



Marine Wildlife Research [<BACK](#)

The Marine Unit is responsible for the conservation management of all marine species within the State's jurisdictional waters (out to 3 nautical miles from the low water mark of the Sarawak coast) that are listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) protection.

In addition some local marine species that have been identified as under threat that are not listed under CITES have also been included for protection under the Sarawak Wild Life Protection Ordinance, 1998.

Marine turtle conservation programme

The conservation management of [marine turtles](#) in Sarawak is complex as various government agencies are involved: the Sarawak Museum, Turtles Board, Forestry Department and Marine Fisheries Department. The various aspects of conservation include rookery management; surveys; sea and land enforcement; education and research. Prior to 1995, the Forestry Department was involved only in enforcement and education. In 1995, it commenced its rookery management programme by opening a hatchery/in situ station at Tanjung Datu National Park. By 1996, another six stations were established at: Pulau Talang-Talang kecil: Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary; Similajau National Park; Kampung Puguh; Kuala Bandang and Tanjung Batu. In 1998 another two stations were established in cooperation with the existing Turtle Board hatcheries at Pulau Talang-Talang besar and Pulau Satang besar.

Reef Ball Project

This is the first reef ball project in Asia to deter illegal trawling. This would facilitate turtle conservation by reducing the number of turtle drowning due to incidental capture in trawling nets. "Reef Balls" were chosen for this purpose because they exhibit many features that mimic natural reefs and are not harmful to the marine environment. They also provide substrate for new coral growth, anchorages for buoys, eco-tourism dive sites and shelter for resting turtles. In April 1998 the "Sarawak Reef Ball Working Group" was formed to oversee all reef ball projects in Sarawak to ensure a coordinated and sound approach to marine conservation. The target for the first project was to produce 500 reef balls. In June 1998 two trainers from the USA conducted a two-week intensive training session and production of the reef balls commenced. In September 1998, 260 reef balls were lowered onto the seabed around the Talang-Talang Islands. The next 260 reef balls are scheduled for deployment in April 1999. A monitoring programme using SCUBA divers and underwater cameras, will be established in April 1999 to monitor the progress of the project.

Coral reef surveys

The Marine Unit has been conducting some surveys of the main [coral reef](#) areas within a 3 nautical mile limit off the Sarawak coast. The number of coral reef areas off Sarawak is limited due to shallow water which has a mainly clay substrate. Thus, the main surveys have been around the close onshore islands. Initial results indicate that since the water is very cloudy the corals are sparse in many areas. However, in areas where there are corals, the diversity is very high. The surveys will be conducted in more detail after year 2000. The results will be forwarded to "Reef Check" an internationally coordinated database from Hong Kong.

Additional activities

The Marine Unit also plays an active role in Wildlife licensing, education, and enforcement. Currently, a number of farms are being established to produce soft-shelled terrapin. Our researchers will be

monitoring the progress of these farms to establish the effects on this protected species.

For further enquiry, please [contact us](#)

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