

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- **TRAINING**—
Aerial Dugong
Survey Training
to be held in
Townsville at
JCU in mid Au-
gust
- **FUNDING**—
Marine Species
Recovery and
Protection
Grants open.
Applications
close 15th Au-
gust.
- **GHOST NET**—
Ghost Net Meet-
ing being held on
Ngurupai.

INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:

- Boigh Update 1
- Project Officer
Training Oppor-
tunities 2
- Green Turtles 3
- Call Torres
Strait Home
- Ghost Net 4
- Ishmael Gibuma 4



Participants involved in Tra-
ditional Fisheries Working
Group Discussions.
Photo: S Reilly, TSRA.

Dugong and Turtle Project



Turtle Tagging Training

From 25 to 29 June, 12 rangers from the Badu, Hammond and Kaurareg Rangers groups along with project officers involved in the NAILSMA dugong and turtle project, converged on Thursday Island to participate in a turtle tagging program

This program was conducted in partnership with Dr. Mark Hamann, a marine biologist from James Cook University, Townsville. The training involved catching, tagging and releasing turtles in the Inner Islands of our region over a period of four days.



Steven Amber tagging.

A normal day consisted of participants meeting at a designated place at a set time, then dispers-

ing to the neighbouring islands or reefs to search and catch turtles. Everybody would then meet after lunch at Hammond Island to conduct the tagging and sex determination scientific procedures.



Dr Hamann demonstrates the laparoscope. Photo by Lachlan Sutherland.

The rangers and project officers were shown how to tag turtles, obtain accurate measurements and record information about the turtles.

Dr Mark Hamann also showed the rangers how to use a laparoscope. The laparoscope is a small microscope that lets you look inside the stomach of a turtle.

You can use it to tell the sex of young turtles, see if the adult turtles have bred or laid eggs before and you can also see if there is any disease or parasites in the turtles gut. Overall the program was successful and the rangers and project officers caught a total of 30 turtles over the 4 days.

The majority of the turtles caught were approximately 15 years old (around 40cm). These turtles are new recruits to the reef after finishing a 15 year journey from the place where they were born out to the open ocean currents. These turtles will probably stay on this same reef area to forage.

This type of training and experience aims to build community research capacity and to further improve our understanding of the lifecycle and movements of the region's turtles. Another training event is being planned for later in the year. The training will be aimed at monitoring of nesting turtles and hatchlings. success at a major green turtle nesting site..

Traditional Fisheries Working Group Discussions

The Community Fisher Group (CFG) representing Torres Strait Islanders in the commercial and traditional fisheries held a meeting on Thursday Island, on 13 July 2007.

At the meeting the CFG listened to Mr Alick Tipoti and Mr Elizah Wasaga who spoke on a proposal that came out of the Turtle and Dugong meeting attended by traditional owner representatives on Badu Island in December 2006.

The proposal from the Badu

Island Traditional Owners workshop is to include Traditional Owner representatives on the traditional fisheries working group, set out under the Protected Zone Joint Authority consultative structure.

The discussions held on the 13th of July were positive as both groups understood the key elements for good representation and ability to work in a team environment for the interest of all Torres Strait Islanders.

The CFG support the opportunity to further discuss their association with the Traditional Owners' representatives and look at how they can work together for a sustainable turtle and dugong population in Torres Strait.

A further meeting is planned for September 2007. Dugong and Turtle project officers, delegates elected at the 2006 Badu workshop and CFG representatives will be invited to attend this meeting.

Malu Kiai Management Plan – Update



The Malu Kiai Traditional Owners of Boigu are one of eight communities participating in the region's NAILSMA project, being delivered through the TSRA. Prior to the outset of the NAILSMA project the Malu Kiai community have felt that formal dangal (dugong) and waru (turtle) management was essential for the survival of the species.

“Dangal and waru are a major component of our diets and culture, we must protect these species because of its importance to our livelihood, culture and community, if these species finish, then what will replace it, we cant depend on buying meat” was a comment from a community member.

The Malu Kiai community have developed a draft management plan for dugong and turtle. Currently the draft plan is going through consultation with the community via Project Officer, Ishmael Gibuma.

“It is paramount that the community is involved in this process because of their knowledge of the movements of dangal and waru, especially their knowledge of the environment surrounding Boigu,” said Ishmael Gibuma.

“Some of the new technologies around today has made harvesting dangal and waru easier, therefore more dugongs and turtles are being caught, these issues need to be looked at,” was a further comment from a community member.

In the Malu Kiai Dangal and Waru Management Plan the community has addressed these issues by incorporating certain restrictions into the arrangements. The Malu Kiai community have held several community meetings with an average of 10-15 community members attending. Another community meeting is scheduled for next month.

