



Roatán Marine Park Newsletter

June 2012

Patrols get back on track

With two new additions to our Park Rangers its been a busy few months and we've managed to confiscate several gill and turtle nets, over a dozen spears and gaffs, along with over 20 masks and sets of fins. In total 15 individuals were jailed.



Yacht mooring field closed

Under Municipal order, the RMP was forced to remove the yacht mooring buoys within the field between West End and West Bay. Reasons for the removal included concerns regarding vessels dumping sewage and trash, as well as poaching and disturbing the turtles residing in the area. This is a blow to our organization as we had been managing that area for several years and been raising funds for both us and the community.



New educational material available

Through funding from CORAL and PMAIB, we were able to produce almost 1,000 posters to educate visitors and locals on environmental matters. The 4 designs contain information on how to be a responsible visitor, what projects the RMP undertake, the recent updates to the lionfish hunting program, and the purpose of protecting the Cordelia Banks. In addition, a 1,000 brochures were also printed and distributed with funds from CORAL.



Cordelia Bank finally declared

After much hard work, ICF have finally declared the Cordelia Bank, a 17km² of almost pristine reef, a site of environmental importance. This will enable conservation groups to receive funding and help manage this final refuge for several *Acropora* species.



Quickly...

- Introduction ... page 2
- Introducing our new office staff Marta, Christi and Giaco ... page 2
- Changes to our Park Rangers ... page 2
- New boat patrolling Coxen Hole ... page 3
- Turtle butchered in Sandy Bay ... page 3
- Turtles hunted on Roatan's East end ... page 3
- Yacht moorings closed down by Municipality ... page 4
- Schools celebrate World Oceans Day... page 4
- Diamonds International help with cleanup ... page 4
- Cordelia Bank finally protected ... page 5
- New posters funded by CORAL ... page 5
- Photo competition ... page 5
- New environmental posters available ... page 6
- Wrapping things up... page 6
- Contact us... page 6

Introduction

The Roatan Marine Park has been subjected to numerous staff changes in the past 12 months with a total of 5 office workers leaving in this short time. For the time being we will be operating without an Executive Director, however each member of our managerial staff will be responsible for their allocated roles which include Marine Infrastructure, Community Development, Patrols, Roatan's South Side, and Administration. Below is an introduction to our new staff.

Our New staff



Marta Mac Pui is our new office administrator and has a bachelor's degree in Market Economy and Tourist Services and a Masters in International Relationships. During her studies she'd been interested in environmental issues and their related sustainable practices. She'd always been concerned about the impacts of the tourism industry on Roatan's economic, environmental, and cultural aspects and the sustainable practices so far implemented. She is thrilled to work with the RMP as she believes that Roatan's environmental and cultural heritages must be conserved for future generations.



Christianne Etches is our Community Development Coordinator and has lived on and off Roatan since childhood. She became a PADI diving instructor in 2008, but as time went by she realized that this environment that she loved so much was in danger. In 2009 she became a Coral Reef Leader as part of the Coral Reef Leadership Network and discovered it was the perfect way to do some conservation work in between diving. In 2010 she participated in a CORAL REEF CSI course, which was a combination of her two loves; criminology and diving. It was one of those 'light bulb' moments; she could dive and save the planet at the same time! From that day on she focused her time and effort on conservation and she is now our liaison for the communities around Roatan.



Giaco Palavicini is our new Southside Director (**3147-5633**) and has a bachelor's degree in Oceanology. He has been working with sharks since 2000 in Mexico, California, South Africa and Honduras. He moved to Roatan in 2005 and has been here ever since. He is the founder of [Shark Legacy Project](#), a Roatan based organization that played a key part in the declaration of Honduras as a shark sanctuary. He is a 2012 leader in the Liderazgo SAM program. He is also a PADI Master Instructor. With his love for the ocean he chose to make a life as both a diver and a conservationist and will be a great addition, along with our other new members to the RMP team.

Patrol Program

Changes to our Patrolling staff



Conch and lobster confiscated near Bare-Foot Bar in West End

Not only has our office been subjected to some staff changes, but we've made one or two alterations to our Park Rangers. The introduction of 2 new Rangers provided us with immediate results and a total of 21 masks and 16 pairs of fins were confiscated and 15 persons were sent to jail. Several of the cases were literally in our front yard when Rangers found people poaching in West End. Our Director of Patrols, Barie Jackson (**3147-5636**), feels that with the new Rangers we are getting to grips with the increased level of poaching which has been occurring since cruise ship season has slowed down. With fewer tourists, we've noticed that people having been heading to the water more regularly and not simply to cool down from the scorching weather.

Patrols monitoring the waters around Coxen Hole and Cordelia



Conch and lobster confiscated in Coxen Hole

A recent change to our patrols has been the addition of a second patrol boat on the south side to monitor the waters around the Cordelia Bank. From recent confiscations and arrests, it has highlighted the need to assign a vessel to the area to prevent poaching. One day we received an anonymous tipoff of a dory coming to shore in Coxen Hole with 4 men with snorkel gear and product. With the police station just round the corner, they were the first to arrive on the scene and arrest the guilty party. These guys were well equipped with 2 large spear guns and 2 gaff spears, along with masks, fins and knives. Unfortunately the 10 adult lobsters were dead, however the 5 large conchs were still alive and released into a conch pen in West End which is part of a breeding program operated by some expats.

