



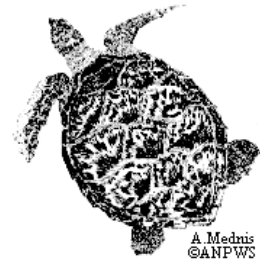
Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Heritage

Marine Turtle Recovery Newsletter

3rd Edition

March 2005



Welcome Readers

As the outgoing Chair of the National Turtle Recovery Group, I am pleased to present you with the first issue of the Marine Turtle Recovery Newsletter for 2005.

You will find in this edition a series of articles about turtle conservation and management, such as actions in Australian fisheries to reduce marine turtle interactions, the upcoming IOSEA Turtle MoU meeting, and travelers returning home for the first time after thirty years.

I hope this issue will provide insight to readers on some challenges and efforts that are affecting turtle conservation and management. On top of this, we encourage readers to pursue their efforts in ensuring that turtles are around for future generations to enjoy. This newsletter will be available on the DEH website (<http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/species/turtles/>) and will also be distributed electronically by members of the National Turtle Recovery Group.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank readers for their support for this newsletter, and to welcome Clinton Dengate as the new Chair and Kelly Mullen as the new Secretariat of the National Turtle Recovery Group.

Robyn Bromley

IOSEA Meeting

The Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA) Turtles MoU is a specialised intergovernmental arrangement under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). It came into effect on 1 September 2001. Composed of twenty signatory States, including Australia and countries from the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia, it aims to coordinate and integrate a framework to conserve and replenish depleted marine turtle populations.

Australia has just submitted its National Report to the MoU Secretariat. In viewing this, it is possible to see Australia's good track record for implementing the MoU, including efforts to rehabilitate degraded turtle habitats, reduce incidental bycatch and mortality, and cooperate with Indigenous communities for sustainable harvesting of marine turtle populations. The Australian National Report can be found at: http://www.ioseaturtles.org/print_report/mainselection.php.

Also, the Third Meeting of the IOSEA Turtle MoU Signatory States will take place in Bangkok, 29-31 March 2005. It will address issues, such as, implementing the Conservation and Management Plan, reviewing priority activities and preparing for the 2006 Year of the Turtle Campaign.

Organisations may wish to start planning activities and budgeting for the 2006 Year of the Turtle Campaign.



Turtle and fish motif woven by Mariana Matalu from Sumba.
© Green Turtle Dreaming Exhibition

Turtle Interactions in Fisheries

Incidental turtle bycatch and mortality represents an important issue for the conservation of marine turtles. The Australian Government and the nation's fishing fleets are working to reduce turtle bycatch and mortality.

FAO Technical Consultation on Turtle Conservation and Fisheries

Australia, and twenty-seven other countries, attended the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Committee on Fisheries technical consultation meeting on sea turtles conservation and fisheries, in Bangkok in November 2004.

The meeting agreed that there has been a serious decline of turtle populations worldwide, and identified regions where specific stocks required urgent attention. The focus of the meeting was on impacts arising from fishing, and from this, a set of voluntary guidelines that will form the basis of FAO technical guidelines, were developed.

The guidelines refer to:

- appropriate handling and release of turtles,
- fisheries including: coastal trawl, purse seine, longline and other fisheries,
- collection of information, data and research,
- information exchange, and
- review of the effectiveness of measures.

Australia promoted the successful work that has been done in Australian prawn trawl fisheries with the development and implementation of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) and, in particular, highlighted the importance of fishing industry cooperation and involvement.



Photo: Garry Day. © Australian Maritime College

Circle Hook Research

Circle hooks have shown to be effective at increasing the survival of turtles incidentally caught during pelagic longline operations. AFMA is working with industry and environment NGOs to develop a research project to test the effect of circle hooks on target and non-target species. This is in addition to promoting the use of de-hookers and line cutting kits on Australian longline vessels.



"J" hook vs a circle hook. Source: NOAA Fisheries

Turtle Excluder Devices

TEDs are designed to prevent turtle and other large marine animal bycatch in trawl fisheries by utilising a grid of bars blocking entry to the mouth of a trawl net. This method has proved effective and is now compulsory in the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery, the Northern Prawn Fishery, WA trawl fisheries and the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Prior to the introduction of TEDs, Northern Prawn Fishery logbooks recorded over 870 captures in 1999. By 2003, only 27 turtles were caught, all of which were released alive. (See related article on page 4 'Loggerhead sea turtles return to Mon Repos' showing positive results from the use of TEDs).

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Turtle Interactions in Fisheries

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Bycatch Action Plans

The Australian Government is also implementing BAPs as a management tool to reduce non-target species bycatch, including turtles. BAPs identify bycatch issues related to specific fisheries, and subsequently provide appropriate actions to address them. For example, the BAPs for the Northern Prawn and Torres Strait Prawn fisheries specify compulsory use and monitoring of TEDs. For more information about BAPs, check out the AFMA website at: <http://www.afma.gov.au/pubs/plans/baps/default.php>



Source: Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Queensland

The MACC Taskforce on Marine Turtle and Dugong Populations - an update

In the last edition, an article outlined informal consultation with Indigenous peoples undertaken by the MACC Taskforce on Marine Turtle and Dugong Populations.