“We are concerned for the survival of the species be-

cause of our location bordering PNG. Coastal villages from the PNG western coast and Indonesian fishermen are exploiting our resources for commercial gain, this needs to be stopped” was another comment from a community member.

The community believes that this management plan must involve the traditional inhabitants from the PNG coastal villages near them because of their interaction with the sea within their sea territory. This will involve a meeting with the Chairmen of all the neighbouring villages and is scheduled to be held at Boigu in the near future. The Malu Kiai community feels that it is essential to involve these people for the plan to work.

If you want to find out more information about the Malu Kiai Dangal and Waru Management Plan please contact Mr Ishmael Gibuma at Malu Kiai Council, Boigu Island on 07 40694066.

Project Officer Training & Exchange Opportunities

A key component to the Dugong and Turtle project is training. Project officers are frequently offered opportunities to undertake training and attend conferences and workshops and do exchange visits inside and outside of Torres Strait.

Upcoming opportunities for project officers include:

- *Coxswain training for shipboard safety;
- *Seagrass Watch training for community seagrass monitoring;
- *Introduction to Fisheries Management Course;
- *Aerial dugong survey

training workshop in August with JCU Townsville; Moses Wailu and Ishmael Gibuma will also attend the National Land and Sea Management Conference in Cardwell in October.

These opportunities increase the skills of project officers to undertake their work and to share information and knowledge with their communities.

A number of rangers groups from Hammond, Horn and Badu Island are also studying the Conservation Land Management certificate courses. These

Vocational and Technical (VET) training courses give people skills and knowledge to become qualified rangers. Opportunities for longer-term study in Conservation Land Management are provided through Batchelor Institute of Tertiary Education, NT or North Queensland TAFE in Cairns, QLD.

If you are interested in becoming involved in longer-term study please contact the Land & Sea Management Unit on 07 4069 2957.



Kaurareg Rangers participating in Seagrass Watch on Ngurupai.

Photo courtesy of Kaurareg Rangers.



Green Turtles that call Torres Strait Home

As hatchlings, green turtles spend many years drifting around the ocean currents, moving between feeding grounds before selecting a sea grass pasture where they will spend their adult lives. As adults, female green turtles spend much of their lives on their feeding ground, migrating every five years or so, back to the region they were born in, to mate and nest. Male green turtles also migrate every 1-3 years back to mate in the region they were born.

This life style of the green turtle makes management of them complicated because the turtles that live together on a feeding ground will all migrate to several different nesting areas every few years. Like wise, turtles found nesting on the same beach are likely to have migrated to that place from many different feeding grounds around Australia or even overseas.

It is very difficult to study the drifting migrations of hatchlings, there are a number of ways to study the migrations of adult green turtles. These include tagging, satellite tracking and genetic studies. Each one of these methods give us different information, but together they can be used to understand where turtles come from and where they spend their time. This month we will talk about turtle tagging and each month will talk about satellite tracking and then genetic studies.

Tagging

Turtle tagging, like that done recently in the Kaiwalagal sea country allows use to see how far apart the turtles nesting and feeding grounds are. All the information recorded during tagging is sent to a central place. Information about tag

recaptures (when a tagged turtle is caught for kai kai or research) can then be sent back to the central place to see where the turtle has traveled. To increase the chance to recapture a tagged turtle we need to tag thousands of turtles and there may be many years between recaptures.

Each tag has its own number on one side and an address on the



Turtle tag.
Photo by Marcus Finn

other side so people can return information on the recapture or return to tags.

A lot of tagging is done at beaches where large numbers of green turtles come to nest such as Raine Island in the northern Great Barrier Reef. Tag recaptures from nesting turtles tagged at Raine Island, Moulter Cay, Bramble Cay and No.7 and No.8 Sandbanks have shown that these turtles migrate back to feeding grounds including eastern Indonesia, PNG, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Northern Territory and from

throughout coastal Queensland.

Over half of the tag recaptures come from the Torres Strait! The map below shows the spread of tag recaptures of green turtles tagged at major northern Great Barrier Reef nesting beaches.

Tagging provides important information to everyone involved in turtle management.

