

This is the last installment of news articles written by the 2015 CRI Summer Interns. Watch out for this year's installment coming to you in few months! The CRI Summer Internship Program is an ongoing paid summer internship program for CNMI based college students and graduating high school seniors. The program is funded through a grant provided to the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program.

Public Awareness about Marine Protected Areas



BY ROMANA CHONG

My name is Romana Chong and I am an upcoming student at the Northern Marianas College. During the Coral Reef Initiative Internship, I worked as a Social Media Journalist at the Division of Fish and Wildlife. I gained the passion to conserve our oceanic and land resources and preserve Marine Protected Areas, as a local, and a person who enjoys the waters and its' inhabitants.

My summer project and experience working for the 2015 Coral Reef Initiative internship has made me more aware of our islands resources. I gained a deeper understanding of why our coral reefs, oceans, and land are important to not only our culture, but our lifestyle. Our coral reefs are a major part of our ecosystem under the water. As a social media journalist, I utilize social media and web resources to complete my summer project. The purpose of my project was to provide public awareness of different marine related species in the CNMI. Posts were comprised of facts about

the marine related species that are informative and interesting. A different species was posted weekly on the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) Facebook page and the Micronesia Challenge Facebook page. Each week I selected a specific marine related species found in the CNMI referenced to the 2013 Updates To The Checklist Of Fishes Of The CNMI.

I accomplished my project through many hours of research collecting information about each marine animal. With each post, a photo was provided through staff from DFW/BECQ or captured by myself when in the field. Examples include the Bluefin Trevally, which is found in the CNMI around Rota, Aguijan, Tinian, Saipan, Farallon De Medinilla, and in most of the Northern Islands (Tenorio). Randall states that the Bluefin Trevally is a carnivorous fish that is potentially poisonous to eat when it is a large individual due to ciguatera. I also compiled an edited a video of conservation messages

from my fellow interns that can be found on the cnmicoralreef.com website home page.

Throughout my experience at DFW I learned the importance of bringing awareness to the public about our well-known marine species. I learned that the best way to solve a problem is to gain awareness. Without knowing the regulations of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) or other areas in the CNMI, the locals cannot positively contribute to the preservation of these areas.

Works Cited

Randall, John E. *Reef and Shore fishes of the South Pacific: New Caledonia to Tahiti and the Pitcairn Islands*. Honolulu, Hawaii: U of Hawaii, 2005. 220, 229. Print.

Tenorio, Michael C. "2013 Updates to the Checklist of Fishes of the CNMI." 14. Accessed July 22, 2015. [http://www.cnmi-dfw.com/docs/2013 Checklist of Fishes of the CNMI.pdf](http://www.cnmi-dfw.com/docs/2013%20Checklist%20of%20Fishes%20of%20the%20CNMI.pdf).



Romana Chong and other CRI interns clean up marine debris on a site visit to the Forbidden Island Marine Sanctuary.



Blue Trevally (Tarakitu)

