

Roatán Marine Park Newsletter

October 2010 Highlights



Close call with Hurricane Richard



With 19 named hurricanes so far this season, it certainly has been a stormy year. Though predicted to hit Roatan head on, we were fortunate that Cat 1. Hurricane Richard skirted north and caused little damage other than downed trees and power lines.

Patrols for the SBWEMR



While there were no arrests, our Park Rangers with the assistance of both the National and Municipal Police confiscated masks and fins, seahorses, dead lobster and fish, and rerelease 18 live conch.

Turtle release



136 green turtle hatchlings were successfully released after watchmen on a property in First Bight reported two nests. The turtles were safely kept for 24hrs and then at nightfall, released to swim off to the unknown.

Lionfish update



Even with over 100 licensed lionfish hunters around the island actively spearing every day, their frequency and size has skyrocketed. So much that it's almost viable for fishermen to begin solely targeting this species. Educating islanders is now the key!!

Quickly...

- Introduction ... page 2
- SBWEMP patrol ... page 2
- Municipal Police patrolling in West Bay... page 2
- Infrastructure ... page 2
- Visit to Maya Cay ... page 3
- E-learning center... page 3
- Glass bottom boat ... page 3
- Youth enviro. club ...page 3
- Coastal marine national action plan ... page 4
- Port of Roatan ... page 4
- School principles involved with the RMP ...page 4
- Cordelia Banks... page 4
- CRLN program... page 5
- Green turtle release...page 5
- Crocodiles around the island ...page 5
- Lionfish video ... page 6
- La Selva Eco-Resort inspection ... page 6
- Wrapping up ...page 6

Introduction

Even though every diver that dives within the SBWEMR hates northerlies, they are actually a vital part of reef health. Though the heavy rains flood the lagoons with sediment, the waves help remove the algae which smothers the coral during the warm months. Hurricanes and northerlies may be an inconvenience to many of us, but to the environment it helps promote change. We all hope that this will be the last of the bad weather, but everyone knows in reality it's just started. Hope you enjoy reading the newsletter in the rain!

Patrols

Sandy Bay West End Marine Park Patrols



Confiscated mask, fins, fish and lobster

This month there were several incidents but none led to an arrest. The first involved a 19 year old caught in Sandy Bay with 5 fish, a lobster, and a conch. Rather than imprison him for 24 hrs, community service was deemed more suitable as there was so much trash in the area. Ten full black garbage bags later, we feel he learned his lesson and given enough back to the community. The next occurrence involved two men caught around Man of War Cay



Trash washed-up on Sandy Bay's beaches

with 5 lobsters. As they were beyond the SBWEMR's boundaries, the lobster and their mask were confiscated and the men sent on their way. While there were few incidents, we received numerous reports of poaching around Mangrove Bight, Tom Fools Bight, Gibson Bight, Blue Channel, and to the east and west of Anthony's Key Resort. A local fisherman managed to scare off poachers in Tom Fools Bight and recovered 18 conchs which were relocated. We ask that you keep reporting by phone, email, or radio any suspicious goings on to enable us to improve our efficiency and results.

Municipal Police assisting in controlling boat traffic in West Bay



Ranger with Municipal Policeman

For almost a year we've asked the Municipal Police for assistance in controlling boat congestion in West Bay during cruise ship days. We're happy to say that we finally have their support and for the past 2 months have been controlling boat traffic in West Bay which consists of water taxis, banana boats, and fishermen. Speeding boats, reckless driving, boats on the beach, overcrowded channels, and illegal vendors



Dried seahorses confiscated from beach vendors

are all issues our Park Rangers face in West Bay. We feel the involvement of the municipal police will enable us to better control these problems. The advantage of the Municipal Police is that they can impose fines on boat drivers disrespecting the law and control the vendors selling on the beach, especially those with seahorses, conch shells, and other marine curios.

Infrastructure

Maintaing the moorings and swim zone

With one northerly after the other, and then Hurrican Richard, it's been a hard few weeks for the marine infrastructure. What has probably been damaged the most is the swim zone in West Bay with 2 channel markers being destroyed and several of the lines coming loose Once the weather clears we intend to fix the swim zone, and replace any missing moorings and markers.



Education

Children from Mud Hole School visit Maya Key!

