

# Roatán Marine Park Newsletter

January 2011



## New Field Director of the South Side



Having worked with the RMPSS for 3 years, we must now sadly say goodbye to Licario Zepeda. However, we would like to welcome our new Field Director, Arlene Rodriguez. We hope that she brings new knowledge, drive and experience to the team and enjoys the new challenges the position brings.

## Patrol summary



This month was relatively quiet regarding confiscations with only 5 incidents resulting in one imprisonment. 3 sets of fins, masks and 3 spears were confiscated

## Lionfish Update



Over the weekends of February 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, and the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, the RMP will be hosting its first island-wide Lionfish Derby. In conjunction with the Derby, on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>, there will also be a

Lionfish Cook Off for budding chefs to show off their culinary skills and for others to try the fish.

## Coral Reef Leadership Network



75 polo shirts and caps, 10 ladders and 25 First Aid kits were donated to the West End Water Taxi Association thanks to the funding from CORAL. Training on First Aid was also given by the Red Cross.

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## Introduction

*While the lionfish invasion is a much discussed issue among divers, we hope February's lionfish derby and cook off will raise awareness about the problem in other groups from around the island show them how they can assist in the demise of the lionfish. By raising awareness about its spread throughout the Caribbean and encouraging people to eat this delicious fish, we hope that we can control the spread of this invasive species. While it's not a simple task, the more people actively hunting and eating, the greater chance we have in controlling its numbers. Happy eating!*

## Patrol

### Sandy Bay West End Marine Park Patrols

In the past month, BICA have once again reinitiated their patrol efforts and are now working alongside our Park Rangers. With an extra set of eyes on the water, we feel that our patrols can more effectively monitor the 13km of coast encompassed within the Reserve. While January was a quiet month regarding arrests and confiscations, we finally managed to catch a well known poacher with a huge haul. One afternoon, we received a call from BICA's patrolman about someone diving near the Sandy Bay School House. After waiting patiently on shore for 2 hours, our Park Rangers were rewarded by catching "Manalong" with a sack full of 26 conch, 5 lobster and 4 fish. The product, along with his mask, fins and knife were all confiscated and the guilty party was imprisoned for 24 hours.



*A haul comprising of conch, lobster, and fish confiscated in Sandy Bay from one individual*



*Some of the haul which was disposed of by Coconut Tree*

While every incident is different, the one constant is how to dispose of the confiscated organic product. Over the years, we have run into several problems. The obvious solution would be to distribute the lobster, fish, conch or any other confiscated marine organisms to the local community. However, how do we decide who it should be given to or what happens if the seafood makes people ill. The decision was finally made that all other product is returned to the reef food chain while all spears, nets, gaffs, lobster and fish traps and other tools are handed over to DIGEPESCA to be destroyed. This month's case certainly highlighted the predicament of disposing edible product, as our patrol boat was unavailable so we asked Coconut Tree Diver Shop to dispose of the product. Their boat captain found it strange why we would throw away perfectly fine food, but upon explanation he agreed that this was a reasonable solution. We dread the day when one of the big groupers or snappers from the El Aguila gets speared and must be thrown away.

### South Side Chapter Patrols

The patrols on the south side have been on and off this month due to the engine needing some extensive repairs. Now that all the necessary changes have been made, the patrols are back up to running as usual. This month there were only two incidents with 4 lobsters, a conch and a speared fish confiscated near Cordelia Banks, as well as 2 pairs of fins around the same spot. We receive several calls each month about people spear fishing or using nets along the north shore but sadly don't have a boat which can patrol around that area yet. The goal for 2011 is to have a boat located on the North shore.



*Items confiscated on the Cordelia Banks*

## Infrastructure

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### Mooring maintenance in the new year

While Nic was away for 2 weeks, several of the dive moorings ended up being either pulled out or run over and therefore needed replacing. Three moorings in West Bay are now back in place and new groundings were installed at Spooky channel and Overhear reef. Some of the yacht moorings also needed some maintenance with several of the sandscrews needing to be reinstalled and the pennant lines needing replacement. Other than those, the majority of the marine infrastructure is in good condition.



