

Roatán Marine Park Newsletter

April 2011



Patrol summary



Several incidents occurred this month with one resulting in imprisonment. 6 masks were confiscated along with 3 sets of fins, 4 spears, 6 live conch and 1 fish. Anchoring was also an issue, especially at the point in West Bay with the Jimmy Jr.

Marine Infrastructure



The dive moorings received some focus this month with 6 new cement chain groundings installed on the south shore. In the SBWEMR, Pillar Coral was reset and there were also 2 new dive sites called “the Wife” just east of Hole in the Wall and “Hole in the Wallet” at the sand patch near Over Heat created.

Education



Of the 250 kids we visited this month, 43 of them from schools and communities throughout the SBWEMR were fortunate enough to take a closer look at the reef. If your school wishes to participate in our environmental programs, please contact us.

Mangrove Inspections and more



We discovered 5 illegal mangrove cuts located in AKR's Bailey's Key, Mud Hole, Gibson Bight, and Flower's Bay. The reef also took a beating from 4 boats that ran aground. The most disastrous took place in front of Parrot Tree. The other three occurred during Semana Santa in West End and West Bay. Please call the RMP immediately if you witness any illegal activities such as these.

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Introduction

This month a host of illegal activities occurred including boat groundings, anchor damage, mangrove cuts, and illegal developments. Though the Marine Park investigates, inspects, and reports each environmental crime that comes to our attention, it is up to the FISCALIA to penalize the wrong doers. This means that many of these crimes go unpunished. Sadly, this is the truth about how things work in Honduras. While you, the residents of the island, may feel disheartened that people get away with such crimes, we can assure you that it pains us much more when we file reports and attend meeting and inspections, yet nothing ever happens. All we can do is continue to find and report these activities and push the authorities to act accordingly. Also, if you suspect illegal activities occurring, report it as soon as possible so we can prevent any further damages.

Patrol

Sandy Bay West End Marine Park Patrols



The far end of West Bay jammed full of visitors and boats during Semana Santa

Our Patrols spent a lot of the first half of April preparing for Semana Santa. The biggest undertaking was working with the Port Captain to bring as many boats as possible up to standard. The Port Captain spent most of the week on our boats ensuring water taxis and other vessels were registered, had adequate life jackets on board, and captains were aware of speed restriction areas. While there were some confrontations, violations of the speed restrictions, and the odd water taxis collecting starfish to show their passengers in Sandy Bay, no life threatening incidents occurred.

In regards to confiscations and arrests, there were only three recorded incidents with one resulting in imprisonment. The first was in Tom Fools Bight, a small bight just West of Gibson Bight, where 3 kids were found with masks and a spear. As they had no fish, lobster or conch, they had their spear and masks confiscated, but weren't subjected to further punishment. The individual sentenced to 24 hours in jail was caught in Sandy Bay with 6 live conch and a speared fish. The final incident involved a large fishing vessel from Coxen Hole called the Jimmy Jr. which was found anchored at the point in West Bay. This was the second consecutive day that the vessel had anchored in this location and the Police informed the captain if found again anchoring anywhere within the Park, he would be fined.



Confiscated mask and fins

South Side Patrols



Haul confiscated when Nick was working on infrastructure

The patrols on the Southside had a mixed month of patrolling due to weather. Some days were so windy and rough that the boat could not patrol. There were a handful of really calm days though that allowed our boat to patrol past Oakridge. On one of these days, Nick commandeered the patrol boat to work on renovating the marine infrastructure. While en-route to install new dive moorings in Oakridge, we passed several individuals spear fishing. This resulted in the confiscation of 2 sets of fins, 3 masks, and 3 spears but no arrests. We have been discussing with residents of Calabash, Oak Ridge and Old Port Royal about

assigning a patrol boat to monitor the region as they are extremely concerned about the amount of poaching occurring in the area. We hope to meet with residents in the coming weeks to discuss how to proceed with this course of action as while we currently have support from the National Police stationed in Oak Ridge, all we need now is a boat, a captain and a continuous source of funding.

