



OCEAN-ACTION RESOURCE CENTER

Balagawan, Silago,
Southern Leyte 6807
09178851074

www.oceanactionresourcecenter.org

ORC Newsletter May 2015



What's happened so far at ORC this year?

1) Bobit arrives!

Carpentry and cuisine expert Novie Sales (aka Bobit, which is much more fun to say) agreed to pitch in at ORC starting last March, and we are SO thankful that he joined! Bobit is our new Community Development Officer for the present, and among his many talents, he can build pretty benches that are not crooked (like Julia's), serve restaurant-quality native food, and of course, bring years of experience in community surveys and development projects to the table.

Pic. 1 Our new staff member Bobit



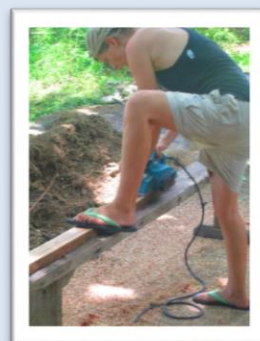
2) Time to puk-puk (hammer)!

With the barebones budget of ORC, we build most of our structures ourselves, with a little bit of help from our local skilled friends in the community. This requires a lot of time and many black and blue fingers when we have bad aim with the hammer... however, it feels worth it to get to the final product and see ORC grow in capacity as a resource center.

First of all, we finally have an indoor office, which we can stay in even when it's raining!



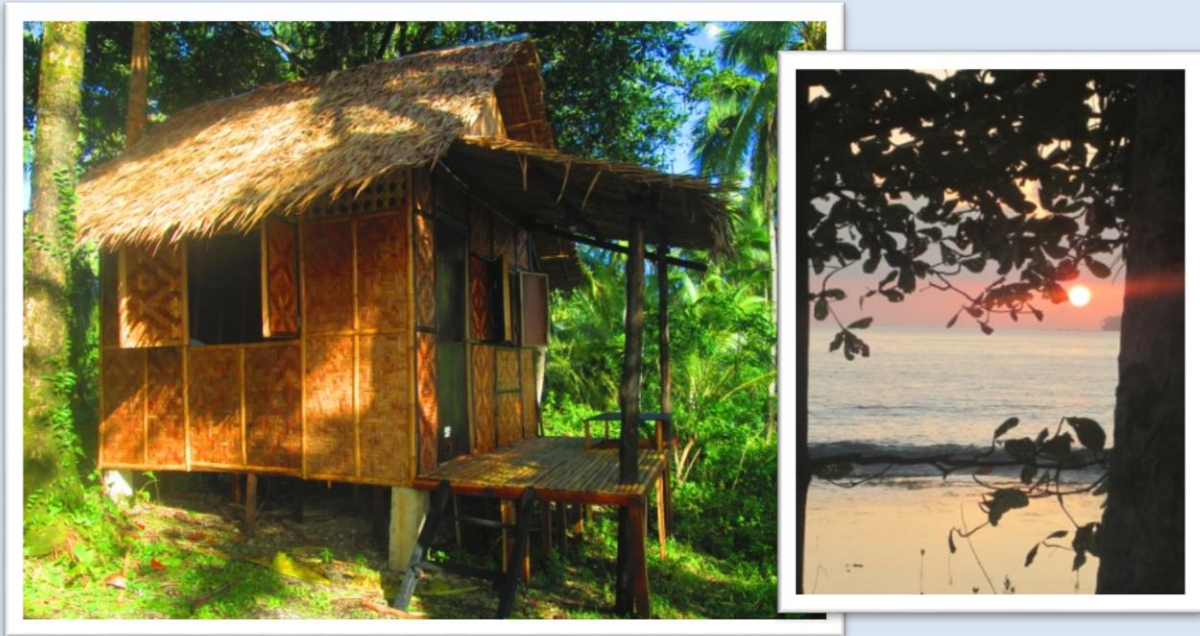
Pic. 3 Our newly renovated office.