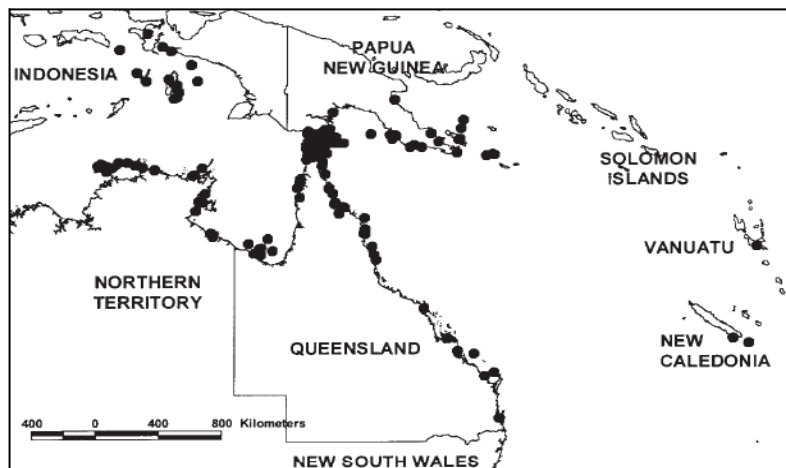
If you find a tag you can return it to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) in Brisbane by mail (QPWS, PO Box 15155, City East, QLD 4002).

Let QPWS know where you found the turtle and what it was doing before you caught it. If you send your address QPWS can send you a reward of a cap or t-shirt for participating in turtle research.

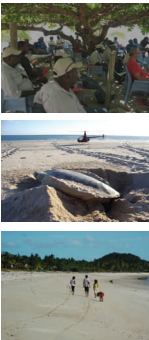


Moses Wailu tagging turtle.
Photo by Lachlan Sutherland

If you ask, QPWS will send back to you information about the turtle such as where it was tagged, how long ago it was tagged and the size of the turtle at that time. Next month we will discuss turtle genetic sampling.



“Over half of the recaptures of green turtles tagged from nesting beaches in the northern Great Barrier Reef come from the feeding grounds of the Torres Strait!”





Australian Government



Torres Strait Regional Authority Land & Sea Management Unit

Dugong and Turtle Project Newsletter

PO Box 261
Thursday Island
QLD 4875

Phone: 07 4069 2947

Fax: 07 4069 2967

E-mail: lachlan.sutherland@tsra.gov.au
frank.loban@tsra.gov.au

The Torres Strait Regional Authority, Land & Sea Management Unit (LSMU) is coordinating the NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project in Torres Strait.

The LSMU coordinates the delivery of regional and local level land and sea management initiatives, and supports communities to access additional financial and technical support and information about sustainable management of their environments.

The Unit operates out of the Four Winds Building above Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island. For more information about the Unit contact the Manager, Damian Miley on 4069 2957.

Visit our website www.tsra.gov.au

The TSRA L&SMU wishes to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Kaiwalagal region, the Kaurareg people, on whose land we are writing and working from and to the Elders from throughout the Torres Strait.

Ghost Net Project Update

The Carpentaria Ghost Net project is a project aimed at removing discarded fishing nets "ghost nets" from the coast and seas of the Gulf of Carpentaria and Torres Strait.

Kaurareg, Hammond and Badu Island rangers all participate in the project. To date Hammond rangers have removed 8 tonnes of net from the Kai-

walagal region.

Ghost net weaving workshops were held on Hammond Island from 16th to 20th of July. Some great bags were made and participants had a good time re-using the ghost net.s.

Kaurareg rangers are also hosting a Ghost Net Steering Committee

Meeting on Ngurupai this week (24th—26th). Rangers from around the Gulf will be present discussing the project.

Ghost Net bag and participants in weaving workshop—



Project Officer Profile - Ishmael Gibuma, Boigu

Ishmael Gibuma is the Project Officer for Malu Kiai (Boigu) employed under the NAILSMA Dangal and Waru project. Ishmael is the son of Mawie Gibuma, an elder of the Malu Kiai community.

Ishmael has lived most of his life on Boigu and is a Father of the Independent Anglican Church of Zenadh Kes, Kaiwalagal Incorporation. He is a father to three children and have been married for 20 years. Ishmael is also a Traditional Owner for the Samu (Emu), Koedal (Crocodile), Baydam (Shark) and Dangal (Dugong) clans of Boigu Island.

As a part of his role as the project officer of Malu Kiai he has been consulting with the Traditional Owners

about their ideas and concerns for their proposed Dangal and Waru Management Plan. He has also been actively collecting catch monitoring data for dangal and waru from community members.

"For myself, it is essential that I use my knowledge passed down from ancestors to help and assist me in my role as a project officer, dugong and turtle is an critical component to our culture" said Ishmael.

Ishmael has been involved in the organisation and facilitation of Community Planning Meetings held at Boigu. If you want to find out more information about the Malu Kiai Dangal and Waru Management Plan

please contact Mr. Ishmael Gibuma at Malu Kiai Council, Boigu Island on 0740694066.



Ishmael Gibuma, Malu Kiai (Boigu) Project Officer during the recent turtle research training. Photo by Frank Loban

