

SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

- **DOWAR** Turtle Training Workshop to be held on Dowar from 3—7 December 2007.
- **COL LIMPUS** attends TSRA Board meeting to discuss turtle issues in Torres Strait.
- **PNG BILATS**—Project officers attend Bilateral Fisheries Meeting in Port Moresby.

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Photo of participants involved in WWF Turtle Workshop. Photo courtesy of IOSEA Website.

# Torres Strait Regional Authority & NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project

ISSUE 3

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## TSRA Dugong and Turtle Project Staff and JCU Working in Partnership

From 21 to 23 August, a workshop was held in Townsville involving researchers from James Cook University (JCU), Project staff of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Dugong and Turtle Project and several representatives from Hammond Island, Hopevale and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

This meeting was attended by the Dugong and Turtle Project Liaison Officer, Frank Loban, and Project Officers Charles David, Moses Wailu, Ishmael Gibuma, Horace Nona, Terrence Whap and Pearson Wigness. Senior Hammond Island Ranger, Stephen Amber also attended.



Green Turtle. [www.turtles.org](http://www.turtles.org)

The objectives of the workshop were to improve understanding between the stakeholder groups involved in the research and



Dugong. © Patrick Louisy, [www.cites.org](http://www.cites.org)

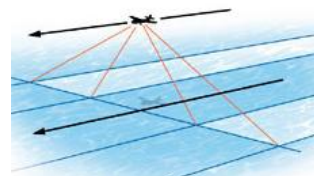
management of dugong and turtle hunting through the development of a common ground from which to base communication, negotiation and co-management strategies, specifically by:

- briefing Indigenous people from Torres Strait and the Northern Great Barrier Reef communities about the results of recent and planned research on dugongs and turtles; and
- obtaining advice from Indigenous people from Torres Strait and the Northern Great Barrier Reef communities about appropriate extension materials and features of effective management.

This workshop provided an opportunity for researchers from JCU to discuss, inform, consult and clarify

any uncertainties members present had about past, present and future research done and planned in Torres Strait specifically relative to dugong and turtle.

Members from the project got a first-hand demonstration as to how researchers from JCU conduct the Dugong Aerial Surveys and various other research projects. This demonstration provided a clear and concise step-by-step picture as to how they determine the estimated dugong populations in the Torres Strait.



Dugong Aerial Survey Diagram. Supplied by JCU.

TSRA project staff and project officers would like to thank Ms Helene Marsh and all JCU staff involved in making this workshop possible. This was a great opportunity to exchange ideas and share knowledge.

## Torres Strait Islanders attend WWF Turtle Workshop held in Darwin

Project Officers Charles David and Kenny Bedford and Hammond Island Ranger Steven Amber travelled to Darwin in September to attend a small regional marine turtle workshop. Ms Sam Emerick an AFMA dugong and turtle officer from TI also attended.

The gathering, organised by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - Australia, brought together participants from different parts of Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Solomon Islands.

The workshop aimed to identify threats to turtle populations within the region and talk about what action needs to take place to help conserve turtles. Large maps facilitated small group discussions of problems facing turtles in various locations.

The Torres Strait Project Officers worked side by side with representatives from Papua New Guinea's Department of Environment and Conservation. This gave project officers the opportunity to talk about cross border turtle issues directly

with PNG government environment officers. Both Kenny and Charles expressed that PNG needs to support western province villages to get involved in turtle conservation works. The groups also talked about the commercial trade of turtles and some of the major threats to turtle in Indonesia and PNG.

For more information about the workshop you can call Lachlan or Frank on 4069 2947.

## Mer Dugong and Turtle Management Plan - Update



**Mer PO Moses Wailu, D&T PLO Frank Loban and Hammond Island Rangers participating in Seagrass Watch . Photo courtesy of Jane Mellors.**

Mer Island Community is one of eight communities of the Torres Strait participating within the NAILSMA project being rolled out through the TSRA's Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU).

After 3 meetings with the Mer Community, including the most recent attended by delegates from Erub, Mer itself has put together a draft management plan for dugong and turtle. The draft plan titled "Keriba Luzabzab-Lera Dorge Dugong and Turtle Management Plan" includes a number of rules and regulations related to dugong and turtle harvest, egg harvest, traditional inhabitant visitation guidelines for dugong and turtle harvest and rules for the use of dugong and turtle meat and eggs.

Currently the draft plan is going over proper consultation with the community through the Project Officer Moses Wailu.