## Education

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### Positive Legacy-Jam Cruise 2011



Held annually in January, Jam Cruise is a music festival on a cruise ship. It encompasses Positive Legacy, a non-profit whose mission is to create meaningful opportunities for music fans and musicians to do something positive for the communities they visit. This year the community of Sandy Bay was visited by this group of artists and several activities were organized under the coordination of SOL Foundation. People were able to play with the kids, learn about the culture of the place and of course, taste some delicious island food. The RMP was there to talk about its programs, the environmental education being developed in schools and joint activities with SOL.

## Meetings and Workshops

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### SERNA and Carnival Corporation

A meeting was held at Mahogany Bay HQ between representatives from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (SERNA), Carnival Corporation, Municipality of Roatán, ZOLITUR, governor of the Bay Islands, congressman and the local environmental organizations RMP and BICA. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the current situation at Dixon Cove and requirements for the second phase of the dredging. SERNA was very clear when imposing a **L.1,000,000** fine to Carnival Corporation for exceeding the total area of dredging of coral allowed in 2009. In order to obtain permits for the initial dredging, Mahogany Bay was ordered to replant the coral that was to be destroyed. This compensatory measure has been changed and Mahogany Bay is now going to build a sewage treatment plant for Colonia Santa Maria near Mahogany Bay instead. For the second and upcoming phase of dredging, Mahogany will be required to transplant live coral and pay \$72,000 in environmental compensation annually.



### Meeting with West End Patronato



*Proposed swim zone which is to be located in the south west corner of Half Moon Bay*

Due to the increase of visitors, tour operators, boats and other users in Half Moon Bay, a meeting was held at Cannibal Café between the West End Patronato and the RMP. The Patronato wishes to install a safe swim zone in HMB and the RMP will support this initiative with technical and financial resources. A map of the proposed zone was presented to those who attended the meeting and after some discussion it was approved. Once the Municipality gives the approval to the request, Half Moon Bay will have a safe place for swimming, snorkeling and dive exercises. The map adjacent indicates the area which will be incorporated within the swim zone and will encompass the current boat exclusion zone for confined open waters.

## Meeting with DIGEPESCA, BICA, CORAL & RMP



In an attempt to work in conjunction and in a coordinated way, a meeting was held in Carambola Gardens between DIGEPESCA's regional coordinator, CORAL's field manager and both BICA's and the RMP's executive directors. There are many goals to be achieved and important projects to be developed in 2011, therefore different topics such as artisanal fishing, trainings to fishermen, and the sustainable seafood program, among others were discussed. Hopefully more communication between these different organizations will be maintained, making the achievement of goals easier.

## Conservation

### Lighthawk Flights



*Aerial photo from the North band, close to Crawfish Rock*

Lighthawk is a non-profit organization whose mission is to champion environmental protection through the unique perspective of flight. For several years this organization has been making conservation flights in Honduras, making it possible for organizations to take aerial photos of landscapes, protected areas, development, among other things. This past month, Lighthawk's Mesoamerican Program manager, Armando Ubeda, visited us and a flight was organized on Eric Anderson's plane for representatives of the RMP and BICA. Last year, aerial photos of new developments were taken within the Municipality of Roatan; this year the mission was the East end of the island. The photos taken will be used to create a database of the situation of the coastline, document developments currently going on and support the declaration of the mangroves of Helene as a Ramsar Site.

