

Announcements

Developments under the IOSEA Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding

By the time this issue of the IOTN newsletter is distributed, the IOSEA Website (www.ioseaturtles.org) will have undergone a major transformation, to improve its functionality and appearance. Among the new features on offer:

- ✎ An appealing new look with a cleaner, more efficient presentation of a vast amount of useful current information; many of the pages have been set up to be “print-friendly”, to allow for instant generation of aesthetically-pleasing reports;
- ✎ A versatile search function allows users to query the entire website, including the archives and news stories, for particular keywords;
- ✎ The project database, containing some 50 entries, now has an integrated keyword search and sort facility that makes for a very powerful investigative tool;
- ✎ The “Useful contacts” list has also been transformed into a searchable, sortable database to increase its versatility;
- ✎ The functionality of the Online Reporting Facility has been improved to allow for quicker and even more sophisticated queries of national report data;
- ✎ The “What’s New” feature has been upgraded to allow for auto-generation of monthly messages to subscribers;
- ✎ The “Message Board” captures, in a central location, useful information and announcements; and
- ✎ “Headlines” appear in a more dynamic, space-saving display;
- ✎ A “Species Overview” section has been added containing, for the time being, basic information on the species covered by the IOSEA MoU, which will be expanded and upgraded systematically in the coming months;
- ✎ A link has been added to a new set of pages designed to contain specialized information on the Year of the Turtle - 2006 campaign (see below).

Behind the scenes, the management system for the website has been completely overhauled to allow for more efficient posting and updating of information on the site.

Apart from these improvements, the website retains all of the substantive features that users have grown accustomed to: the Interactive Mapping System (IMapS), the Electronic Library, the Flipper Tag Series, the Profile of the Month, regular news features, and a whole host of other information. The Secretariat encourages IOTN readers to take advantage of this unique “one-stop shop” for information on marine turtle conservation in the Indian Ocean – South-East Asian region.

Year of the Turtle - 2006

Next year has been declared the Indian Ocean – South-East Asia (IOSEA) ‘Year of the Turtle’ (YoT). This exciting campaign will raise awareness of the diversity of social, cultural, ecological and economic values of marine turtles, as well as the habitats on which they depend. The theme of the YoT, “*Cooperating to Conserve Marine Turtles – Our Ocean’s Ambassadors*”, is intended to stimulate collaborative, concerted actions to conserve and manage these threatened animals. The YoT has five separate objectives that will shape the activities of countries across the region:

- (1) To increase public and media awareness of the diversity of social, cultural, ecological and economic values of marine turtles - at international, regional and community levels.
- (2) To develop sound policies that recognize and emphasize the socio-economic benefits of conserving turtles, whilst ensuring that any traditional or other use of turtles is sustainable.
- (3) To conserve habitats of importance for marine turtles, through a new international initiative to create a network of key sites throughout the IOSEA region.
- (4) To highlight the urgent need to address the problem of fisheries by-catch, by increasing policy linkages between the objectives of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU and the interests of relevant regional fisheries management organisations.
- (5) To enhance funding and other forms of support available for marine turtle conservation and research in the IOSEA region.

The IOSEA YoT 2006 is shaping up to be a significant milestone for marine turtle conservation in the region, and interest continues to grow each day. The campaign will consist of numerous country-specific YoT events held across the region, coordinated under the IOSEA umbrella. The IOSEA Secretariat and a YoT Steering Committee provide overall direction and leadership for the campaign, but the YoT events to be held in each country are decided upon at national and local levels. With less than five months until the launch of the campaign, at the Meeting of IOSEA MoU Signatory States (SS4) in February/March 2006, the IOSEA Secretariat encourages all IOTN readers to get involved in this “once in a lifetime” campaign by nominating activities you would like to host in your country.

