

Roatán Marine Park Newsletter

July 2011



Saying goodbye to our staff



Grazzia, who has been with the RMP on and off for 4 years is sadly leaving for good to complete a Masters degree in Sweden. We wish her all the best and await the arrival of a new Director in September.

Patrol summary



Though all our patrol vessels weren't fully operational, our Rangers still managed to have a relatively busy month with 14 incidents resulting in 6 arrests. Confiscated items included 16 masks, 9 sets of fins and 2 complete sets of dive gear and 3 tanks.

Infrastructure update



With so many divers complaining about boat traffic around the Lighthouse dive mooring by Half Moon Bay, the small channel by the iron shore was marked out with 6 markers providing boat operators an alternative to driving over divers heads.

Coral Reef Leadership Network



This month the CRLN program worked with 5 Patronatos, 3 restaurants and a group of fishermen from around the island. All the groups discussed their concerns about the environment and we worked to find solutions.

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Introduction



Sadly we have to say farewell to Grazzia as she is moving to Sweden to do her Master's degree. As the Masters is a two year program, this may be the last time she works with the RMP. Over the past 4 years, Grazzia has dedicated herself to conservation here on the island and she will be sorely missed. We wish her all the best and hope our new director, Andres Alegria, who starts in September, will be able to fill the huge shoes she left behind.

Patrol

Sandy Bay West End Marine Park Patrols



Lobster, conch, fish and crab confiscated one evening in Sandy Bay

The weather gods blessed us this month with low winds and calm seas. This makes for perfect poaching conditions and our Park Rangers were busy all month. As we only have 1 boat working on the north side and our south side boat was being repaired, our Rangers also spent a fair amount of time on shore patrol. All in all there were 14 incidents, resulting in the arrest of 6 people and the confiscation of 16 masks and fins, 9 spears, 2 sets of dive gear, and too many conch, lobster, and fish to count. We received word of night time poaching in Sandy Bay so we sent our Park Rangers to investigate. He caught two people

with 20 lobster, 14 conch, 8 fish and several king crab. Their gear was confiscated and they were sent to jail. A fish trap was also confiscated from the dock at Flying Fish in Coxen Hole after Nick found it one morning.

Later in the month, on one of the many calm days we received a call from a diver who happened to pass people poaching in the Cordelia Banks. As the Southside boat was out of the water, our boat traveled around to find two men in full dive gear with 13 lobster, 2 conch, fish, and spears. All their dive and product was confiscated. On another calm day, Nick spotted four men spear fishing in Flowers Bay. Two of them got away but the others were sentenced to community service and their spear gun and gear were confiscated. In Half Moon Bay, two Peruvian tourists were found swimming with a lobster gaff. As they hadn't yet caught anything, they only had their gear taken. There were many other incidents this month but we won't bore you with all the details.



Gear confiscated from divers in Flowers Bay

Infrastructure

Channel marked out west of Half Moon Bay



New channel markers installed near HMB

Many divers have reported close calls with boats driving over their heads at Lighthouse, Moonlight and Dixies. Due to the reef topography, water taxis, fishermen, and other dive boats cut between parked boats and the reef, driving over the shallows where divers are. To prevent this from occurring, additional channel markers and marker buoys were installed to the east of the channel so drivers could see the path they must take when dive boats are present. We also marked an alternative channel at the point of the bay to give boaters another choice. This channel is perfect for the smaller water taxi and fishing boats. Hopefully this will reduce the number of incidents occurring in the area and boat drivers will become more aware of the dangers.



Fishing Moorings



Fishing mooring buoy

Over the years, the RMP has tried to install permanent fishing moorings to reduce anchor damage on the reef. We used various methods and designs but all failed. Some were run over by boats and others sunk. This time, we have decided that simpler is better. The moorings consist of a 1,500lb concrete block, a mix of ½ inch polypropylene and nylon rope, a green buoy, and an orange buoy. The buoys indicate that they should be used for “fishing only” and fishermen were told that only boats less than 25ft in length should tie up. So far we have installed 2 fishing moorings, adjacent to Anthony’s Key Resort in about 250ft and near Luna Beach in around 450ft. More moorings will be added inside and outside the Reserve. Also, two new dive moorings were installed by West Bay Point, one at Pablo’s in 25 feet

of water and the other at Texas on a sand patch in 40 feet of water. Though technically dive moorings, fisherman are allowed to use the buoys as it’s preferable to them anchoring.

