



Turtle Foundation

Foundation for the protection of sea turtles and their habitats

Newsletter November/December 2017

Dear friends and supporters of the Turtle Foundation,

In September, a publication in the scientific journal „Science Advances“ stated that in several conservation projects for sea turtles the number of nesting turtles has increased again in recent years. Approximately one third of 300 examined stocks showed a positive balance. This clearly demonstrates that years of continuous commitment and efforts for species protection are worthwhile! Such conservation successes are very encouraging and gratifying, however we have to remember the fact that the total number of wild animals on our planet has more than halved since 1970, while over the same period the number of human beings has doubled and still continues to increase. The current quantity of sea turtles in our oceans is still only a fraction of the population before the industrial revolution, and many populations are still declining and threatened by extinction. Therefore, great effort is still needed to limit the ongoing global decrease of wildlife and natural habitats, and to prevent species from becoming extinct forever.

The Turtle Foundation is very proud of its contribution to the protection of endangered turtles and their habitats over the years. However, this has only been possible with the invaluable help of our loyal supporters. Thus, today we are pleased to give you a brief synopsis of our activities this year.

PROJECT INDONESIA

The Derawan archipelago off East Borneo plays a special role in international sea turtle protection, as it is the largest nesting area of the green sea turtle in Indonesia, as well being an important population of the critically endangered hawksbill sea turtle. This is where the work of the Turtle Foundation began over 17 years ago, and where we continue to protect the nests of the green sea turtles from egg thieves on two important nesting islands of the archipelago, namely Bilang-Bilangan and Mataha. A team of 10 rangers patrols the beaches of the islands several times a day during day- and night-times. Although the current nesting season is still ongoing, the nesting data collected so far indicate that 2017 will be a good year with above-average nesting rates, while turtle egg poaching has been largely prevented.

An important step towards consolidating and expanding our activities in the region is our new cooperation with the big international nature conservation organization *The Nature Conservancy* (TNC).

While the TNC is developing a comprehensive management plan for the local marine reserve in cooperation with stakeholders and local authorities, the Turtle Foundation is implementing concrete conservation measures for the sea turtles.

In many regions of Indonesia sea turtles are still rampantly and unrestrainedly exploited despite their supposed legal protection. One such area is the Mentawai Islands off West Sumatra, where in May we conducted a field study on occurrence and threats to sea turtles. We found that not only are turtle eggs collected there, but also juvenile and mature animals are regularly hunted for their meat.



Ranger Pak Ben unearths a hatched green sea turtle nest on Bilang-Bilangan island. From the contents of the nests (shells, undeveloped eggs, etc.) important conclusions can be drawn on the reproductive biology of the turtles.

This is not only problematic from the conservational viewpoint. Indeed, consumption of turtle meat can be dangerous for humans. In the tropics, a still unknown biotoxin in turtle meat occasionally causes a type of food poisoning known as chelonitoxism, which is quite rare but often fatal, and especially affects children. In cooperation with local authorities, we are now working on educational programs to encourage local people to rethink their attitudes towards turtle meat consumption.

PROJECT CAPE VERDE

On the Cape Verdean Island of Boavista, a great and very exciting nesting season has just ended that was even topped by the [visit of Prince Albert II of Monaco](#) at our project site. For the first time, we had to equip and operate [five instead of three full fledged field stations](#) for beach protection. Additionally, in 2017 an unexpectedly high number of loggerhead sea turtles came ashore for nesting. As part of our protection against poaching, we guard every turtle we find nesting on the beach until it safely returns to the sea, and we simultaneously collect important biological data. Thus, there was a whole bunch of work to do for our operating and managing teams. The data including nesting numbers are still being evaluated, but we already know that with about 5,000 protected nests on our project beaches we have a new nesting record!

Our two major projects in Indonesia and Cape Verde are quite different in many respects. This applies not only to the species of turtles being protected and the measures taken to protect them, but also to the culture of the people involved, including employees and the local population. That's why we were all the more pleased that for the first time we were able to invite two colleagues from Indonesia, who were so far not yet involved in field work, to learn the „business“ of turtle protection on Boavista. In the near future, Zai Meriussoni and Stefanus Satotton Ake will supervise the new project on the Indonesian Mentawai Islands and will certainly benefit greatly from their experience in Boavista.

The end of one season is the beginning of the next season, so the preparations for next year are



Our Indonesian colleague Stefanus (right) is helping to rescue a female loggerhead turtle that got lost in the dunes after egg laying on Curral Velho beach, Boavista.

already in full swing. The increased support from our long-standing project sponsor *MAVA Fondation pour la Nature* will also result in a number of innovations and improvements on project and organizational level. This also includes the use of two conservation dogs, which will support our team on Boavista from 2018 onwards. The two Labrador puppies Karetta and Kelo from the well-known [Slovakian kennel Aguzannis](#) will soon start their training with the Swiss dog trainer [Marlene Zähler](#). For more information, please visit our [Facebook page](#) and our website.

TURTLE FOUNDATION RAFFLE

On 28 January 2018, the big travel fair FESPO in Zurich, Switzerland, will again host the drawing for our annual Turtle Foundation Raffle. This raffle greatly benefits our protection projects. There are 31 great prizes waiting for their winners, including travels and diving equipment. These prizes are worth more than 30,000 Euro (35,000 Swiss Franks 36,000 US Dollar) and are donated by renowned dive tour operators and diving equipment suppliers, whom we would like to thank here very much! With only 300 tickets to be sold more than one in ten tickets will be a winner. **All proceeds from the raffle will be used for the protection of the sea turtles.** You will find more information and the opportunity to buy the tickets on our website:

<https://www.turtle-foundation.org/en/tf-raffle/>

We would like to thank all our friends, sponsors, and partners, and would be very pleased and eternally grateful if you would continue to support us with your donation!

Your Turtle Foundation

Turtle Foundation

Registered Charity in Cape Verde, Germany, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and USA

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