

# Roatán Marine Park Newsletter

## November 2010 Highlights



### Patrols for the SBWEMR and South Side



There were a variety of incidents which happened both within and outside the Reserve these past few weeks. A diver from a yacht was found with speared fish, a boat was found with 50 lobsters, a 300+m net was confiscated.

### Yacht season off to a slow start



Yacht season has just begun, with boats slowly trickling in. However, even with only a few yachts, we have had several run-ins with owners. The moorings have been renovated and the paperwork altered to ensure no problems arise.

### New group teams up with the RMP



The Eco Rangers Club (ERC) is an initiative created by BICA and supported by the RMP. The project works with the youth of Sandy Bay and aims to educate kids about a variety of topics including the importance of Roatan's ecosystems.

### Second nest hatches near Coco View



On November the 27<sup>th</sup>, the second turtle nest hatched on Coco Beach. A total of 150 eggs were laid, with 140 actually hatching. We hope those turtles have a long life and that we will see them in the near future on our reefs.

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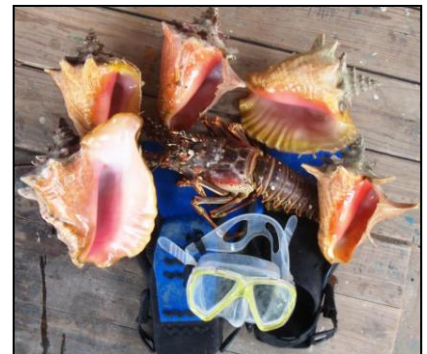
## Introduction

*With Christmas right around the corner, the RMP is breathing a sigh of relief for another slow season survived. The staff of the RMP has been busy this month with various projects and planning future ones for the New Year. During breaks in the weather, both Nic and Licario managed to renovate the moorings around the island. The schools begun vacation on the 15<sup>th</sup> so Grazzia used this time to focus on other projects, attend meetings, and go on inspections. We are also happy to announce that the Calendars for this year's photo competition have arrived and are for sale.*

## Patrols

### Sandy Bay West End Marine Park Patrols

This month there were five incidents resulting in the arrest of one individual. We received several reports about Luna poaching near Hobbies Hideaway and it was only a matter of time until we caught him. When we finally did, he was found in possession of 5 live conch and a dead lobster. His snorkel and mask were confiscated, the product was returned to the water, and Luna was imprisoned for 24 hours. On the same day, our patrols came across a boat anchored on the reef in Sandy Bay. Upon inspection, a large wooden speargun was found on board. The owner, a resident of Lawson Rock, claimed that the speargun was kept on board for self defense and was not onboard for any other purpose. The speargun was confiscated and given to DIGEPESCA, and the owner was fined for anchoring on the reef.



*Mask and fins, along with 5 large conch and a lobster confiscated in Sandy Bay*

### Problems with the yachts in West End



*Speargun confiscated from yacht in the West End mooring field*

In just one week there were 3 incidents involving yachts in West End, coincidentally all of them involving European owners. The first two incidents occurred on the same day in the yacht mooring field between West End and West Bay. While inspecting the yachts, our Park Ranger noticed several snorkelers near the shallow reef waving at a yacht. He then saw a person with a speargun climb into a dingy and head towards the snorkelers. Before any damage was done, our Ranger confiscated the speargun and told the owner to report to the office.

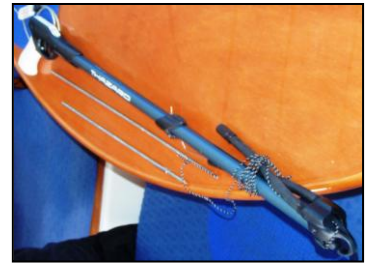
Several hours later a snorkeler from another sailboat was found swimming with two large conch. He was informed of the rules and told that he must register his vessel at the Marine Park office. It appears that even though the Reserve's regulations are posted all over the internet, visiting vessels are either ignoring them or are still uninformed. We have now stepped up supervision and enforcement and are improving the ways we disseminate information on the can and can't dos of the reserve.

On the last Sunday of November, the Marine Park received a call from Coconut Tree divers who had spotted a diver with a spear gun and bag of fish and videoed the culprit underwater. The divers belonged to the catamaran Quo Vadis which was tied to the El Aquario mooring near Half Moon Bay. For once everything seemed to fall into place. While the patrol boat was enroute, Reef Gliders lent Nick their boat to inspect the catamaran, still tied to El Aquario. Within minutes of the call, the boat was boxed in by the dive boat and the patrol boat.



*A still taken from a video clip of a diver spotted with speargun and bag of fish near the El Aquario mooring*

As we waited for all the divers to surface, the captain who had been reminded of the rules the day before denied any knowledge of his customers spear fishing. As the divers surfaced, we noticed all wore gloves (not permitted within the Reserve) and one had two large conch which he immediately dropped. It appeared that we'd arrived too late and the diver with the speargun had surfaced earlier. Since the Police are unable to search boats, we called upon the services of the Port Captain. After watching the video and photographic evidence provided by Coconut Tree, the Port Captain, three police officers, and a Park Ranger searched the catamaran.



