

Roatán Marine Park Newsletter

May 2010 Highlights



SBWEMP and RMPSSC Patrols



Three individuals were imprisoned for 24hrs for illegally harvesting lobster and spearing fish. A total of 8 masks were confiscated along with fins, spears, gaffs, Hawaiian slings and a torch.

Marine Infrastructure Update



Over the past 3 months, 1,800ft of rope has been used to renovate the dive and yacht moorings within the SBWEMR. The Reserve currently has 4 channel markers with solar beacons, over 80 dive and yacht moorings, and 4 swim zones.

Lionfish Update



With so many dive shops and individuals actively hunting the lionfish, it's impossible to provide an accurate number of kills this month. Estimates are anywhere between 400 and 600.

Education statistics



The kids were kept busy this month taking trips on the glass bottom boat in West Bay, planting saplings for Tree Day, making recycled paper for arts and craft and organizing a beach clean up in Punta Gorda.

Quickly...

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Introduction

As we reach the mid way point of the year, we look back at all the staff and volunteers we've had the fortune to work with in the past 6 months. Matt, Alvaro, Sandy, Grazzia, all of them contributed towards the development of the Roatán Marine Park and we can only hope that our new employees can follow in their footsteps. I guess only time will tell.

Patrols

Sandy Bay West End Marine Park Patrols



Lobster confiscated near Palmetto Bay

This month there were a total of four incidents which resulted in the jailing of three individuals. The first incident occurred near Palmetto while our patrol boat was searching the area for illegal nets. While in the vicinity, they found a man with 12 lobsters, 2 conch and 2 speared fish. The next arrest occurred in Mangrove Bight after receiving a report of a young man from the Berrinche diving for lobster every day that week. The culprit attempted to hide the lobsters but the bag was soon found and 4 of the 7 lobster were re-released.



Dead adult and juvenile lobster from Mangrove Bight



Items confiscated near Maya Cay, Coxen Hole

In recent months our office has received numerous calls from Maya Cay about people setting lobster traps and diving for conch and lobster. While our patrol from Barefoot Cay does monitor the area around the airport, it is easier for the West End patrols to travel by land to Coxen Hole and use a boat provided by Maya Cay. After receiving a tipoff from a local informant, and with the seas being



Lobster confiscated adjacent to Half Moon Bay

so calm due to Hurricane Agatha, it was possible for our boat to travel to the airport, checking Cayucos and dories along the way. At the airport they found a father and son snorkeling with a dory containing a haul of speared and hooked fish and two lobster. The father was arrested and all the speared fish and lobster, masks, fins and Hawaiian slings were confiscated. The son was sent home with the fish caught with hook and line. The final incident occurred one Monday morning at 4am, when 3 teenagers from the Berrinche were caught by police just west of Half Moon Bay with 18 lobsters. Since they were underage, they were forced to clean the Police Stations in both West End and Coxen Hole. This incident has highlighted how difficult it is to capture people from the Berrinche who are slowly devastating the local lobster population.

South Side Chapter Patrols

With our new boat captain, Crist McKenzie, patrols have been operating as often as our engine permits it. This month the engine had so many problems that we are now searching for a new 4-stroke. If you know of any available or of anyone willing to donate one, please contact us. June was a quiet month with very few people spotted poaching and only several reports resulting in the confiscation of 3 lobster. We did however receive information of fishing nets and lobster traps been used in the vicinity of French Cay and are currently trying to locate them.