The kids from the Mud Hole School are incredible; they are enthusiastic, responsible, and have a thirst for knowledge. They are always so excited to help the RMP and are so interested in everything we teach them. The RMP thought that the kids deserved a reward after doing such a great job cleaning Mud Hole's creek prior to the heavy rains. Thanks to Maya Key, the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders from the school spent a fabulous afternoon learning about birds, wild cats, reptiles, monkeys, and more. They also got to see the replica of the Mayan ruins on the key. We would like to thank all those who made this possible and director Leo Lanza for such a great tour.



The kids from Mud Hole School at Maya Cay

Sandy Bay e-learning Center goes for Turtle Conservation!



Kids at the E-learning Center being taught about turtle reproduction

The e-learning center in Sandy Bay has been teaching its students about conservation for some time. However some of the kids were still confused about some details. Many thought female turtles stay onshore to protect their nests like their reptilian cousins, alligators and crocodiles. To answer their questions and clarify the process, the RMP visited the e-learning center and taught 18 children all about turtles. The children had a fun afternoon learning about the events from the turtle's pregnancy all the way through the hatching of the eggs. After a small lecture they were split into teams to test their listening skills. Each team had to organize the steps a turtle goes through, from nest building until the hatchlings reach the ocean. The teams that got the order correctly won a Marine Park Frisbee. They loved it!

Instituto Santos Guardiola visits Flowers Bay's Reefs

This month, the education program focused primarily on high school students. The RMP visited the Instituto Santos Guardiola in Coxen Hole and taught 20 teenagers who were studying tourism at the institute. The Coral Reef Leadership Network joined the RMP on the visit as the students intend to enter the tourism industry after they graduate. The students were given important lectures and then, even though there was a northerly that day, they were taken on the Glass Bottom Boat to have a close encounter with the reef in Flowers Bay.



Great views of the reef on the GBB

Many thanks to John from the Glass Bottom Boat for supporting us so much!

Youth Environmental Club



Meeting at the Santos Guardiola School

Integrated by students from Instituto Santos Guardiola, the Youth Environmental Club formed by the RMP earlier this year is being very active. From plastic bottle separation and collection, to brainstorming for the tree nurseries and more involvement in diving, these kids are very committed to the environment. As school comes to an end in mid November, kids will get very busy doing their Open Water Course. Besides providing a reward to the group for all their hard work these past months, we are happy to get more young people into diving, providing them a closer encounter with the reef and the first step to the possibility of dedicating their life to the diving business.

Meetings and workshops

National Workshop to develop Strategies and Activities of the Coastal Marine National Action Plan

Representatives from several government institutions, NGOs, and other organizations met in La Ceiba this month for a national workshop. The goal was to work on the revision and validation of the Proposal for Priority Sites of Conservation of the Honduran Caribbean and on the elaboration of strategies and activities for the National Action Plan for coastal marine management. The event, hosted by The Nature Conservancy, brought people from the Caribbean coast of Honduras, the Bay Islands, and Tegucigalpa to go over the proposal. Finally, participants worked in groups to identify the strategies and activities required for the elaboration of the National Action Plan.



Coastal Marine National Action Plan meeting

Port of Roatan



Overhead of the POR cruise ship dock

The Port of Roatan started operations in April 2006. The project has two phases with phase 1 coming to an end in January 2009. The second phase has recently begun and includes the filling in of 8,900m² (25,800 ft²) of shallow reef to the west of the dock, construction of 4 buildings for commercial and customer service establishments, construction of an 88 room hotel, and improvements to increase the dock's berthing capacity. For these



Plans for phase 2 of construction

activities, an environmental license has been issued by SERNA and a resolution containing the compensation and mitigation measures for this project has been approved. A meeting was held with the environmental manager of the project and representatives from BICA, the RMP Municipality, and ZOLITUR for updates on the project and further actions. A coral transplant plan is part of the mitigation measures for the filling activities and details concerning its implementation were part of the meeting's agenda.

Coral Reef Leadership Network

October was a busy month for the CRLN program. Leaders Juan Valla and Artley Brooks reached several more groups and have broadened our borders. This month we included high school and university students studying tourism, water taxis drivers from West End and Oak Ridge, tour guides, and teachers in our program. The CRLN will continue to focus on teachers and students in the coming months. Our goal is to reach every teacher so that they can share their new environmentally friendly knowledge with their students.



CRLN representative meeting with teachers in Coxen Hole

Visit to the Cordelia Banks



100% coral cover at the Cordelia Banks

Staff from CORAL, Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza TNC, and USAID/MAREA paid a visit to the Cordelia Banks off Roatán's southern coast. Visitors were amazed at how healthy the coral was and how many species were found on the Banks. The purpose of the visit was to show everyone the healthy, rich habitat in hopes of obtaining more support from international agencies for proper management of the area. A meeting was later held to talk about the RMP's programs, sources of funding, and achievements.