Education

Education in the schools expand

It was another busy month for Wendy who gave presentations to 227 kids this month. As Roatan continues to boom, there is a constant supply of new schools and community centers for our staff to visit. This month we managed to include 3 new locations, the Roberto V. Stanley School in Sandy Bay, the Buckner Transition Home, and the Masapan Community Center in La Colonia. We are happy to report that all the children from The Guardiola Institute in Coxen Hole have received a presentation on the 3R’s. The next step of the program is to teach the kids about the sharks and their vital role in the ocean and the importance of mangroves. The kids are also encouraged to collect plastic bottles and cans which are picked up from the school each week.



Kids at the Masapan Center in La Colonia

Cleanups in Sandy Bay and El Berrinche

This month we organized two clean ups. Almost 200 kids from the Roberto V. Stanley School picked up 18 bags of trash from the beach. The students got to practice what they learned during their earlier 3 R’s presentation by separating out the recyclables during the cleanup. The other cleanup involved a group of very conscientious tourists that came to Roatan for a wedding. The eighteen tourists wanted to offset the emissions they caused by traveling to Roatan so volunteered to clean up El Berrinche. Everyone who has walked through there knows that the area could do with a weekly cleanup!



Volunteers help collect trash from El Berrinche

Glass bottom boat trip



More students fortunate enough to go on the GBB

In July, 143 students from the Miguel Paz Barahona School in West End, the Buckner Transition Home, and the hotel management program at the Guardiola Institute went on the Glass Bottom Boat. All of them were really excited to be there and to learn more about the coral reef. The teachers from the hotel management program jumped at the chance to have their students participate as they are not taught biology or ecological studies. The combination of the presentations the RMP have given and the glass bottom trip helps to reinforce the importance of conserving Roatan’s reefs and how their actions can help preserve it for future generations. Our continued thanks to John.



Tree Nursery Project

With the help of our trusty volunteers, we were finally able to start the Nursery at The Guardiola Institute. The project, which is funded by PMAIB, aims to create a nursery for indigenous tree species. These trees will be replanted in areas that have been deforested. As part of their required community service, the students from the Institute will be in charge of maintaining the nursery and caring for the saplings. We have purchased the materials and given the equipment to the Institute and the students have prepared the nursery site. The first trees to be planted are mangroves that will be replanted in front of the future West End water treatment plant as a preventive barrier for possible overflowing.



Alex and Norma working at the tree nursery

Drawing competition



The iguana endemic to Roatan

We would like to announce that the Bay Island Institute and the RMP is holding an Iguana drawing contest open to 1st – 6th grade students from schools on Roatán. Stesha Pasachnic, a herpetologist studying our endemic and endangered Iguana, *Ctenosaura oedirhina* is the brains behind this project. The objective of the contest is to spark students' interest in the protection and conservation of the iguana. The prizes for the contest will be given by Antony's Key Resort, Mayan Key and the Glass Bottom Boat (West Bay). If you or your kids are interested in participating, please come by the marine park office for more information.

Meetings and Workshops

Nassau and Queen Conch Meeting

Our staff attended a meeting on the current challenges facing the Nassau Grouper and Queen Conch in the coastal waters of Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras. In attendance were experts from USAID, The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, and marine park rangers from Belize and Guatemala. The discussion centered on the endangerment of these species and options to stem their depletion and increase their numbers to a healthier and sustainable level. Belize has made progress with their current management strategies that include establishing fishing seasons for Nassau Grouper and designated fishing and non-fishing areas. One of the conclusions of the workshop was decidedly to work together in the future protection of these species because borders don't exist in our waters, at least not for our finned friends!



Snapper and grouper from a fisherman's haul

Visit from the government representants



Government officials and RMP staff on a vessel

This month we had visitors from the Department of Finances representing the interests of Cooperacion Española. These representatives were interested in learning how the Marine Park Administration works and functions on a daily basis. We were able to demonstrate the need for installing a greater number of yacht moorings on the south side of the island as well as fishing moorings island wide, especially in the coveted Cordelia Banks area. After observing us in action for several days, they were happy to recommend that the Marine Park receive the grant we had previously applied for. In addition to funding the Marine

Park Infrastructure program, we received money for the Lionfish Eradication Program.