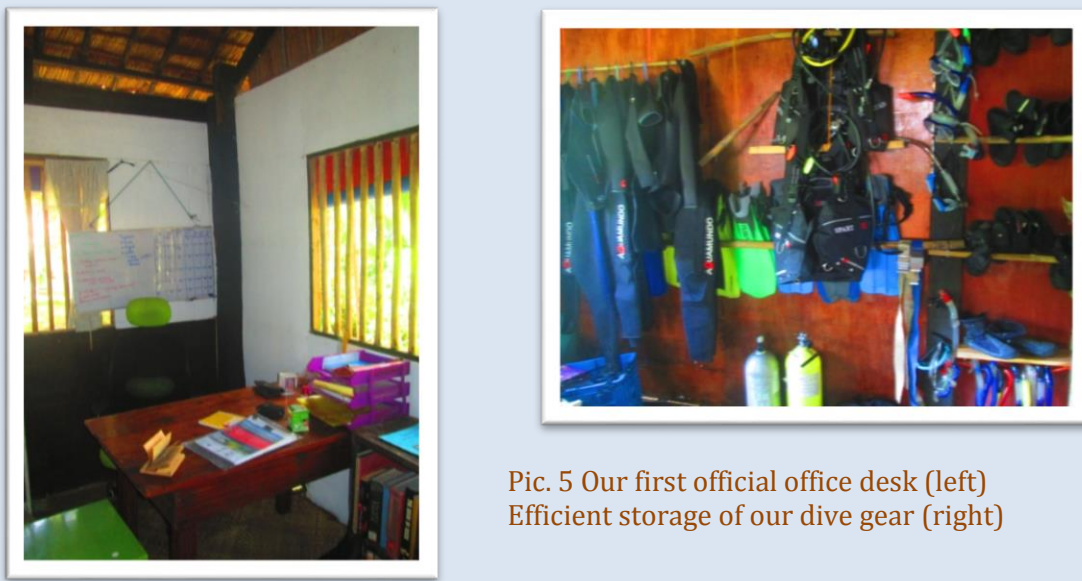
Pic. 2 Julia busy planing lumber for the new office loft.



To make this dream come true, we first had to build a staff kubo so Julia and Jackie would have somewhere to sleep- 10 by 10 feet, out of amakan (bamboo mats), nipa (leaf roof), and mangyum tree (which comes from a local tree farm). Shocking though it was to most Filipinos here, Julia was the lead carpenter on the kubo and office projects. (Jackie helped... a bit.)



Pic. 4 New staff kubo with beautiful sunrise view



Pic. 5 Our first official office desk (left)
Efficient storage of our dive gear (right)

After these initial building projects, the list only got longer... we first created an entrance area so people would actually know where we are! We then went on to build a loft where visitors can sleep and a centralized, elevated water storage system to prepare for the many visitors we'll be having this summer.

This year, we've graduated from bamboo rain pipes to PVC, which certainly catches more, since it can't absorb the water. After a heavy rainstorm, we have a three to five-day supply of water; these stores are extremely useful in our area of the barangay, where a mountain water source is not yet tapped.

Our organic garden relies heavily on the rainwater catchment- this year, we've added cucumber, zucchini, and coriander to the mix, all fed with vermicompost from our worms!



Pic. 4 We are very proud of our first salad seedlings.

3) Proposals, proposals, proposals...

Currently in process are multiple grant applications and proposals for projects ranging from seaweed farming/organic chicken farming/moringga farming and processing to Silago ecotourism guidelines and marine protected area strengthening. While the details are still being sorted out, the rest of this year and beginning of next should be exciting. We're revving up for the big time!

4) Eco-adventure tourism in Silago? Let's do it right!

We're lucky to be partnering with the Silago Department of Tourism this year for a new kind of funding from the Philippines government- one that requires civil service



organizations and local government units to work together on projects created specifically to fit the local community's needs and potential. We kicked off our collaboration with the Silago DOT by crafting and facilitating a fun, arts-and-crafts-based Vision, Mission, and Goals workshop with Tourism Council members; by being intentional and informed about the regulation of the tourism industry, we hope to avoid the ecological destruction and commercialization common to places like Boracay and even El Nido.

This project is very dear to our hearts because we love Silago so much- it's green, quiet, scenic, and hospitable- and we have seen the horrible impact of tourism on coral reef ecosystems and community ties in other Filipino islands, even the ones that are supposed to exemplify successful ecotourism projects.