Lobster confiscated on the South Side

Infrastructure

Yacht Mooring Project

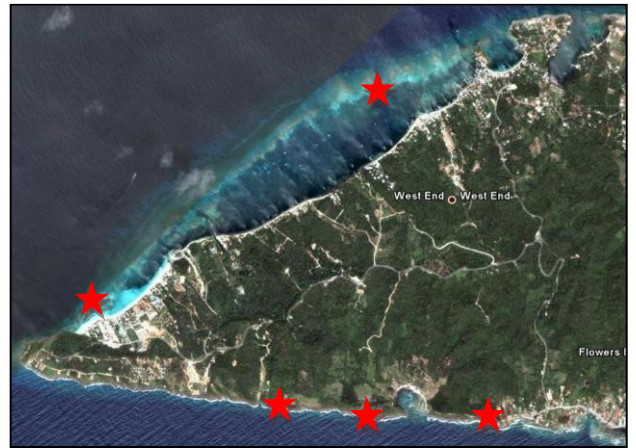


The last of the season's visiting yachts before hurricane season begins

As the yachting season tails off, fewer and fewer sail boats are visiting Roatán. Fortunately for the community of West End, the mandatory mooring fee was introduced just before numbers dropped to insignificant figures. Over the past 5 weeks, the fee managed to generate just over \$1,800, a large proportion of which has and will be donated to West End. It's proposed that 50% of money generated from this project, minus overheads, will be assigned to programs in West End. These will include renovating the school in the Berrinche, improving the trash receptacles on the main road, and assisting our local Police Station. From May's funds, the RMP has donated \$400 to the Police to help pay part of the \$1,400 electricity bill, and will contribute a further \$400 to the West End School to help fix the bathroom, the windows and the fans.

Dive Mooring Update

With such calm seas due to Hurricane Agatha, which hit Guatemala on May 31st, the conditions were perfect to inspect the dive moorings in Flowers Bay, which had been neglected for quite some time. Armed with a new GPS (its predecessor died), sheer luck, and great memory we managed to locate 5 of 7 moorings. The lines on those moorings were changed and should hopefully last through the next rainy season. This brings the total number of dive mooring lines replaced since January to over 35, and a total of 10 new groundings installed at both old sites such as Spooky Channel, Dixie's, and White Hole, and at new sites such as Kaylee's Daydream and several moorings in the shallows on the lagoon side of Blue Channel.



New dive sites in West End and West Bay and renovated sites in Flowers Bay

Education

Paper Recycling



Learning how to make paper with screens & trays

First graders from The Methodist School had a fun and educational morning making recycled paper to be used for arts and crafts. This entertaining activity helped the boys and girls understand the importance of protecting our forests and how plants help maintain healthy coral reefs. A large number of kids from all around the island have been visited by representatives from the



The kids drying their sheets of recycled paper

RMP and been taught the significance of the 3Rs, Reducing, Reusing and Recycling. This exercise taught them how waste paper could be turned into new paper, which in turn could be made into attractive cards and pictures which can be sold to raise money for the school.

Tree Day

May 30th is globally celebrated as Tree Day, and coincidentally is also the RMP Director, Nic's, birthday. The RMP celebrated this special day by acquiring over 200 seedlings donated by Native Sons in West End and distributed them between two colleges on the island. The seniors from ESBIR and the Adventist school were given to saplings to plant in around the island. The purpose of this project is to teach the students the benefits of trees, mainly how they help to prevent soil erosion during heavy rains and increase CO₂ absorption on our planet.



Seniors from ESBIR with their seedlings

Glass Bottom Boat Tours



Firstly the kids are taught about the coral reef

Mario Pi, owner of the glass bottom boat in West Bay, has allowed the RMP to take school groups on the boat for the past few years. His only requirement has been that the class had recently been taught about the importance of the reef by a RMP representative. Thanks to his generosity, 623 kids have had the opportunity to see the reef first hand since our new Director of



Then they experience the beauty of West Bay

Education, Wendy Naira, took over the position two months ago. Sadly, Mario is leaving the island but we look forward to working with his business partner, John, who has agreed to follow in his footsteps regarding working with our organization.

Beach cleanup in Punta Gorda

On the first weekend of the month, seniors from Children Palace, French Harbor, travelled to Punta Gorda to clean the beaches. The seniors conducted the clean up as part of their community service and managed to collect 10 large black bags in 2 hours. A large proportion of the trash collected was composed of plastic bottles and bags, typical for beaches throughout Roatan and the rest of the world. Food for thought, how come when you find flip flops on the beaches around Roatan, the majority of them are left footed? What happens to all the right footed flip-flops? Do ocean currents really have an affect on the distribution of the sea's flip-flop populace?



Seniors from Children's Palace collecting trash

Meetings and Workshops

RAS-HON Seminar



Meeting at the RAS-HON seminar in La Ceiba

On May 18th, the RMP attended a workshop with the Water and Drainage Net of Honduras (RAS-HON). Also in attendance were the Water Board leaders and Patronato members from the Bay Islands and mainland Honduras. During the workshop, we discussed the importance of good drainage and water management, especially on Roatan and the Bay Islands where runoff caused by poor drainage from developments has caused serious damage to the reef and continues to be one of our biggest threats. The goal of the workshop was to create alliances and partnerships among the Patronato members so that they can collectively decide on a water and drainage management plan for the Bay Islands.

