

A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM TO CONSERVE MARINE RESOURCES IN THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

SAHIR ADVANI¹ & NAVEEN NAMBOOTHRI^{1&2} #

¹Dakshin Foundation, Bangalore, India

²Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India

#naveen.namboo@gmail.com

The Indian Institute of Science, in collaboration with Dakshin Foundation and Andaman and Nicobar Island Environmental Team (ANET), has been monitoring the nesting and movement of leatherback turtles of Little Andaman Island since January 2008. While this work contributed significantly to our knowledge of this species, there was a need to undertake parallel conservation efforts directed at the conservation of the species and their habitats.

Various government ministries, departments, institutions and organisations have similar jurisdictions, mandates, responsibilities and roles that contribute to effective management and sustainable utilisation of the coastal and marine resources of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. While some of these mandates are in conflict with each other, many overlap, invariably leading to duplication of efforts or inadequate cooperation between departments. This necessitates greater interaction between different departments, organisations and institutions in the islands. More often than not, however, there is a lack of communication and information sharing between various departments and organisations involved in marine resource monitoring and management.

The conservation of marine resources in these islands is important from not only an ecological point of view, but also in the context of sustaining livelihoods. Degradation of habitats, unsustainable extraction of resources and limited interactions between varied resource users heighten the need for a collaborative approach to conservation and management. Opening a dialogue will help highlight issues that all stakeholders face in their interactions with the marine ecosystem and their impact on it. Over the years, there has been both research and conservation in the islands by various institutions from diverse fields. However, by complimenting and supporting each others' work, the outcomes could be far more beneficial and effective. Knowledge generated from such interactions can also feed into the management and

policy decisions.

Against this background, Dakshin Foundation and ANET, in partnership with the forest department, organised a workshop titled "Collaborating for marine conservation and resource management in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands" on March 24, 2012, at Van Sadan, Port Blair, India. One of the main aims of the workshop was to broaden the focus from sea turtle conservation to the pressing issues of maintaining healthy marine ecosystems and sustaining livelihoods that are dependent on them..

The primary focus of the workshop was to explore ways in which various organisations, institutions, departments, and entrepreneurs could work together to strengthen existing efforts towards effective resource management and environmental education in these islands. Participants included individuals from central government agencies, Andaman and Nicobar administrative departments, research institutions, non-governmental organisations, private entrepreneurs, media agencies, and agencies involved in environmental education in the islands. Participants provided an overview of activities specific to marine conservation and/or resource management conducted by their respective organizations. Participants were also encouraged to discuss circumstances where a lack of interaction with other departments led to problems in achieving their goal, and situations where work has been replicated as a result of inadequate information sharing. Suggestions to promote better collaborations with other departments and organizations were also encouraged. Facilitated group discussions were carried out to promote the beneficial exchange of ideas and identify different ways in which participants could interact and complement each others' work, with participants voicing views and concerns that affected their actions towards marine conservation.

A session focused on research, monitoring, management, and enforcement in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

resulted in detailed presentations and discussions on the present status of marine resource management and research, and solutions that could help improve conservation efforts. The role of private entrepreneurs and non-profit groups in marine conservation, and an appraisal of conservation education and outreach, were also considered. The importance of environmental education in the islands was stressed during presentations and discussions.

Facilitating a dialogue among the various key government and non-government actors interested in resource management and marine conservation in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was achieved, and several points of action were established and will be undertaken in the coming months. It was also determined that there was a need for a common platform where all agencies could interact in a meaningful manner. A consensus was reached that such a platform would undertake the following activities:

1. Take marine conservation science to the people of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands– facilitate the dissemination of conservation awareness through the media, with contributions from various institutions/ organisations.
2. Examine the contributions that private entrepreneurs

could offer to enforcement agencies and education initiatives.

3. Find ways to enlist the support of the A&N Administration and government research organisations in marine conservation, research and education initiatives.
4. Create a list of departments and the facilities and staff that they can offer as resource people towards conservation/ research/ education initiatives.
5. Highlight need based research and pointing out gaps for departments or individuals to fill.
6. Investigate the possibility of using AN.net to nest a marine conservation portal.
7. Create a core committee to facilitate collaborative initiatives for marine conservation in the ANI.

Assistance for organising the workshop was provided by the Andaman and Nicobar Department of Environment and Forests and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust. The workshop was funded by several agencies including the Duleep Mathai Nature Conservation Trust, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation, Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, The Ocean Foundation, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. ■

AN UPDATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON SEA TURTLES IN THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

ANDREA D. PHILLOTT

Asian University for Women, Chittagong, Bangladesh

andrea.phillott@auw.edu.bd

The contents of this issue of IOTN, and the recent publications below, should be used to complement the bibliography on sea turtle records and research from the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago published in 2007 (see IOTN 5: 14-18).

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