

Roatan Marine Park Newsletter

November 2009 Highlights



New booth at the Cruise ship terminal



While the majority of businesses on the island have always benefited financially from cruise ships, we've finally taken the step towards joining these entrepreneurs. With a stand at the Port of Roatan, and a further opening shortly at Mahogany Bay, we hope we can supplement new projects with this new income.

SBWEMP and RMPSSC Patrols



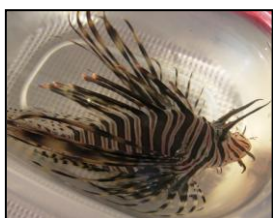
The patrol's combined hauls from confiscations comprised of 7 sets of snorkel gear, 5 spears, 3 fins, 3 snorkels, 2 spear guns, a gaff and a lobster trap. Four people were imprisoned for 24 hours while four minors were forced to do community service.

Marine Infrastructure Update



With only small storms this past month, several of the channel markers and dive moorings had to be reinstalled while the fishing moorings at Cordelia had new buoys added.

Lionfish Update



With over 80 reported sightings this month around the island, almost 40% of those were killed. We are currently working with DIGEPESCA on developing a strategic plan to eradicate these invasive creatures.

Education



The RMP continued its extensive education program in November with 60 local youths trained on reef habitats and threats. The children from the ESBIR School were our target audience and have learnt much from our visits.

Quickly...

- Patrol update page... 2
- Renovation of fishing moorings... page 2
- ESBIR students learn reef habitats... page 3
- Kids taught about reef threats ... page 3
- Shark project... page 4
- Strengthening ties with DIGEPESCA ... page 4
- MAR fund meeting in Guatemala... page 4
- Reef management meeting... page 4
- Recycling one step closer... page 4
- Coral reef leadership network cont... page 5
- Mangrove cuts in Flowers Bay.. page 5
- Lionfish update.. page 5
- Wrapping up... page 6
- Contact us... page 6

Introduction

November 2009 is a month that Honduras will never forget, as it marked a national triumph for all people who aim for liberty. Hondurans went to the polls to celebrate a "fiesta electoral" and managed to save democracy. Elections for President, Congress and Mayor were also a party on Roatán. Congratulations to the new elected Mayor, Don Julio Galindo, we hope we can work together for the environment and conservation of our island's natural resources.

Patrols

Sandy Bay West End Marine Park Patrols



Confiscated snorkel gear from West End kids diving at Dive Masters Choice

While our new boat was out of the water for maintenance on the tilt and trim hydraulics for the whole of November, our Park Rangers focused on land patrols as a primary means of supervising the Reserve. This month we reported only 3 incidents which led to the imprisonment of 4 individuals and the confiscation of 4 sets of masks and fins, a gaff, a lobster trap and 11 dead conch. The case resulting in the confiscated snorkel gear involved four minors from West End who will now be under constant watch by our Patrols.

To teach the teenagers a lesson, they were forced to collect trash from the beach near the school house in Sandy Bay.



Lobster trap found near the Blue Channel shallow mooring

South Side Chapter patrols

With the patrols still operating with the Preventiva Police, this month they managed to confiscate 5 spears, 3 fins, 3 snorkels, 2 spear guns, and 4 small conchs. With reports of a turtle net being seen in Port Royal, our patrols expanded their usual search area to incorporate old and new Port Royal for several days after the initial report. Sadly we have yet to confiscate the net but are currently still searching. The main problem regarding this case is that they set the net at dusk and bring it in at dawn. To coordinate catching the culprits and confiscating the net, we require more information, therefore we implore that if anyone sees anyone placing a net in the vicinity, please contact us.



Spear gun and fins confiscated from a poacher

Infrastructure

Renovation of fishing moorings at the Cordelia Banks



Used cooking oil drums filled with Styrofoam used as fishing moorings

After much trial and error, it was decided that we required an alternative to the PVC pipes used as fishing mooring buoys. Though the pipes work well as channel markers, the 100ft of line leading down to the grounding caused an immense amount of drag on the pipes. The solution to the problem was a remarkably cheap and easy alternative, using old cooking oil drums, filling them with Styrofoam, sticking reflective tape on them and then attaching a tie-line for the fishermen. The outcome: valueless, durable and highly visible moorings, perfect for moorings at Cordelia.