*Damaged speargun found on board*



*The speared snapper found at El Aquario*

We found the speargun hidden in wet towels on board. The diver claimed he found it while diving but this was a complete lie and all evidence proved this. The captain of the vessel was told to report to the Port Captain's office the following morning. Meanwhile, divers from Coconut Tree returned to the scene of the crime and found the bag contacting the fish hidden under rocks by the mooring line. The next day, the captain of the boat still denied the crime yet agreed to make a donation to help maintain the yacht moorings and the guilty diver had all his dive gear confiscated. We hope that the story of this incident will circulate throughout the yachting community so others will think twice before breaking the rules.

### South side patrols



*300m net found near French Cay*

At the end of October, there were two incidents which were not mentioned in last month's newsletter. The first occurred when an early patrol near Parrot Tree discovered a man diving for lobsters. Approximately 50 lobsters of all sizes were confiscated, the boat was impounded for 72 hours, and the owner was jailed for 24 hours. The second incident involved a 300 meter long net in the lagoon behind Cocoview and Fantasy Island. Luckily



*Boat found with 50 lobsters on board*

our patrol found the net after it was just put in and managed to remove it before it had snared no more than just a few small fish. Thanks to the Frontier police who jumped in the water to help with the removal of the net. We would also thank Coco View for letting us use their bigger boat to remove the net.

This month was relatively quiet with just a few happenings. We received several reports of people poaching but upon inspection turned out to just be local fishermen using lines. Another incident resulted in the confiscation of a mask and spear. We took advantage of this lull to take the boat out of the water for a few days to repair the bottom, touch up the paint, and fix a few engine parts. Now we can say that the boat is looking good and running well, knock on wood.

## Education

### Diving Course Scholarships for Locals



*Kids experiencing their first dive*

We are happy to say that the RMP (in conjunction with several dive shops) is providing diving scholarships for locals. The project, which was on stand-by for more than a year, has been re-launched thanks to funds from PMAIB. Its purpose is to provide locals an alternative livelihood that would further incorporate them in the diving business. Local high school students who have shown exceptional interest in reef conservation are also eligible for similar scholarships. In November, the scholarships allowed the certifications of one EFR, one DiveMaster, and three open waters. We would like to invite dive shops interested in becoming a part of this project to contact us.

## Mangrove replanting in Mud Hole

It's very sad what's happened to many of the mangroves throughout Roatan, especially in Mud Hole and Corozal. Many have been cleared and destroyed in the name of development. Knowing the importance of this vital habitat to the wildlife of Roatan, the RMP gathered mangrove seedlings that had washed ashore in West Bay and Half Moon Bay during a storm. The RMP then brought children from the Toribio Bustillo School to help replant the seedlings in Mud Hole. The kids also committed to looking after them for the next few months and hopefully over the years this area will re-grow to its previous glory.



*Kids planting mangrove seedlings*

## Eco-rangers club



*Eco-ranger members by the collage at AKR*

The Eco Rangers Club (ERC) is an initiative created by BICA and supported by local organizations including the RMP. The project works with the youth of Sandy Bay and aims to educate kids about a variety of topics including the importance of the Bay Islands' ecosystems. The ERC also encourages community work and aims to create young leaders. The ERC meets at the Mazapan House in La Colonia every Saturday and Wednesday afternoon during school vacation and Saturdays and Sundays during normal school hours. The head of the ERC invited us to join the cause and we were happy to! We would like to thank our volunteer Torri Chronister for supporting the project on behalf of the RMP. If you are interested in joining this project, contact us or the head of the ERC, Mack

Yovanne at: [mackyovanne.bacabennett@yahoo.com](mailto:mackyovanne.bacabennett@yahoo.com)

## The Eco Rangers visit Maya Key!

The Eco-Rangers visited Maya Key to see the various inhabitants at the animal rescue center. There were 30 children in attendance on the first visit and 23 kids on the second visit. Among the many animals at Maya Key are Scarlet Macaws, parrots, sharks, sting rays, sea lions, an anteater, several wildcats including ocelots and a margay, turtles, snakes, crocodiles, and a few others. The children were especially excited to see the 3 species of monkeys and Zumo, the 3 year old jaguar. The staff was full of information on the animals and graciously guided the group through the cay. The eco rangers also explored the replicas of Mayan ruins and the museums. All enjoyed seeing and learning about the animals on this fun adventure. Once again, we would like to thank the director of the Rescue Center, Leo Lanza, and all those who made this possible.