In traditional Meriam lan-

guage, turtle is called 'nam' and dugong is 'deger'.

"Nam and deger is very important to the world, it is important to me and my people as it is our totem. Thus we accept the opportunity to develop and implement our traditional and cultural lores for the take of these species" comment from Moses Wailu.

The Mer Dugong & Marine Turtle Project incorporates the traditional lore of Mer, highlighting the notion that one must first seek permission before one can hunt on another person's land or sea country.

An up and coming event for Mer community is the Mer Tagging Program being run in partnership with James Cook University, the Torres Strait Regional Authority Dugong and Turtle Project and the Mer, Dowar and Waier communities. It will involve a week intensive turtle tagging program during the nesting season at Dowar. This will

happen in the first week of December.

If you want to find out more information about the Mer Nam and Deger Management Plan please contact Mr Moses Wailu at the Mer CDEP Workshop on 40694779 or alternatively on 40900400.



**Mer PO Moses Wailu and D&T PLO Frank Loban with kids from the Tagai College—Mer Campus.**

## Sea Grass Watch - Kaurareg Region

During the cold mornings of August 8 to 11, Torres Strait Regional Authority Dugong and Turtle Project staff participated in the Sea Grass Watch program along side Queensland Department of Primary Industries, Jane Mellors, Kaurareg Rangers, Hammond Island Rangers and local Tagai Secondary College students.

The first site in which staff participated was located on Horn Island in front of the Wongai Hotel. The second site was located at Thursday Island, in front of the Federal Hotel-Motel.

The last site was located on Hammond Island at the northern-most point near the end of the Island's community beach. This opportunity increased the skills of project staff to identify, determine and analyse sea grass species, meadows and habitat. Sea grass is an essential component of dugong and turtle diet and an essential component to marine ecosystems.

Through the Sea Grass Watch program interest has been generated in the outer island community of Mer. Mer Project Officer

Moses Wailu, has identified potential sites around Mer and wishes to involve the local community and primary school. This is likely to happen in November or December, based on the tides and the availability of QDPI Officer



Jane Mellors.

# Green Turtles that call Torres Strait Home—Satellite Tracking

This article follows from the tagging story placed in the last issue of the newsletter. Here we continue on to talk about how satellite tracking is being used to tell us more about the life style of green turtles in the Torres Strait.

Flipper tagging provides good long-term information on turtle movements and turtle growth. Tracking turtles with satellite transmitters gives us accurate “real time” data on migration routes and behaviour. This method is expensive with transmitters costing around \$2000 each and only last a year or so at most. The companies that run the satellites also charge for their use.

Many Indigenous communities around north Australia have tracked turtles using satellite transmitters. In 2005-2006 the Hammond Island community with James Cook University tracked 4 green turtles in Torres Strait. The turtles were caught during saulal (mating season).

The Hammond community found that all 3 female turtles they tracked migrated either to Raine Island or Moulter Cay in the Northern Great Barrier Reef to nest. One of the turtles named “Toni” stayed around Raine Island for about 14 weeks and nested 7 times.



Hammond school children release turtle with satellite tracker. Photo by Jillian Grayson

These 3 female turtles then returned to feeding grounds close to where they were caught in Torres Strait. The satellite tracking showed that some of these turtles traveled up to 1400km over a period of 140 days.

The one male turtle that was



Turtle with satellite tracker nesting on Raine Island. Photo by Duncan Limpus of QPWS.