Pic. 5 Three minutes to sketch your vision!

In Panglao, Bohol, for example, our dive guide informed us that even the barangays which are home to MPAs with dive sites are so disconnected from the rationale behind conservation that they have illegally fished out all the schools of barracuda and big jacks. Other dive guides even illegally practice fish feeding

to please tourists who want to see the fish up close, and don't know or care how fish feeding destroys the entire ecosystem.



Pic. 6 Presenting a vision for Tres Marias waterfalls in Katipunan

In El Nido last year, we were absolutely shocked to see the continuing degradation of coral reefs that have not been zoned for snorkeling. Before our very eyes, anchors were thrown on live coral colonies that had been growing for decades, pulling them out of their base and rolling them onto the sand to die. Our supposedly Green Fins- trained dive guide encouraged his guests to spearfish (though he had just said it was prohibited) and even encouraged them to walk on live corals to reach a hidden lagoon. We recently learned that a 30,000 PhP/per night private resort on another El Nido island practices fish feeding to please its snorkeler guests. Money money money... always prioritized over sustaining the Philippines incredible natural treasures. Hopefully, with IEC (information, education, communication) and a lot of passion, we can keep Silago from this fate.



Pics. 7, 8 More impressions from the Silago Tourism Council workshop

5) Up, up, up... all the way to Northern Samar? For a mayor who wants to dive?

It's a rare thing in the Philippines to meet a young mayor who wants to learn to scuba dive and conserve coral reefs, but we were lucky enough to be invited to Mapanas municipality in Northern Samar to train Mayor Francis Tezano in exactly that! Mapanas is very, very far away from Silago- a whole day's travel by land, and a very different environment. Small-scale tuna, dorado, and marlin fisheries still survive here with a catch of up to 6 kilos a day by hook and line (in Silago, average catch is around two kilos a day, or less). However, the coral reefs within the calmer water of Mapanas Bay are an utter tragedy of past dynamite fishing, as are the families that have been broken by fatal wounds from this extremely dangerous practice.



Pic. 9 View of Mapanas coastline (Photo credit: choosephilippines.com)

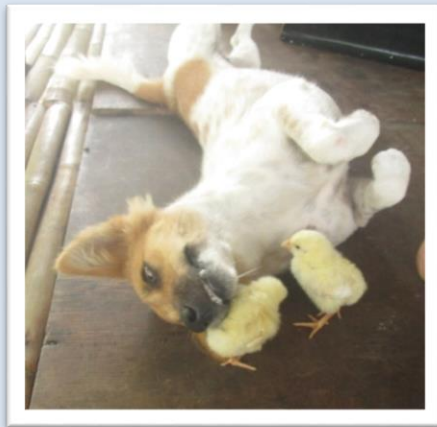
“Walang isda,” said the mayor after his first dive. Indeed, there were almost “no fish,” even though the few remaining coral colonies showed high diversity and a long history (with large colonies of the slow-growing massive *Porites* genus). We hope this week of dive and conservation training marks the beginning of a long friendship and collaboration with Mapanas as ORC tries to help manage what is left and rehabilitate whatever has a chance of recovering.

6) Chickens

We can't kick off a new year without new chickens- this year we've got two hens from the progeny of last year's kabir chicks (named Pay and Pal), and two broiler (45 day) chicks named Pi and Po. No, we are not going to eat the broilers. Instead, we're giving them lots of exercise and not so much food, in order to avoid the health problems that plague broiler chickens as they're fattened for a short, slaughter-bound life. Our organic feeds mix azolla, cassava, moringa, and ipil-ipil with normal, store-bought feeds. None of the birds are old enough for eggs yet, but we're crossing our fingers for the day when we can finally celebrate our first home-grown omelette and pilot organic chicken and egg farming alternative livelihood projects based on our experience.