### Recycling Microbusiness

Because we are convinced that the Recycling Microbusiness project can be achieved, once again the coordinating committee of this project: RMP, BICA, ZOLITUR and Municipality of Roatan got together, this time with representatives from the Education department, RECSA (Recycling Company from San Pedro Sula) and Fernando Penabad from Fundación Cervecería Hondureña. RECSA visited the dump and talked to the people who belong to the Microbusiness. A meeting was later held in the Municipality and RECSA was able to present its experience in San Pedro Sula, as well as a proposal of how they can support Roatan's Microbusiness. Finally a work plan was elaborated with specific responsibilities and tasks.



*Members of coordinating committee, Education department, Cervecería Hondureña and RECSA together at the Municipality*

### Let's all Support the Conservation of the Wishwillies!



A meeting was held at the Community Center in Punta Gorda and representatives from different conservation organizations in both Utila and Roatan attended, as well as members of the Punta Gorda community. According to Dr. Stesha Pasachnick, the "wishwillies" or black iguanas of the Bay Islands face immense threats, including habitat destruction, hunting for consumption and the international pet trade. Therefore a program that brings together research and education about this endangered species is being developed throughout the Bay Islands. By raising awareness throughout the communities and helping people understand the importance of these lizards, as well as Roatan's iguanas and other reptiles, we can then begin to try protecting these species.

## Launch of the 2010 Report Card for the Mesoamerican Reef



*Grazzia presenting the activities and future plans of the RMP for 2011 at Land's End Resort*

Healthy Reefs for Healthy People is an initiative that aims to improve reef management and decision-making in the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) eco-region through the generation of tools to measure, track, and report on the health of the MAR Ecosystem. Last month was the launch of the 2010 Report Card for the Mesoamerican Reef and two events were held, one at Maya Key and another one at Land's End Resort in West End. Guests of the first event included the vice minister of Natural Resources and Environment (SERNA) and director of Biodiversity. A snorkeling trip was made to the Cordelia Banks and participants were able to see the beautiful staghorn corals of the bank. The other presentation was for dive shops. In both events, the RMP was able to present the programs being developed and future plans for 2011.

## Public Awareness

### Coral Reef Leadership Network: First Aid Workshop for the Water Taxi Association

The Coral Reef Leadership Network (CRLN) achieved another goal this past month, this time with the training of the Water Taxi Association crew on First Aid, and the donation of 1<sup>st</sup> aid kits, uniforms and equipment for their boats. The needs of the Association were identified during the CRLN's meeting in November and thanks to a microgrant from CORAL the donations were possible this past month. We would like to thank the Red Cross in Roatan whose volunteers provided the training. In addition to the first aid kits and training, the Water Taxi Association also received new polo shirts and caps, as well as 10 telescopic stainless steel ladders to enable their clients to climb safely back into the boats while snorkeling.



*Members of the Water Taxi Association wearing their new uniforms*

## Lionfish Derby

**Sign up for Roatan's First  
Lion Fish Derby**  
**Saturday Feb 12th and Feb 13th**

CASH PRIZES: \*Most lionfish caught \*Smallest and Largest lionfish  
**\$25 entry per team of 2 people, \$30 late registration**

It is not necessary to enter both days as catch totals are per day, not cumulative

**FOLLOWED BY A LIONFISH COOKOFF**  
**Eat 'em to Beat'em**

SHOW OFF YOUR CULINARY SKILLS OR JUST EAT \* \$5 TO ENTER \$10 TO EAT  
Cash prizes for winners. **SUNDAY 13th 6:30 @ Blue Marlin**  
Lionfish meat will be made available to contestants

For more info, visit the **MARINE PARK OFFICE** or [www.roatanmarinepark.net](http://www.roatanmarinepark.net)  
All teams must register by and attend Captains meeting on Feb 10th

**KILL THEM ALL**

The RMP will be holding its first lionfish derby over the weekends of February 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. Entry is only \$25 per team of two per day and cash prizes will be awarded to the team with the most lionfish caught in one day, as well the smallest and longest specimens. It's not necessary to enter more than one day as the winning total will only be for one day, but if you wish to double, triple or quadruple your chances of winning, or just want to kill more lionfish, then entry is \$40 per team for 2 days.