A range of projects is being developed to promote the YoT and ensure the year is a great success for the ongoing conservation of marine turtles. These include preparation of fundraising items, such as a YoT 2006 wall calendar, T-shirts and pens, and a collection of silver jewellery. These promotional products will be produced and distributed free to countries for use either as gifts or to raise funds for turtle conservation. Other initiatives include printing of postcards to help promote the campaign, and the development of a DVD highlighting the main issues facing marine turtles in the region. The latter will be suitable for use at YoT events, for soliciting potential sponsors and (in its shortened, public service announcement format) for raising public awareness. If significant sponsorship is secured, the IOSEA Secretariat proposes to develop a YoT documentary that could be screened on major cable TV channels across the region. Similarly an Ambassadorial Dinner, which would bring together regional Ambassadors to fundraise and celebrate marine turtles, could be a significant YoT event if financing is secured.

The Secretariat is also developing some longer-term conservation projects that will ensure that research and science continue to inform marine turtle conservation efforts well beyond 2006. A YoT tagging initiative could supply YoT numbered and registered titanium tags to countries in the IOSEA region that have been unable to develop or maintain a comprehensive tagging programme. A YoT Leatherback/Tsunami Assessment project, already underway, will complete a detailed evaluation of the conservation status of the Leatherback turtle in the region post the December 2004 tsunami. Finally, an ongoing project to develop a comprehensive network of coastal and marine sites of importance for marine turtles in the region is expected to come to fruition in 2006. The sites will include important nesting, foraging, developmental and migratory habitats, and will serve as models of best practice that may be replicated throughout the region and elsewhere.

A YoT Steering Committee has been convened and is providing leadership for the overall direction of the campaign. Committee membership was determined at the Third Meeting of IOSEA Signatory States (Bangkok, March 2005), and its members are drawn from five Signatory States, one non-Signatory, two Advisory Committee members, one commercial organization and one intergovernmental body. The committee works remotely, chaired by Ms. Elisabeth McLellan (WWF International) and serviced by the YoT Organiser (Ms. Stephanie Dunstan).

The types of activities that countries across the region may conduct as part of the campaign is wide-ranging and open to suggestion. They could include the development of national marine turtle action plans, declaration of new protected areas, initiation or extension of long-term census work, tagging and release of satellite-tracked turtles, training workshops on fishery by-catch mitigation and

public awareness-raising about marine turtles through print and audio-visual media. From the second half of October 2006, dedicated YoT web pages linked to the IOSEA Website will be the main source of information for YoT activities, containing a searchable calendar of all YoT events, as well as media briefings and a downloadable YoT logo. The IOSEA MoU Secretariat welcomes the participation and contributions of IOTN readers in the YoT campaign. Please use this opportunity to celebrate marine turtles and showcase to the rest of the world your work in helping to conserve marine turtles. If you have any ideas for events or activities you would like to conduct please contact the IOSEA Secretariat by email: iosea@un.org.

The Marine Turtle Newsletter (<http://www.seaturtle.org/mtn/>)

The Marine Turtle Newsletter is published quarterly (January, April, July, October) and distributed free of charge to over 110 nations and territories. Started over two decades ago, it remains the only periodical of its kind. Throughout the world, scientists and non-scientists alike rely on this humble but highly acclaimed publication for timely information concerning the biology, conservation, management, legal status and survival prospects of all species of endangered and threatened sea turtles.

The aims of the Newsletter, as articulated in the first issue, are:

1. to provide a forum for exchange of information about all aspects of marineturtle biology and conservation, and
2. to alert interested people to particular threats to marine turtles, as they arise.

Original manuscripts are welcome; peer-review is routine. Free and timely publication contribute to the vital role that the Newsletter plays in sea turtle conservation in many developing nations. Because most sea turtles are globally distributed and all are highly migratory, international availability ensures an open line of communication among scientists, conservationists, and policy-makers in multiple range states.

The Marine Turtle Newsletter is also published online <<http://www.seaturtle.org/mtn/>>. If you would like to subscribe or submit anything for publication contact the Editors Dr. Annette Broderick and Dr. Brendan Godley at mtn@seaturtle.org or by post at:

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Conservation and Society (<http://conservationandsociety.org>)

Conservation and Society' is a peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal that aims to promote work on the theory and practice of conservation. Conservation and Society was initiated two years ago as an interdisciplinary journal to integrate conservation research from the natural and social sciences. Although the journal was originally visualized to have a focus on South Asia, its geographical scope has been expanded to include issues regarding conservation from developing countries around the world. The journal is committed to disseminating information in the developing world. **Free online**

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