Turtle butchered in Sandy Bay



Butchered juvenile green turtle in a bucket

Most of the time while our Rangers are out patrolling, they expect to find people with only spears or gaffs, collecting lobster, conch and fish. Every now and then however, they come across scenes involving other marine organisms. This case was one of our more grizzly and involved a juvenile green turtle. During a northerly, we received a report of a man butchering a turtle near Anthony's Key in Sandy Bay. The man was swiftly apprehended by Police and brought to the office. His excuse was that he hadn't personally caught the turtle and someone else had brought it to him. He said it was alive when delivered but he kindly put it out of its misery. As he was over 60, we knew the Police would do very little with the case, so accompanied by the FISCAL, we set about finding the culprit. As expected the guilty party was no where to be found when they returned to the area and the old man was duly released by the FISCALIA due to lack of evidence. This case sadly highlights the

fact that the RMP needs to employ its own personal prosecutor when it comes to environmental crimes.

Turtles being hunted on the east end

With turtle mating season taking place between March and May, during those months our office receives numerous calls from concerned people living on the east end. While turtles are mating and splashing about on the surface, it's very easy for fishermen to grab them. According to reports, fishermen were collecting turtles between Punta Gorda and Helene, and some days there were dozens of boats out hunting. Even though Roatan's east end is beyond our normal boundaries, to prevent turtles from finding their way onto the dinner plate, our staff will do whatever necessary. Rather than having to rely on other people for transport, we stationed one of patrol boats at Turquoise Bay. Even though we never came across any fishermen with turtles while patrolling, we were informed that people knew we were operating and our presence was acting as a deterrent. One person who's been involved in turtle conservation in Camp Bay is Jimmy who owns La Sirena. He has a small turtle pen at his restaurant and buys turtles from fishermen which are destined to be butchered. While some view this as counter productive, his efforts have certainly made a difference. While he usually waits for storms to release the turtles on that end of the island, it was decided that the 3 hawksbill turtles he had in his pen should be taken down to West End where the waters are safer. The turtles were measured and numbered and released in front of a large crowd in Half Moon Bay. For photos of the event, please view our [Facebook page](#).



The 3 turtles transported from Camp Bay to West End for release

Infrastructure

Yacht moorings closed down under Municipal decree



Mooring field between West End and West Bay almost at capacity with over 20 vessels residing here

The RMP has managed the yacht mooring field between West End and West Bay since 2006. With grants from PADI Project AWARE and PMAIB, we were able to purchase the materials for the moorings; however use of the moorings were free to visitors. In April 2010, the RMP introduced a mandatory fee of \$10 a day, \$40 a week and \$100 a month to ensure sustainability of the project and provide additional income for the RMP. With funds raised from the fee, we were able to maintain the moorings and donate almost \$3,500 to community projects. At the beginning of 2012, the Municipality presented the RMP with a decree stating that due to concerns raised by the community, the mooring field would have to be closed. The main issues presented were that the visiting vessels were dumping raw sewage, illegally collecting conch, lobster and fish while snorkeling or diving, and that having the boats in the mooring field, fewer turtles resided within the lagoon. Though none of these could be confirmed, the RMP followed the request of the Municipality and removed the mooring buoys. The loss of the boats was not only a blow to the RMP which earned \$12,000 from mooring fees in 2011, but also a loss to local businesses that relied on patronage from yacht owners. Even though the buoys were removed, yachts are still visiting the field and dropping anchor. With the season coming to a close as hurricane season nears, we hope that in the coming years the RMP can work with the Municipality and reopen the field, according to what ever requirements are deemed necessary for proper management.

Education and community development

Schools celebrating World Oceans Day

On June 2nd we helped celebrate World Oceans Day at the Port of Roatan. While we were celebrating the official launch of the new patrol vessel purchased with a grant from the OCEAN Fund and assigned to patrol Cordelia, we wanted to involve local school kids in the festivities. We helped organized a march for local children from the center of Coxen Hole to the port where we had face painting, bounce house, a drawing contest and a cotton candy machine! The winners of the drawing contest were, in 1st place Guayamuras School located in Spanish Town, 2nd place was Elfrida Brooks School in Coconut Garden and in 3rd place Tomas Mcfield School in Flower's Bay. The kids did an amazing job! Well done and thank you to all that participated.



One of the winners of the drawing contest

Diamonds International help with cleanup



With cruise ship season finished, Diamonds International has been looking for ways their staff can help the community. After assisting with construction of the new school in Sandy Bay, they were looking for something more environmental. On May 28th we organized a beach cleanup in Mangrove Bight near Flowers Bay and with help from 43 staff from Diamonds International; we managed to fill 140 bags in less than 3 hours. With so much trash collected from an uninhabited beach, we hate to think how much is all around this island. Thanks to all that helped.

