

New Turtle Nesting Sites Identified!

Earlier this year, Sea Sense recruited and trained 10 new Conservation Officers in Tanga, Pangani and Muheza Districts. The new officers began to monitor turtle nesting activity in April and 23 new turtle nests have been recorded so far. This is exciting news as until now, there have been no accurate records of turtle nesting activity in this area. Ongoing monitoring will enable Sea Sense to build a clearer picture of turtle nesting frequency in Tanga Region and identify areas of high risk to turtles.



One such area is Maziwe Island Marine Reserve in Pangani District. Maziwe Island was once a nesting site for endangered olive ridley turtles, which are no longer known to nest in Tanzania. Nesting green turtles in Maziwe now face the risk of slaughter from illegal fishers and nests are inundated with every spring tide. To increase the chance of successful hatching, Sea Sense Conservation Officers have been visiting Maziwe regularly and translocating turtle nests to the mainland. So far, 6 nests have been moved. We wait for them to hatch with eager anticipation. Wouldn't it be wonderful to find they are indeed olive ridley turtle nests! Watch this space!

In total, 192 turtle nests were recorded in Tanzania during the first half of 2009 and 8,051 turtle hatchlings successfully reached the sea. March and April are traditionally the peak nesting months for turtles in Tanzania and this year was no exception. 104 nests were laid in those two months alone, keeping Sea Sense Conservation Officers very busy!

Threats from Gill Nets

Direct observations of strandings and interviews with fishermen indicate that gillnetting continues to pose a major threat to turtles, dugongs and dolphins in Tanzania. Gill nets are commonly used in the southern Rufiji Delta which supports the last remaining population of dugongs in Tanzania. Sadly, a mother and calf drowned in a gillnet in the Rufiji Delta in February. Sea Sense was able to recover the bodies and take skin samples for genetic analysis.

Sea Sense, in collaboration with WWF, is working closely with coastal communities in the Rufiji Delta to encourage restricted use of gill nets and ensure dugong protection measures are incorporated into local bylaws.

As part of the Sea Sense ongoing awareness programme, our Education Officer recently took part in a radio interview in Dar es Salaam to raise awareness of the critical status of dugongs and promote the importance of marine conservation initiatives.



World Environment Day

To celebrate World Environment Day 2009, Sea Sense organised a competition for fishers in Rufiji District. 'Village Olympics' were held in 4 villages: Jaja, Kiecheru, Mbwera and Pombwe. Male and female fishers were encouraged to participate and the response was impressive. Several hundred spectators turned out to watch their friends and families take part in sack races, tug of war matches and sustainability games. Winners were awarded prizes including t-shirts, caps, torches and radios.



Competition participants from each village were invited to attend a ceremony on World Environment Day where overall winners were presented with mobile phones and stereos. The competition was great fun and succeeded in bringing communities together to appreciate the importance of marine conservation and sustainable resource use.

Marine Conservation Seminar

Newly elected Conservation Officers in Tanga Region attended a 2 day seminar in March to receive training in marine conservation issues and practical conservation techniques. The seminar was enjoyed by all and provided a valuable opportunity for new recruits to meet and share ideas and experiences with existing Conservation Officers and other Sea Sense staff.



Whale Shark Awareness

There have been frequent reports of negative interactions between night ring net (*dagaa*) fishers and whale sharks in Mafia. Whale sharks are attracted by the bright lights of the fishing boat and fishers also use whale sharks to locate the *dagaa*. The sharks can end up trapped inside the ring net and are often injured by the boat propeller. In June, Sea Sense held meetings with night ring net fishers in Kilindoni, Mlongo and Tumbuju villages to raise awareness and to agree on a Code of Conduct for fishing activities in the area.

Sea Sense would like to thank all their donors, including Born Free, WWF, EU and the Dar es Salaam Charity Goat Races for their support and funding. We would also like to thank all the Conservation Officers, as well as the District authorities, Village Chairs, Council members and Environment Committees for helping to protect endangered marine life in Tanzania.

International Recognition for Sea Sense !

In February, Sea Sense attended the 29th International Sea Turtle Symposium in Australia and presented research findings on incidental turtle by-catch in commercial prawn trawlers and on turtle meat consumption. Later this year, Sea Sense has been invited to present work on turtles, dugongs and whale sharks at the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association symposium in La Reunion. This invitation clearly demonstrates the importance and relevance, both nationally and regionally, of Sea Sense work.



Please help us to keep turtles alive by adopting a turtle, or a whole clutch!!

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