Plastic recycling

The Plastic Bottle Recycling Company, headed by Mr. Samuel Sandres, will be responsible for collecting and compacting all the plastic bottles recycled on Roatán. Early this month, a meeting was held at the Municipality between Mr. Sanders and a representative of a company based in Choloma, Cortes that is interested in buying bottles and turning them into a shredded plastic or PET1 material. They have yet to agree on a price but once this happens, contracts will be signed on both ends that will ensure their partnership for years to come.



Meeting at the Municipality regarding Recycling

Patrols training in Cayos Cochinos



As mentioned in last month's newsletter, at the start of June our patrols will be working with the Honduran Navy instead of the National Police. To prepare ourselves for the transition and see how the Navy works elsewhere, several of our staff traveled to Cayos Cochinos. After a short workshop, two of the four staff members spent two more days on the islands participating with the patrols at all hours of the day. We hope that their experience has prepared us more for dealing with Navy in the coming months.

Inspections

Inspection of Maya Lounge's septic system

After receiving several complaints from Roatán Divers that their neighbor's septic tank was leaking, the RMP organized a meeting with the owner and renters of the new Maya Lounge in Half Moon Bay. It was agreed that the septic tanks needed to be pumped and that the new grey water tank must only be used for that purpose. However, even after pumping, the sewage was still leaking, and after having received several other complaints regarding garbage and their generator, representatives from the Municipality, RMP and the West End Patronato came to inspect the site. The police inspectors listen to the comments of the neighbors who attended the inspection and the owner and arranged that they would soon return with the UMA's Engineer to evaluate their sewage system's pipes.



Inspection in Half Moon Bay, West End

Public Awareness

Starfish in West Bay

If you've visited West Bay recently you may have noticed a huge influx of starfish near Tabyanna's. While starfish are always around in West Bay, they certainly haven't been quite this abundant. Why such high numbers? The culprit: an islander with good intentions but a bad result. He had transported 100 starfish from Turquoise Bay to West Bay to help repopulate the area and graze on the algae on the reef. Unfortunately however, he placed the starfish too close to shore, therefore signing a death warrant to the starfish on cruise ship days. The RMP spoke with the man in question and informed him that to reduce the starfish mortality by tourists removing them from water, they should be placed in the deeper sandy area near Mandy's. This has now been achieved and we hope they remain unmolested.



An example of dead starfish left out to dry on a beach

Lionfish

Lion fish presentation in Cayos Cochinos

On the same trip to Cayos Cochinos, once the training was finished, we invited the personnel from the Foundation and the Navy personnel to participate in a presentation about the Lion Fish Control Program used around Roatan. Since Cayos Cochinos have only had one or two lionfish sightings, they didn't know much about this fish and the problems arising since its introduction to the Caribbean. Therefore we thought it vital that we discussed the lionfish, about its behavior, habitat, reproduction, and most important of all, how to catch them. At the end we feel that the whole experience was a symbiotic experience for both organizations and that we both learned from each other. We would like to say a huge thank you to the Cayos Cochinos Foundation and all their staff; they make us feel very welcome. Special thanks to Marcio Aronne, Elias Aguilar and Adrian Oviedo.



Staff listens intently about the lionfish invasion

Continuation of the lionfish program



Jars of lionfish heads ready to be sent to the States

Sadly, this month we had to say farewell to our volunteer lionfish specialist, Matt Nawrocki, who has been with us since October. During his stay he developed the RMP eradication program and involved many of the dive shops throughout the island in the project. One of his objectives during his stay was to collect lionfish heads which are to be sent to the States for genetic analysis. In the photo you can see that the size of the lionfish heads, ordered by date captured from left to right, has increased since the program began.

Next month our new volunteers will begin a new island wide Lionfish eradication program. Staff and volunteers will travel to the far off reaches of Roatan such as Camp Bay, Paya Bay, Calabash Bight, Port Royal and French Cay to hunt and kill lionfish. In addition to exterminating the lionfish, the two pronged approach will have our volunteers brief the communities we visit on the invasive species and demonstrate how to catch and eat them. The program will run every other Friday starting on June 18th. There will only be space for 12 participants, so if you are interested, please contact our office. Cost will be 300lms and will include transport, training, snorkel gear and more.

Wrapping things up



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 2,325 fans. Recommend us to your friends and let's break that 2,500 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 and www.roatanlifelifevacationrentals.com or +504-445-3130 or from the U.S. at +1-970-300-4078.

Nic, Matt, Wendy and Licario