Schools' Principals Involved with Marine Park Projects



Prof. Oscar Lemus from Methodist School inspecting the land for the tree nursery

Thanks to funding provided by PMAIB, the RMP is developing new projects to implement in the island's schools. Our volunteer Alejandro López has been busy holding meetings with principals and students from the Methodist School, ESBIR and Instituto Santos Guardiola to discuss these projects. One of the projects is the construction of 3 nurseries containing native tree species. These trees will be used to reforest degraded areas. The Sandy Bay Public School was also visited and asked to identify the needs of the school. As per their wishes, four garbage bins (2 exclusively for recycling and the other for garbage) will be donated. Finally, as part of the CRLN, a meeting was also held with director of the Departamental de Educación, Professor Juan Carlos Cardona, to plan the integration of high school and elementary teachers into the target groups of the CRLN.

Conservation

Green turtle hatchlings released in First Bight



136 green turtle hatchlings safely released near their fenced off nest on a beach in First Bight. The baby turtles crawled safely to the shore and swam away

In mid October, we received a phone call from a watchman for a property in First Bight. He informed the RMP that there were two turtle nests on the property and one nest had hatched the previous night. 137 hatchlings emerged from the nest around 8pm the night band the watchman had safely stored them in a cayuco to ensure no birds, crabs or dogs ate them. The two nests had been fenced off immediately after the eggs were laid to prevent anything from disturbing them during incubation. Waiting till nightfall, representatives from the RMP, BICA and Zolitur, as well as some bystanders, assisted in the release. The nesting site locations were recorded on a GPS and forwarded to [ProTECTOR](#) who will document the hatching. To see more photos on the release, please visit our [facebook page](#).



The 136 hatchlings in the cayuco

What to do with the crocodiles around the island?



Crocodile nestled in the mangroves in Gibson Bight

Within the Reserve there are several 5-6ft crocs in both Mangrove and Gibson Bight. One of them has even been seen swimming inside the lagoon to the west on Half Moon Bay during the early hours of the morning. In Camp Bay, there have been many incidents of crocodiles attacking the local dogs. With one crocodile estimated to be 10ft, they pose a threat not only to pets but to children. Relocation is a nice idea in theory but scientists have discovered that crocodiles can swim hundreds of miles back to their origin. Unfortunately the farthest spot we could safely relocate them here is to the mangroves in Helen which is only 30 miles away. Sadly, many people think the only solution is to kill them. The RMP has been fruitlessly brainstorming ideas and searching for better alternative for months. If

you have any suggestions, please contact us before it is too late.

Public Awareness

Lionfish video

Funded by Native Son's Dive Shop, a [new video](#) will be used as an educational tool to teach people on the island about the lionfish. The short video, in both Spanish and English, explains what lionfish are and how to prepare them. Around the island there is a lot of stigma about the lionfish with many locals misinformed about this invasive species. The video clearly states that the spines are the only dangerous part of the fish and shows how to safely clean and cook them. The video will be aired on local TV to raise awareness with the intention of educating people that the lionfish is a good alternative to other reef fish. With so many lionfish around the island it seems that it's almost economically viable for fishermen to solely hunt this species.



A load of lionfish caught on a dive and later made into a tasty ceviche

Inspections

La Selva Eco-Resort in Sandy Bay



Roads cut into the property without permits

The Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental (SINEIA) of Roatan is comprised of representatives from BICA, the Municipality of Roatan, ZOLITUR, and the RMP. Its purpose is to inspect new developments and give recommendations to the government and developers on how to proceed with minimal environmental impact. SINEIA was called to attend an inspection for a new project called La Selva Eco-Resort located near Sandy Bay. The developers are requesting an environmental license to allow them to legally build. The inspection was not possible due to an unresolved denuncia on the developers from last March. The denuncia was presented by the local SINEIA for the construction of a 3.1 km peripheral road, as well as other roads within the area without any permits. Once the Fiscalía, Environmental Prosecutor, SERNA, and ICF give a verdict on the denuncia, a new inspection will be re-scheduled. The project will remain on stand-by until then.

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 3,100 fans. Recommend us to your friends and let's break that 3,250 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.roatanlifelvacationrentals.com or +504-445-3130 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.

Grazia, Nic, Cesy and Licario