Hours are 8am till 5pm on Saturdays and 7:30am till 4:30pm on Sundays. Contestants must be at either of the Marine Park offices, West End or Barefoot Cay, for the start and finish. Lionfish may be taken anywhere in Roatan's waters as long as collection occurs during Derby hours and the fish are present at the Scoring Station at the end of each day. Lionfish may be taken by pole-spear, Hawaiian sling, hand net, or plastic bag. You may dive and/or snorkel while hunting but if you are diving, at least one of your team must have a dive computer.

To qualify for prizes, participants should be registered by Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>. All participants must sign a Legal Waiver and registration form and pay entry fee to be considered registered in the Derby. All fish must be presented in whole condition. Only lionfish may be taken during the derby. No other fish, conch or lobster may be present on the boat at any time during the derby.

### Lionfish cook off

Following the two weeks of hunting, we will be hosting an Eat 'em to beat 'em Lionfish Cook-off taking place at the Blue Marlin in West End on the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Show off your culinary skills or just come to enjoy the meals, \$5 to enter or \$10 to eat. CASH PRIZES for winners! This will also be the awards ceremony for the Lionfish Derby so don't miss out finding out how many lionfish were caught around the island over the two weekends and which teams caught the most lionfish and smallest and the largest fish. For more information on both of these events regarding rules and regulations, please visit our [website](#).

**Eat 'em To Beat 'em  
Lionfish Cook Off**

Celebrate Valentine's Day a Different Way  
Sunday Feb 13th 6:30 pm @ Blue Marlin in West End

**SHOW OFF YOUR COOKING SKILLS  
OR JUST COME TO EAT**

\$5 to enter \$10 to eat  
Cash prizes for winners

Lionfish meat will be made available to contestants if needed

For more info or to register visit the **Marine Park Office** in  
Half Moon Bay or [www.roatanmarinepark.com](http://www.roatanmarinepark.com)

**Help control the Lionfish invasion**

### Wrapping things up



#### Sad events in Sandy Bay

During the last Sunday of January, a large adult loggerhead turtle washed up near Sundancer in Sandy Bay. The turtle had been shot through the shell and a noose tied round its neck. We're not sure exactly where the turtle came from or who committed this crime against nature, but think the incident occurred miles away near the Banks and the turtle swam to the Reserve to die. A very depressing case!



#### Win a week of diving at Anthony's Key Resort

[Anthony's Key Resort](#) has kindly donated a "Diving Package for One" to the Roatan Marine Park which includes 1 week hotel accommodation, 3 meals a day, 3 single tank boat dives per day and much more. Tickets are only \$50 each with all money going to the RMP. To find out more, please visit our [website](#).



#### Become our fan on Facebook

We have a **Facebook** page which we post a host of relevant links and photos. Stop by, check it out, and become our fan to receive updates and invites. So far we have over 3,450 fans. Recommend us to your friends and let's break that 3,500 mark!



Our newsletter is sponsored by Roatan Life Real Estate & Roatan Life Vacation Rentals. Roatan Life will donate 10% of net commission earned on the sale of any property or any vacation rental to the RMP if the customer mentions that they saw Roatan Life on the Marine Park Newsletter. Please contact Roatan Life for all of your real estate and rental needs at [www.roatanlife.com](http://www.roatanlife.com) and [www.roatanlifelvacationrentals.com](http://www.roatanlifelvacationrentals.com) or +504-2445-3130 or from the U.S. at +1-970-300-4078.

*As always, we would like to thank all our supporters and volunteers for the help they've given us in the past month. If you have any comments or suggestions, feel free to email us at [info@roatanmarinepark.net](mailto:info@roatanmarinepark.net). For more information, please visit our [website](#) or stop by our offices in Half Moon Bay and Barefoot Cay.*

Grazia, Nic,  
Licario and Cesy