Volunteers picking up trash from Mangrove Bight

Meetings and workshops

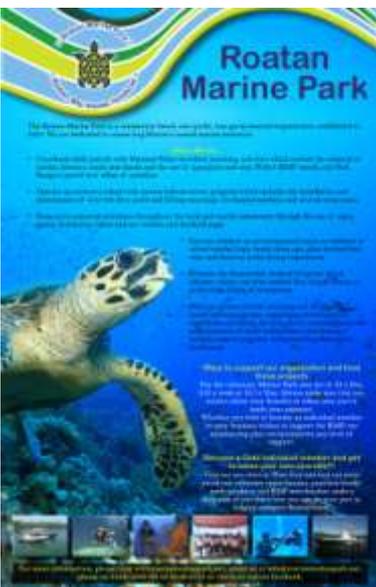
Cordelia Bank finally declared a Protected Area



New patrol boat assigned to Cordelia from OCEAN FUND

With support from CORAL, Healthy Reefs Initiative, OCEAN Fund and other partners, Banco Cordelia was finally declared a site of wildlife importance. After waiting patiently for several years, ICF (Protected Areas Department of the Forestry Conservation Institute) declared this 17km² of pristine reef a site of environmental importance. Cordelia is a barrier reef that extends southwest of Roatan, and is a refuge for *Acropora cervicornis*, and spawning site for grouper and snapper. This decree gives the area a higher level of legal protection inside the Bay Islands MPA and paving the way for the Congressional Decree. To patrol this newly protected area, the OCEAN FUND provided the RMP with a grant to purchase a patrol boat to monitor the waters on a daily basis.

Raising Awareness



New Information distributed to dive shops around Roatan

With funding from a CORAL grant, we were able to produce 3 new posters which are available to dive shops and businesses. The purpose is to raise awareness on matters including what projects the RMP undertake, the lionfish hunting program, and the purpose of protecting the Cordelia Banks. In addition to the posters, new brochures were also created and are freely available to anyone interested in displaying them in their business.



Annual photo competition



Best find entry of a toad fish with all its babies

The closing date to our 4th annual RMP Photography Contest was June so firstly we would like to thank all those that sent in their photos. We held the competition slightly early this year so the calendars could be on the shelves sooner than usual. Our intention is to announce the winners at the RMP Annual Fundraiser in August. Similar to previous years, the categories include Macro, Reef inhabitants, Black and white, Divers, Invertebrates and Conservation in action/Reefs at risk. There was a new category this year titled Best find and is directed towards those small critters and awesome animals which you find around Roatan. They may not necessarily be the greatest shots but its all about content when it comes to winning

this. All the entries for Best Find are on our facebook page so you the public can vote for you favorite. Please click "like" on your favorites. Once again, thanks to all those who entered and good luck.

Distributing environmental awareness posters throughout businesses around Roatan

Back in 2006, the RMP received funding from CORAL and WWF to finance the production of signs, posters and brochures to raise environmental awareness throughout the community. Over 600 framed posters were distributed to hotels, restaurants and dive shops throughout West End, West Bay and Sandy Bay to educate visitors on good environmental practices in both Spanish and English. Six years later, with funds from an old PMAIB grant, we were able to update and reproduce the poster to allocate to new businesses in the vicinity and also elsewhere around the island. So far, over half of the 800 new posters have been given out to hotels including West Bay Lodge, Island House, Bananarama Resort, Henry Morgan, Seagrape Plantation, Burke's Place, Cocolobo's, Blenny's Cabins, Casa Calico, Tranquil Seas, Blue Bahia, Posada Arco Iris, Key Hole Bay, Coconut Tree Cabins, Turquoise Bay, Las Orquidias, Barefoot Key, Las Rocas, Pirate's Den, Half Moon Bay Cabins and Lands End, along with several smaller businesses. Dive shops and restaurants have also been provided with the posters but there are still plenty left for any business that doesn't have any. You are welcome to come by our office in Half Moon Bay to collect the posters, or email us and we can deliver them.



The new framed poster available to hotels

Wrapping things up...



Blue Ocean Reef Bug Repellent Sponsors "Bags for Life" Project

Bill Williams, owner of Blue Ocean Reef Bug Repellent, graciously decided to sponsor another of the RMP projects, after financing the construction of 20 recycling receptacles last year. This time he is funding the purchase of reusable shopping bags which we will distribute to the large supermarkets around Roatan. The bags are currently being printed so more on this next month.



Our eco store receives a face lift using funds from a CORAL grant

If you haven't had the chance to drop by our Eco-store in West End recently, you definitely should as the whole building has received a face lift. The new roof, extended deck, signs, and paint job has converted the front into an attractive façade and made the store more inviting. The interior has also been renovated and we've filled our shelves with new merchandise and eco friendly stuff.



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](http://www.roatanmarinepark.net) or stop by our office in Half Moon Bay.

Best wishes to all, from the RMP Staff!