Community development

Cooperative of Tourism Services

People working together for the common good are a more powerful force than competition. An initiative lead by Steven Miller, Alfredo Ebanks, and a few others asked the RMP to help form a cooperation. Members will include people in the tourism industry including independent land and water taxi drivers and providers of sport fishing charters, boat trips, and snorkel tours. In addition to aiding in the formation of the cooperation, we will also provide training and environmental education to the members through the Coral Reef Leadership Network in an effort to protect the reef.



Local water taxi drivers meet at RMP office

Public Awareness

Coral Reef Leadership Network visits Patronatos



CRLN program meets more people

This month we worked with Patronatos in Jonesville, La Balfate, Monte Fresco, Sandy Bay East, and Pandy Town. They were given presentations on the RMP, our programs, and the importance of sewage management. These underfunded Patronatos have had to manage their sewage without the help of the Municipality. Unfortunately, this means most of the towns have inadequate waste management. Many people open their septic tanks when it rains because they cannot afford to have their tanks pumped. The Dale Jackson School doesn't even have a bathroom and students must relieve themselves outdoors. We are looking for funding to help resolve these issues that threaten the health of the people and the reef.

Fishermen meet to discuss conservation

This month we also gave a presentation to the fishermen on the Cordelia Banks. The nine attendees are eager to form a Fishermen's alliance that will set catch limits, have collection and inspection points, and help protect the Banks. In addition, they will help the Marine Park patrol the area by reporting unlawful activities and will take people to the Banks to show them the important biodiverse area. Mr. David Bodden, an attendee and alderman of the municipality, said that the municipality might even help the donate equipment like coolers once the alliance is formed. Let's hope this project comes together and that these fishermen become the stewards of Cordelia.



Fishermen happy to be a part of the program

Responsible Restaurant Program

Best Choices	Choices with Cautions	Avoid Eating
Tuna <small>(Skipjack, Bonito & Little Tuna)</small>	Lobster	All Other Grouper
Cero	Conch	Reef Snappers <small>(Red Snappers, Lane Snappers)</small>
Kingfish	Barracuda	Parrotfish
Spanish Mackerel	Dog Snapper	Shark
Wahoo	Mutton Snapper	Triggerfish
Jack & Trevallies	Deepwater Snappers <small>(Black Snappers, Red Snappers, Yellow Snappers)</small>	Sea Turtle
Mahi Mahi	Red Hind Grouper	
Yellowtail Snapper	Rock Hind Grouper	
Lionfish		
Squid		

Part of the seafood guide indicating what we should and shouldn't be eating

Our Responsible Restaurant Program is just getting started. We spent much time tweaking and improving the program. In addition to including information on Sustainable Seafood, we will also teach restaurants how to reduce their environmental footprint by using recyclable and reusable materials, conserving water, and refraining from using Styrofoam and plastic bags and bottles. We also visited 3 restaurants, Celeste's and Las Rocas in West Bay, and Besos in West End. Those participating will be revisited and supervised to ensure they follow the program. If so, we will certify and promote them as Responsible Restaurants. As part of the promotion, a Trip Advisor styled website is being designed that will allow customers to rate and review restaurants' responsibility level online.



El Heraldo Newspaper visits Roatan

As the tourism boom continues, Roatan is a popular subject for travel magazines and articles. Tegucigalpa's newspaper, El Heraldo, visited Roatan, to find out more about the island and its positive and negative aspects. They approached the RMP to learn more about the Sandy Bay-West End Marine Park and the conservation efforts being developed by us. These articles have just been printed so if you can read Spanish and want to read more about the good and the bad of Roatan, please visit their web site, www.elheraldo.hn



Wrapping things up



Re-release of the Roatan dive guide

After years of waiting for the second edition, finally the new, updated dive guide is finally available. With so many moorings having been changed over the years, this new guide provides you with up to date dive site information on your favorite dive sites, as well as some new ones. This new guide is great and is available at either of the marine park offices in west end or barefoot cay and at many of your local dive shops.



Largest lionfish caught to date

While we haven't mentioned lionfish much in the past few months, divers and snorkelers are still out there spearing the invasive species and either feeding them to the resident grouper and snappers or taking them home to eat. While Kent Ebanks held the record for largest fish at 36.4cm for several months, this was finally beaten by Caroline Power who speared a 36.6cm. If you catch any monsters, please bring them to the office for measuring.



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 4,100 fans. Recommend us to your friends and let's break that 4,250 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 and www.roatanlifevacationrentals.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. For more information, please visit our [website](#) or stop by our offices in Half Moon Bay and Barefoot Cay.

Nic, Wendy,
Arlene and Cesy