Education

ESBIR's 2nd graders learn about the Habitats of the Reef

Did you know that the coral reef ecosystem is like a house with different rooms? It has different living environments called habitats. Just like a house has a kitchen for cooking and a bedroom for sleeping, the different habitats of the reef system each have their own purpose. This lesson is what ESBIR's 2nd graders learned about this past month when the RMP's education staff visited them at their school. In order to enhance what was taught in the classroom, a tour to the reef aboard the Glass Bottom Boat will be planned for the following weeks.



Diagram of house used as a comparison to a reef

Children are taught about Threats to the Reef



Volunteer, Andrea Todt, presenting at the ESBIR School

Since it's often hard to change the minds of adults, just like it's difficult to teach an old dog new tricks, we find it more beneficial to teach our future generations about how they can help support reef protection. This month the children from ESBIR were taught about water conservation threats and what they can all do to help. After discussing important environmental concerns that affect both the reef ecosystem and our fresh water, we all worked together to identify ways that these threats can be prevented. We were excited and happy to be able to deliver this message to the kids!

Meetings and Workshops

Shark Project

A recent project the Marine Park has been offering its support with has been a Shark protect project run by Peter Wilcox and Giacomo Palavicini. The pair intends to study nurse and reef sharks populations throughout Roatan and work out the financial worth of each shark. They will be analyzing the revenue generated through tourism from each shark compared to the amount a shark raises from its fins. This month the RMP attended a meeting in Tegucigalpa where Mr. Palavicini presented to representatives from DIGEPESCA, Honduran Institute of Tourism, and SERNA (DIBIO). As the project develops in the coming years, it is hoped that Biology students from UNAH will travel to Roatan where they will be able to research and promote the protection of our sharks.



Shark presentation in Tegucigalpa

Tying bonds with DIGEPESCA



Fishermen surveying the moorings

The RMP received a visit from the coordinator of DIGEPESCA's Research Department, biologist Eloisa Espinoza. The purpose of her visit was to discuss all of the activities our organization is developing in both the Sandy Bay-West End Marine Reserve and the Southside. Together with fishermen from Coxen Hole, we visited the Cordelia banks to assess the fish moorings that were installed by the RMP a couple of months prior through a grant from PADI Project AWARE. We are now in the process of writing new memorandums of agreement with them. On another note, we would like to welcome Violeta Redondo to the island; she is the new head for DIGEPESCA's office on Roatán. We are looking forward to working closely with her.

Meeting with MAR Fund/KfW Bankengruppe



In addition to the continuous support we receive from our local sponsors, we are also consistently seeking revenue by applying for grants from international cooperation agencies. Due to this, a meeting was held in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, with representatives from the RMP, the Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MAR Fund) and the German bank KfW attending. The MAR Fund is a four-country alliance (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico) whose primary goal is to protect the Mesoamerican Reef eco-region. The drafted funding proposal focused on strengthening patrols and infrastructure and community development and water quality monitoring programs. In addition, a plan for the construction of a visitor's center for the Reserve was presented by the RMP and BICA.

Connectivity Science and Coastal Reef Management in the Caribbean

Belize City played host to a workshop entitled "Connectivity Science and Coastal Reef Management in the Caribbean", which brought together scientists and managers from marine protected areas from all around the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System. This workshop was an opportunity for scientists to share the results of their research in the region and for us managers to determine what our role is in building connectivity science and the ways we can better manage our reserve. Our Executive Director Grazzia Matamoros was fortunate enough to attend the workshop and present the Marine Park to those present.



Representatives from the Mesoamerican area meet in Belize

Efforts for the Creation of the Recycling Micro business "Roatán"

Efforts by the RMP, BICA, ZOLITUR and the Municipality of Roatán to help create the Recycling Microbusiness "Roatán" continued this past month. Additional lobbying was successful and we can now count on more support from the private sector for the implementation of this program.



Meeting with representatives from the RMP, BICA, the Municipality, and micro business owners attending

The Cervecería Hondureña has been a key player in the development of the project as they have helped facilitate training to the members of the micro businesses several months ago and will be providing the shipping of plastics to the mainland. Cervecería Hondureña will also be instrumental in filling many other important roles. USAID-MIRA is will be an important piece of the puzzle as they have created a document of regulations for the management of solid wastes, which will soon be approved in Congress. A workshop was organized in La Ceiba and representatives from Roatán's Recycling Micro business, ZOLITUR, the Municipality and the RMP all were there.

Community Development

The Coral Reef Leadership Network (CRLN) continues



CRLN representatives continuing with their training

In November, the CRLN trained 15 tour guides from MC Tours and 19 from Sun and Fun Tours. Also, an interview and discussion about the leadership program were conducted by Veronica Kelly James and Andrea Rivera on the Stereo Caracol radio station in Coxen Hole. At the show, shirts were raffled with those who called asking questions regarding the reef or the RMP. We are glad that the community is responding well to the trainings and participating! They are raising their concerns and also proposing solutions to better protect the coral ecosystem and re-focus our approach towards sustainable tourism.