Following these consultations, the Taskforce has prepared a draft document *Sustainable and Legal Indigenous Harvest of Marine Turtles and Dugongs in Australia - A National Approach*. The draft National Approach canvasses a range of actions that governments, communities and individuals can take to ensure that traditional use is sustainable and consistent with the law.

The Taskforce is now undertaking formal public consultation on the draft document. The National Approach can be downloaded at www.deh.gov.au/coasts/species/turtles/national-approach.html. Comments on the draft National Approach must be received by COB Friday 13 May 2005, and should be sent to:

Migratory and Marine Species Section
Department of the Environment and Heritage
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2600

or by email to marinespecies@deh.gov.au

New DVD Released for Longline Fishing

A DVD called "Crossing the Line" has just been provided to the Australian longline fleet. Funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, it is destined to help the Australian longline fishing industry minimize its impact on sea turtle populations. It shows how to use dehooking devices on deck and on turtles still in the water, how to safely bring turtles aboard and handle them on deck, help comatose turtles recover and how to release them back into the water. It also explains how to tag, measure and identify the different species of turtle.

Loggerhead turtles return to Mon Repos

In the early 1970s, volunteers aided scientists to tag turtle hatchlings from Mon Repos Beach, Queensland, for turtle monitoring. Decades later, the turtles have returned for their first breeding season. Last year, one of the tagged turtles was seen at Mon Repos Beach to breed, and this year two more have come back. This confirms that they take 30 years before they breed and is a positive sign showing that loggerheads are making a small comeback in south east Queensland. Some scientists believe this may be due to the introduction of turtle excluding devices on trawling nets.

Green Turtle Dreaming: Linking communities in Indonesia and Australia

The *Green Turtle Dreaming* project involved collecting stories, song and artworks on green turtles from communities in Eastern Indonesia and Northern Australia areas between which green turtles migrate each year. The project has culminated in an exhibition that celebrates the significance of green turtles to communities in Eastern Indonesia and Northern Australia. The project includes an education kit, a CD, and a bilingual book of the stories.

The project has brought together a culturally diverse range of stories, songs and artworks on this much-revered creature. These document the significance of the green turtle to these communities and reflect their understanding of the need for green turtles to be conserved. More information on the project can be viewed at www.greenturtledreaming.com.

The exhibition is currently on display at the Museum of Western Australia, in Perth until 17 March. It will be at the Geraldton Museum from 24 March to 27 April, Kalgoorlie Museum from 5 May to 22 June and then move on to the Sarawak Museum and Melville Island. In 2006, in the *Year of the Sea Turtle in the Indian Ocean and South-east Asia*, the exhibition will be on show at the Cairns Regional Art Gallery from 7 April to 28 May and then will travel to Thursday Island and Darnley Island and finally it will head to the Geelong Gallery, Victoria in August 2006.

Green Turtle Dreaming was selected as a pilot project for the Australia - Indonesia Arts and community program, supported by the Australia Council and Asialink. The concept originated with artist Susan Barlow, translator Richard Barlow and musician Melanie Humphrey.

Contact Details

Migratory and Marine Species Section
Department of the Environment and Heritage
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601
Email: marinespecies@deh.gov.au

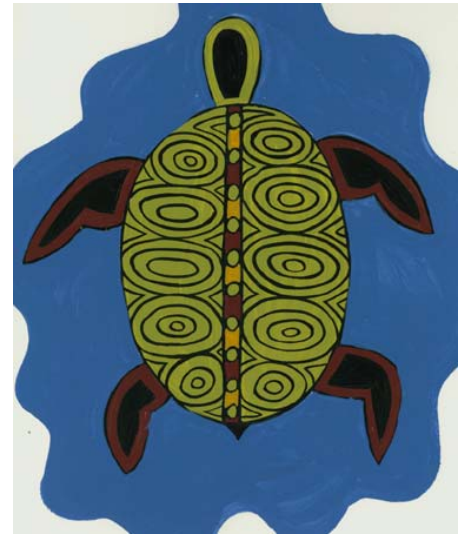


Image: Donna Burak. *Jarrakalani*. The turtle is a symbol of antiquity, fertility and stability central to many stories in Eastern Indonesia and Northern Australia. © Green Turtle Dreaming Exhibition.

Tsunami Impacts

The Indian Ocean and South-East Asian (IOSEA) Marine Turtle MoU has commenced collation of preliminary assessments from a variety of sources on the impact of the December tsunami on Indian Ocean turtle projects and their habitats. More information on this topic can be found at: <http://www.ioseaturtles.org/tsunami.html>.

In addition, the UNEP has released its rapid assessment report on the environmental impacts of the tsunami in the region. Important management findings include the significance of coastal ecosystems such as mangroves as buffer zones, and the value of maintaining them. Additionally, severe damages to endangered turtle nesting beaches in India, Sri Lanka and Tanzania require urgent measures to rehabilitate them. These issues will be incorporated in UNEP's following reconstruction and restoration phase. The report, *After the Tsunami: Rapid Environmental Assessment*, can be found at: http://www.unep.org/tsunami/tsunami_rpt.asp