Pic. 10 Our new Kabir chickens Pay pay and Pal pal



Pic. 11 Unicef finally found some friends to play with

7) CONNECT for marine conservation education

This spring, ORC initiated a collaboration between Coral Cay Conservation, LaMaVe (Large Marine Vertebrates Project Philippines), and School of the Seas to conceptualize a standardized marine conservation education program that will give us Filipino conservation NGOs more visibility and a broader reach through schools all over the country. We are currently deciding what material should be covered, and challenging

ourselves to integrate the most effective, fun, and galvanizing educational techniques we know to make conservation come alive. Stay tuned for more updates and pictures once we begin to pilot the program!

8) Building capacity for municipal fisherfolk- the fun way!

On May 18, we held a capacity-building workshop at ORC for the Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Council, a government-mandated municipal body composed of local fisherfolk and village leaders from all the neighborhoods within a municipality. It was a huge amount of fun! The workshop centered on interactive games and activities to bring marine and aquatic resource management issues and solutions alive for the council, which is supposed to represent the needs and situation of local resource users to the municipal law-makers. The enthusiasm of the workshop participants for our games, presentations and activities, and their thoughtful comments during the FGD (focus group discussion), prove that learning and hard work never have to be tedious, even for adults.



Pic. 12 Fishermen (with scarves) catching fish outside the MPAs



Pic. 13 Balancing the Earth with different ecosystems



Pic. 14 Focus group discussion on the role of MFARMC

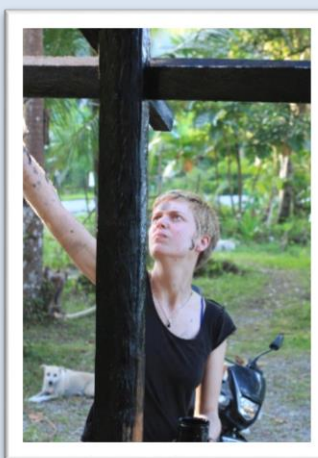


9) Welcoming new interns and collaborators this summer!

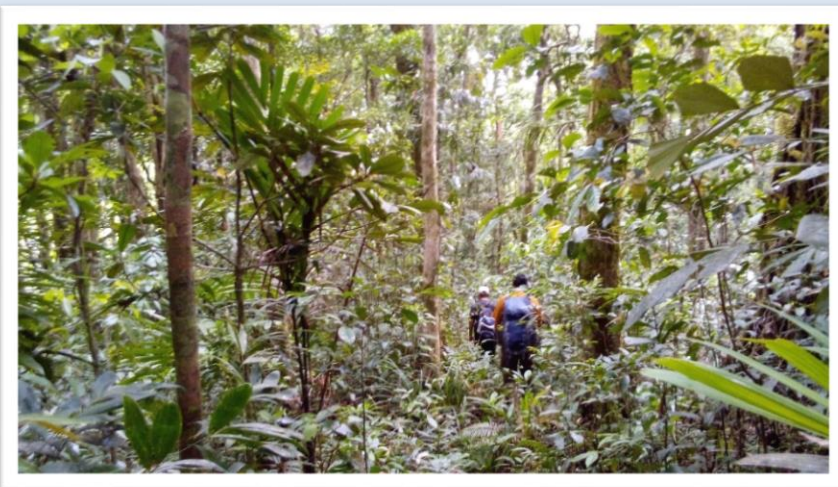
Look out for our summer newsletter- we are so excited to welcome a new intern and volunteer in August, the first from the Netherlands, who will make ORC's education program her practicum for a Coastal Resource Management degree, and the second from England, who is studying Disaster Risk Management. We're also hoping to welcome a group of sailing, diving, conservationist videographers in August who are, incredibly, exploring the Coral Triangle by boat to feature innovative, community-based initiatives that make conservation work from the ground up.

10) Visitors

We've already been blessed this year by a visit from Jackie's parents and by the recent arrival of Thalea, a friend of ORC from Germany, as well as Neil and Russ from Cebu, who have just toured overnight through the Mount Nacolod protected area in the mountains of Silago. We're looking forward to Yella and Chris arriving from Germany in August- the attractions of Silago, described by one tourism official as "most lovely," are best when shared ☺



Pic. 14 Thalea is already busy painting ORC's new roof extension.



Pic. 15 Neil and Russ trekking through protected forest in Mt. Nacolod