Inspections

Mangrove cut in Flower's Bay



Section of mangroves decimated east of Flower's Bay

Having received a tip-off involving people diving on a daily basis in the Key Hole area at the south-western extent of the SBWEMR, our Park Rangers went to investigate the claims. While patrolling the region they stumbled upon two recent mangrove cuts around the Flower's Bay area. The first site consists of a large section of cleared mangrove hidden behind a dense tree line to the

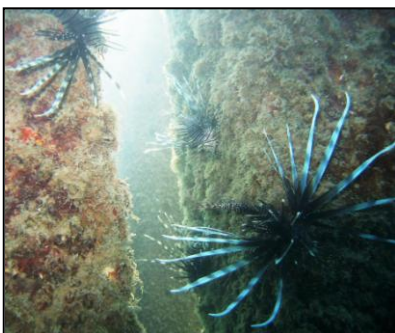


Strip of mangroves cleared near Pirate's Cove

right of the path west of Flower's Bay. The total area of mangroves cut down is estimated at 150 ft by 150 ft. The second clearing is approximately 15 ft wide and 300 ft long and runs parallel to the path leading to Pirate's Cove. While the two clearances are unrelated, maybe these cases indicate the direction in which the owners are hoping to proceed with this area of Flower's Bay. After our Park Rangers identified the mangrove cuts, the RMP, along with representatives from the DGIC and BICA inspected the sites and filed reports documenting the incidents. The case is now in the hands of the Fiscalía.

Public Awareness

Lionfish update



4 lionfish spotted together near Barefoot Cay

While the community has been seeing an ever-increasing number of lionfish sightings around the island, it is important to remember that early detection and rapid response is the best way to stay on top of this problem. We are thankful for participation among many of the dive shops and residents for reporting and capturing lionfish as well as delivering lionfish dead or alive to the Marine Park office for further research. This research is being done in coordination with top-level PhD ecologists in the United States at NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) with the hopes that this knowledge may lead to future solutions to better control this species as well as other marine invasives.

We feel strongly that with both the frequency of dives and number of divers consistently diving within the Reserve, our coordinated efforts can significantly reduce native reef fish mortality and ecosystem imbalance by this invasive. In November alone, we received reports of 80 sightings, and of these, over 30 were captured and killed. At a single site between Barefoot Cay and Los Fuertes bay, 11 lionfish were spotted in 10 ft of water, with 6 of them were captured and killed before the elastic on the Hawaiian sling broke. Please remember to help protect the reef by reporting lionfish sightings on our online [form](#) at the RMP homepage, calling the RMP office or filling out the form at your dive shop.



Lionfish speared at Conch Cay near Port Royal

The RMP is currently working with the department of fisheries, DIGEPESCA, to develop a national action plan on dealing with the lionfish. We understand that an aggressive approach must be undertaken to combat these invasive creatures and are requesting the introduction of pole spears and licenses to trained divers throughout the island. If you wish to participate in this project, please contact us, providing details on dive certification, port of work, etc.

Wrapping things up



Unidentified blob found near Barefoot Cay

Several weeks ago, workers at Barefoot Cay's found a 5 ft long and 9 inch wide purple transparent blob floating on the surface in front of the dock. After posting the photo on the web, we discovered that the object is actually a diamond squid egg mass, mostly seen in temperate waters and not in Honduran waters.



RMP stand at the Port of Roatan cruise ship terminal

With business being so slow at this very moment in time, we are very grateful for having a stand at Royal Caribbean's dock in Coxen Hole where we can sell our merchandise. Each day the ships arrive, we have a representative at the stand providing visitors with information on the Marine Park and stocking a variety of merchandise including t-shirts, tank tops, caps, mugs, and much more. We hope this extra revenue will help see us through this slow period.



New possibilities at Mahogany Bay

After making an agreement with Carnival, we have been provided with a small booth at the new Mahogany Bay cruise ship terminal. We have yet to begin selling our merchandise but intend to begin in the next few weeks. By having booths at both terminals, we hope to generate funds to assistance in the finance of more projects proposed for 2010.



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 1,300 fans. Recommend us to your friends and let's break that 1,500 mark!

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, West End and Barefoot Cay.

Grazzia, Nic, Sandy, and Licario