Infrastructure

Swim zones installed in both Half Moon Bays



Swim zone in Half Moon Bay, West End

Due to an ever increasing amount of boat and swimmer traffic, the Patronato of West End requested that the RMP install a swim zone in Half Moon Bay. Using funds from the mandatory yacht mooring fee, we were able to install the new feature just in time for Semana Santa. The area now provides a secure enclosure for divers conducting confined Open Water exercises, bathers, and snorkelers. The swim zone will be a permanent feature but will be temporarily removed during rainy season's northerlies. We also installed a swim zone in the other Half Moon Bay near Parrot Tree. A new resort, Media Luna, was concerned for their guests' safety and requested the RMP install a swim zone.

Renovation of dive moorings on the South Side

This month saw a large improvement of the dive moorings between Media Luna and Oak Ridge. In total 6 new groundings were installed at Half Moon Bay Wall, Pond View Wall, Caribe Point, Casablanca, Crab Wall, and Reef House Wall. While maintaining the moorings, we were stunned to still see that a large number of the moorings were simply pieces of chain wrapped around coral. The aim for the next few months is to replace all these moorings with cement chain groundings, and where necessary, install galvanized wire rope to prevent people from stealing the rope and buoys.



Location of the renovated moorings between Media Luna and Oak Ridge

Education

Kick start of the RMP's Education Program

This month with the help of two volunteers we were able to give presentations to over 200 high school kids from the Methodist school in just one day. The topic was the management of sewage and solid waste, which continues to be a serious problem on the island and efforts to properly manage it continue to be unsatisfactory. So far this year, the RMP has managed to give presentations to 625 kids in schools from Punta Gorda, Brick Bay, French Harbor, and Coxen Hole. Now that our Director of Education, Wendy, has returned we hope to exceed our goal to reach 3500 children this year.



Volunteer presenting to kids on waste management

Kids from within the Marine Park visit the Reef



Kids having a great day on the glass bottom boat

This month, 43 kids got a closer look at the reef in West Bay aboard the Glass Bottom Boat. Children from Sandy Bay Alternative School's Preschool and 1st grade saw many interesting animals when they went on aboard. Also children from West End and Sandy Bay schools had the opportunity to enjoy the corals on a trip during Semana Santa. We would like to thank the boat's owner, John Carusoe, for supporting environmental education of children on Roatan. We are sure these experiences will remain in kids' minds for years to come.

Children from Discovery Bay learn about the Reef!

The RMP visited the little kids from Discovery Bay in Sandy Bay. During the visit, we read them the story “A Tropical Fable” and took them on a virtual snorkel. It was great having the kids imagine the wonderful journey as they travel through the reef as the majority of them were too young to get in the water. The kids now are aware of the importance of reef and mangrove conservation. The following week, we took them aboard the Glass Bottom Boat in West Bay where they saw a record breaking 4 turtles!



Grazzia presenting a virtual snorkel tour

Recycling in the Schools



Recycling bin outside the RMP office in W.E

The RMP has been working with the Guardiola and Arobia Welcome schools on a plastic bottling recycling program. Unfortunately, the program continues to run into logistical problems including transportation of the bottles and receiving payment from the deposits. Therefore, the RMP has decided to choose two new schools to continue the project, one from the Municipality of Roatán and the other from Santos Guardiola. The schools will sell the bottles and hopefully the project will become self sustaining. Our goal is to integrate as many schools as possible.

In other recycling news, we are happy to announce the return of the recycling bins in front of the Marine Park Office in Half Moon Bay. Please drop your plastic bottles and aluminum cans by to help reduce the amount of trash on our island and in the ocean. We also intend to install new bins at the cruise ship dock stands.

Inspections

Disastrous grounding in the South side

Sadly, in the early hours of April 5th, a boat coming from La Ceiba into Parrot Tree’s marina missed the channel and drove directly into the reef south of the resort. The RMP was immediately contacted and sent members of Roatan’s CSI for Coral Reefs team to the site that afternoon. Several corals were completely destroyed and an area of approximately 100m² or 900ft² affected. Due to strong winds and large waves, the CSI team had to return several days later to complete the investigation. Despite all the documented damage, the FISCALIA did not wish to follow up on the case. No fines or penalties have been assessed to the boat’s owner or Captain, who was suspected of being under the influence at the time.