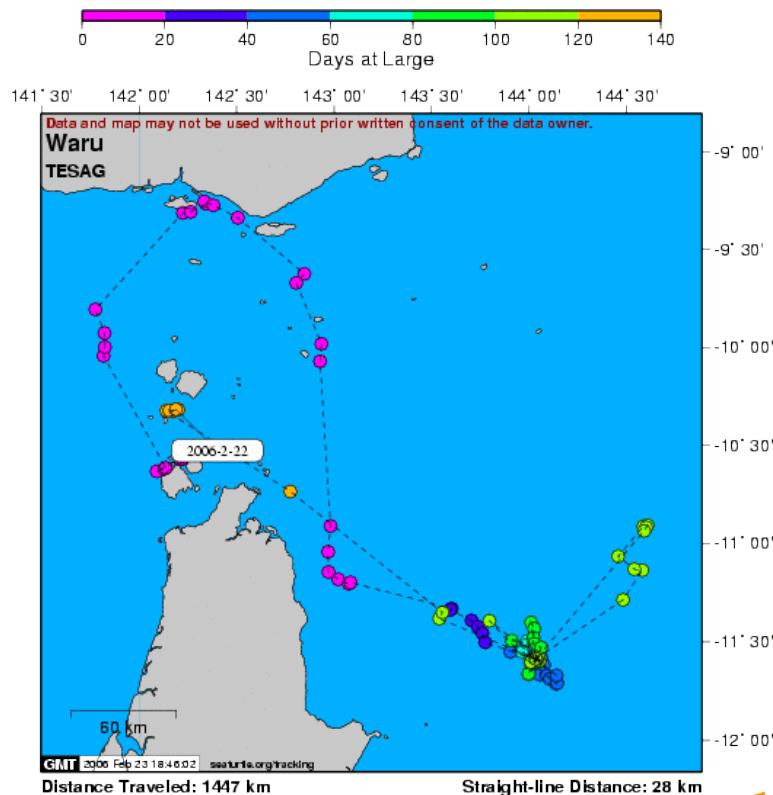
tracked swam nearly 200km in 4 weeks and yet stayed in Kaiwalagal the entire period it was tagged. Its tracking shows it made a large number of small trips and was most probably

chasing female turtles during saulal.

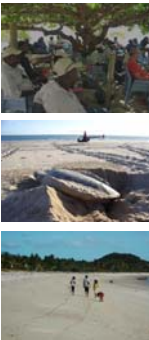
The satellite tracking work done by Hammond Island Community and the tagging that has been done on turtles at Raine Island over many years tells a similar story. Large numbers of the green turtles that call Torres Strait home and live on their feeding grounds go to nest at or on islands near Raine Island. James Cook University and some communities involved in the dugong and turtle project are looking at opportunities to place more satellite trackers on turtles in Torres Strait to watch their movements.

If you would like to know more about satellite tracking or turtle tagging call either Lachlan or Frank on 4069 2947.

Map of satellite track made by the turtle “Waru.” Picture produced by seaturtle.org



“One of the turtles travelled over 1400km and nested 7 times at Raine Island!”





## Torres Strait Regional Authority Land & Sea Management Unit

### Dugong and Turtle Project Newsletter

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The Torres Strait Regional Authority's Land & Sea Management Unit (LSMU) is coordinating the NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project in the 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, Mr Damian Miley on 4069 2957 or

Visit our website [www.tsra.gov.au](http://www.tsra.gov.au)

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

## St Paul's replaces Dauan in Dugong and Turtle Project

The Dugong and Turtle Project on Dauan Island has recently ceased. As a result, a recent meeting of the TSRA Executive recommended that St Pauls Community on Moa take Dauan's place.

The Executive justified its recommendation with St Pauls community being a big harvester of dugong and turtle and that having all three islands of Moa, Badu and Mabuiai would greatly assist the development of a cluster based

management plan for the western islands.

The TSRA Board approved St Paul's to join the project and TSRA staff have already made contact with the community Chairperson to organise a visit.

Project staff visited St Paul's in 2006 and the community were very interested in participating in the project. The Mualgal Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) including traditional owners

of Moa, have also been involved in the project discussions and will need to be centrally involved in any discussions about resource management on Moa.

TSRA Project staff will work with the Mualgal PBC and St Pauls Council to employ a project officer. For more information call Lachlan on 4069 2947.

## Project Officer Profile - Charles David, Iamalgal Traditional Owner

Charles David is a project officer employed under the NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project. Charles is based on Iama and is a traditional owner within the Kulkalgal region. He has strong ties to the islands of Tudu, Zagai, Sassie, Iama, Mukar and Gebar. His mother is from Mer from the Comet clan and totem is Garr (mangrove root).

Charles is very passionate about fisheries management and a strong advocate of the fishing rights of Torres Strait Islanders. Charles has noticed the changes in the biodiversity and ecological condition of the marine environment in his community's sea

country and from stories told of the Pearling eras by his father.

Charles is also the President of his Iama Fisheries Association and the Iama representative on the PZJA fisheries consultative structure for Torres Strait fisheries.

Charles says the main goal of the dugong and turtle project on Iama is to highlight that there is a sustainable hunting practice in his community and throughout his region. Currently he is advocating to implement traditional owner monitoring programs that incorporate traditional knowledge to work with western science.

If you want to speak to Charles about the Project you can contact him at the Iama Community Council on 4069 4195 or his mobile on 0427 943 848.



L to R, Charles David, Iama Project Officer with traditional owner Joman David. Photo by Lachlan Sutherland

