

[< = Back](#)

**With permission, from "Sarawak Tribune", Front Page,
Thursday, June 18, 1998**

Drastic drop in turtle landings

By Roger J Duyong

KUCHING - Sarawak turtle islands have witnessed a drastic drop in turtle landings over the last 35 years. "Last year, there were 280,000 turtle landings with about one million eggs collected. Thirty-five years ago, three million landings during a season would be common," local expert Dr Charles Leh revealed yesterday. This year, the population of turtles, which include the hawksbill and olive ridley species, are expected to range between 600 to 1,000, depending on the weather, according to Dr Leh. The number of turtles began to decline during the war when hundreds of bombs were dropped in many of the landing areas, killing numerous turtles. After the war, the population did not increase and it was until lately that the turtles were showing signs of a comeback. Previously, the methods used to create reefs for marine life conservation involved structures like car bodies, lyres and barges which contained heavy metal toxins and other chemicals, believed harmful to the turtles. Moreover, siltation had caused the habitats of the turtles to become shallow. But the chief threats are still heavy fishing and hunting, particularly by illegal trawlers. Dr Leh said to prevent the turtles from extinction, the government had enacted a law to make them an endangered species. Measures had also been taken to deter trawlers from catching the turtles. However, some of the anti-poaching methods used were not satisfactory, prompting the authorities to try a new technology from the US called "Reef Ball." Dr Leh hoped it would help to solve the problem. The "Reef Ball" technology is now being applied around the turtle islands of Talang- Talang in the South China Sea.

[< = Back](#)