The vessel “3D take’n me away” crushing the shallow reef in front of Parrot Tree Plantation

More mangrove cuts



Mangroves completely destroyed

With demand for waterfront properties increasing on the island, so too does the number of mangrove cuts. Five mangrove cuts were discovered this month, at AKR’s Bailey’s Key, Gibson Bight, and Flower’s Bay, and 2 in Mud Hole. The RMP and a representative from the DGIC made a visit to the sites where cuts occurred. After the Fiscalia and DGIC failed to act on three denuncias regarding the cuts, a meeting was held with representatives from BICA, ZOLITUR, the Municipality of Roatan, and the RMP to discuss what strategies we can implement to avoid letting these denuncias remain unpunished. Hopefully something will actually be done now to those responsible for these environmental crimes.

Groundings during Semana Santa

Semana Santa is that week of the year when hoards of people who have little knowledge of and no concern for our reef flock to Roatan from the mainland and elsewhere in Central America. This means it's the time when more accidents on the reef occur. There were three boat groundings in West Bay (2 in one day!) and another outside Half Moon Bay. One of the boats that ran aground in West Bay was actually being captained by the same man that ran the boat aground outside Parrot Tree earlier this month. Hard to believe, but no further action has been taken against him by our authorities.



The vessel 3D take'n me away being towed off the coral in West Bay



Boat's propeller found in West Bay

The grounding of two boats in less than a month should result in the revocation of his Captains License. The Port Captain is the authority responsible for assessing fines and compensatory measures for all boats that run aground or drop anchor on the reef. Unfortunately, all we can do is report the damage to him and hope that the appropriate measures are taken. The grounding that took place in Half Moon Bay was just east of the channel and minimal damage was done to the reef. Even though the captain was requested to report to the RMP office the next morning, he disappeared two days later, but until ripping out Atlantic Sea Divers mooring by Half Moon Bay's dock.

Parrot Tree proposing to build a mega yacht marina

Parrot Tree Plantation wants to build a mega yacht marina in First Bight, which would have 60 slips for boats as long as 100m in length. They are also planning to build a gas station, mini-mall, and bank adjacent to the marina. The SINEIA (Evaluation and Assessment Impact National System) joined by members of the Santos Guardiola Municipality, Tourist Honduran Institute (IHT), Secretary of Environmental and Natural Resources(SERNA) and RMP went to the proposed building site to do a terrestrial and underwater inspection. The inspection proved that the proposed site is an inappropriate place for this kind of project as coral and seagrass will have to be dredged



Area proposed for a mega yacht marina in First Bight

Public Awareness

Launch of the 2011 Underwater Photo Competition



The cover shot from this year's RMP calendar

We are happy to announce the launch of the 2011 RMP underwater photo competition. To ensure that we have the 2012 calendar on the shelves by October, we will be hosting the competition slightly earlier this year, with the contest beginning May 18th and finishing Friday June 17th. Similar to previous years, participants can enter a maximum of 6 photos which must fall into either of these categories: Black and White, macro, reef inhabitants, divers, invertebrates and conservation in action. With each photo, we ask that you identify the category in which you wish the photo be entered under and that you name it. We look forward to seeing your favorite underwater photos from around Roatan and hope that this year we receive even more entries.

RMP celebrating its 6th birthday

The RMP celebrated its 6th birthday on April 9th at BananaRama Resort in West Bay. Just like previous years, we had an all day buffet with smoked pig and other great food, a bar manned by Caroline who slaved away all day to keep you hydrated, a raffle with dozens of great prizes and a superb auction which managed to raise over \$3,500. We would like to say a huge thanks to BananaRama for hosting the event, all the business who kindly donated to the event, those that helped make the day the success it was, especially Caroline for organizing and cooking, and of course all our supporters who attended. A special thanks to William Crisp and Stu Cook who kept our auction alive and won the privilege of naming their own dive sites, as well as a host of other prizes.



The RMP in Nat Geo News: Shark's Lionfish Lunch

According to photographer Antonio Busiello who started the idea of giving sharks a taste for lionfish, the alien reef species, "if these predators start to see lionfish as prey, eventually, in time the lionfish may be kept under control as a part of the ecosystem." This initiative which is being supported by the RMP was described in Nat Geo's Daily News from April 4th. The article also describes the great efforts the RMP is doing for reef conservation in Roatan. To view the article, please go to the following address:



<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/03/pictures/110404-sharks-lionfish-alien-fish-invasive-species-science/>

Wrapping things up



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 3,750 fans. Recommend us to your friends and let's break that 3,900 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 +504-2445-3130 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.

*Crazzia, Nic, Wendy
Arlene and Cesy*