*Eco-rangers at Maya Cay*

## West End School congratulates the RMP



The efforts made by the RMP in the West End School were recognized this past month in the closing ceremony for the school year. School principal Mrs. Reina Santamaria told guests of the work we've done with the school's children for the past 4 years and of the school improvements made possible with the funds from the yachts mooring program. We will continue supporting the school now that the sailboat season is almost here and the mooring fee will again be bringing in money.

## Mud Hole School Goes for Conservation!

As part of a community based project in Mud Hole, children from the Toribio Bustillo School were very busy this past month painting trash can holders that they had previously constructed. Hopefully the new colorful holders will grab people's attention and encourage them dispose of their trash properly, helping keep the reef and mangroves clean!



*Colorful trash receptacles in Mud Hole*

## Meetings and workshops

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### Visit from WWF to the RMP

Alicia Medina of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) visited the RMP this past month. The purpose was to discuss activities regarding the Cordelia Banks in the coming year and how the RMP and the WWF can join efforts to ensure better protection for the area. A meeting was also held with BICA to discuss the different conservation initiatives. Hopefully the New Year will bring increased efforts to protect Roatan's precious resources.



### New Fisheries Law



The Fisheries Law is currently under revision and a consultant has been hired by the government to be in charge of this task. A meeting was held between RMP managers and Mr. Bernal Chavarría from OSPESCA (Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector) at the office in West End to discuss concerns with the current law and important items to be included in the new law. According to the Fisheries Department the new law should accomplish the following objectives:

- a. It should be modern, practical, transparent, and integrative.
- b. Must promote associative efforts between the public and private sectors in order to obtain competitive benefits for fishermen, people involved in aquaculture and industrial fisheries.
- c. Must guarantee a top quality positioning of the national product in national and international markets.

### Reforestation Project

To further the development of the nursery and reforestation projects at local schools, the RMP enlisted the help of the I.C.F (Honduran Institute of Forestry Conservation and Development). Jose Luis Ramos, the ICF designated expert, has worked very hard along with the RMP this past month. Among other activities, three schools (Santos Guardiola, ESBIR and Methodist) were visited to assess their orientation, size, needs, and other relevant factors for successful nurseries. We also visited the Robert Stanley School in Sandy Bay to assess the location for tree replantation. The aim is to reforest the school grounds to provide shade to the children on sunny days and to stabilize the soil which has suffered a lot of erosion from a lack of trees. To ensure that we use only native species, the RMP conducted a study using specialized books, reports, and information on local tree populations. We also went on long walks in several areas including Carambola Botanic Garden to document the species. We would to thank all the teachers involved in the project and give a special thanks to Jose Luis Ramos for all his efforts and enthusiasm.



*Specialist from ICF GPSing the proposed site*

### Public Awareness

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#### Coral Reef Leadership Network



*Teachers from Arobia Welcome on the GGB*

As part of the field activities developed with the CRLN, a group of teachers from the Arobia Welcome School in Los Fuertes were taken to meet the reef on board the Glass Bottom Boat. It was the first time for most of them and they were extremely excited. The teachers were especially interested in seeing conch and were happy to see so many in the seagrass beds on the way back to the dock. We hope to expand the CRLN project and present the opportunity for more groups to see the reef using the glass bottom boat. Thanks as always to John for allowing us to use his boat.

## Inspections

### Marine Inspection for La Selva Eco-Resort Project

The local SINEIA (Sistema Nacional de Evaluacion de Impacto Ambiental) is a group composed of staff from BICA, the Municipality of Roatan, ZOLITUR and the RMP. As mentioned in last month's newsletter, a denuncia against La Selva Eco-Resort in Sandy Bay was presented by the SINEIA for the illegal building of 3.1 km peripheral road as well as other roads inside their property. This month, the SINEIA made another visit to La Selva Eco-Resort this time with officials from SERNA to evaluate the damage. Once all the data is considered, SERNA will make a final decision in the case and issue a fine to the developers.

### Desalination Plant

A proposal for the installation of a desalination plant in West Bay was presented to SERNA and an inspection was made to the site. The plant intends to collect 250,000-500,000 gallons on sea water per day and provide potable water to around 10,000 people. A major concern with this project is what so do with the salt that is left behind in the desalination process. The company is proposing to use long pipes with diffusers to return it to the ocean far away from the reef.



Site in West Bay for the proposed desalination plant

## Wrapping up



### Donation of Garbage Bins for Sandy Bay School

A total of 4 garbage cans (2 for trash and 2 for recycling of PET bottles) were donated to the "Roberto Stanley" School in Sandy Bay by the RMP. The cans were purchased with funds from PMAIB and were painted by Malika.



### Turtles hatching on the second nest

On November the 27<sup>th</sup>, the second turtle nest hatched on Coco Beach. Since the hatching took place around 1 am, the owners of the land decided not to interfere with the hatchlings. A total of 150 eggs were laid, with 140 actually hatching. We hope those turtles have a long life and that we will see them in the near future.



### 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](#).



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*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

