

Main Identity

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Using reef balls to protect critical turtle habitat in Sarawak, Malaysia

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Four species of sea turtles namely the leatherback (*Demochelys c* turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and *(Lepidochelys olivacea)*, nest along the sand beaches and islands turtles account for 99% of nesting sea turtle recorded yearly. The nesting sites are located on the Sarawak Turtle Islands (Talang-S Park), consisting of Talang-Talang Besar, Talang-Talang Kechil an

All species of Chelonidae and Dermochelyidae are listed as Totally under the Wild Life Protection Ordinance, 1998 (Amended 2003). hunts, kills, captures, sells, offers for sell or claim to be offering f exports, or is in possession of, any totally protected animal or an or derivative thereof, or any nest thereof, except in accordance w

writing of the Controller of Wildlife for scientific or educational purposes or for protection and conservation of s animal, shall be guilty of an offence: Penalty – imprisonment for two years and a fine of twenty five thousand f Government Gazette, 2003).

In the old days the numbers of eggs harvested on the Sarawak Turtle Islands were astronomical: more than 3, collected in 1936 (Pritchard, 1979). At the present time, the Sarawak turtle population is in serious trouble, su 90% exploitation of the eggs laid since 1951. Besides over -exploitation of green turtles eggs in the past, accid adult turtles in fishing gears are also a major contributor to declining of turtle population in Sarawak (Tisen an

Every year, significant numbers of adult turtles have been found dead and believed to be caught in trawler net adult turtles were found stranded in Sarawak's beaches every year before 1998 (Bali et. al. 2004). The patrols trawlers are not effective because the trawlers can always spot the patrol boat first and flee immediately.

In view of this, the Sarawak Reef Balls Project was initiated. Reef balls were deployed randomly at areas that v inter -nesting swimming grounds for turtles during nesting season. With a sharp and rough surface, and weighi reef balls are suitable for ripping the trawler nets that become entangled on them. The aim is to keep trawlers turtle internesting habitats.

Since 1998, 2584 units of reef balls were deployed by the Sarawak Reef Balls Working Group (SRBWG) along the Sarawak coast (100 reef balls were sponsored by PETRONAS). 1572 reef balls were used for protection of sea turtles internesting areas around Talang-Satang National Parks. Another 1012 units were deployed at Lawas, Bintulu and Kampung Buntal (Kuching) in order to protect the fishing grounds of traditional fishermen from the illegal trawlers.

Deployment of reef balls in areas identified as internesting swimming grounds for sea turtles around Talang-Satang National Park resulted in a marked reduction in number of dead turtles reported (around 20-30 dead turtles annually compared to 70 to 100 before



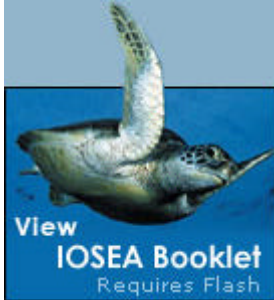
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1998). Besides that, local fishermen benefit from that project as their traditional fishing grounds are protected activities. Since the programme was initiated, the local fishermen have experienced an increased in catch and caught, resulting in increased income.

Around 5000 reef balls are still needed to protect the critical habitats (interesting swimming areas, nesting be grounds) and migration pathways of sea turtles along the almost 1000 km coastline of Sarawak. Most of the bi purchase and deploy reef balls.

Each reef ball is estimated to cost about RM 1,000 (approx USD 275) for construction only and another RM100 transportation and deployment (depend on location). Thus national and international based companies, private governmental agencies and non-governmental agencies are most welcome to sponsor for the Sarawak Reef ba the endangered sea turtles of Sarawak.

Anybody interested to sponsor for the reef ball project in Sarawak please contact us at:

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Note: Sarawak Reef Balls Working Group comprises of 12 governmental agencies in Sarawak namely: Sarawak Corporation; Department of Marine Fisheries Department Malaysia, Sarawak; Marine Police, Sarawak Continge Ministry of Public Health and Environment; Sarawak Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism; Sarawak Mir Development and Urbanization, Sarawak Tourism Board; Sarawak Natural Resources and Environmental Board Department; Sarawak Turtles' Board; Institute of Marine Fisheries, Sarawak; and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.



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