

# The Tri-national Sea Turtle Marine Biodiversity Conservation Corridor



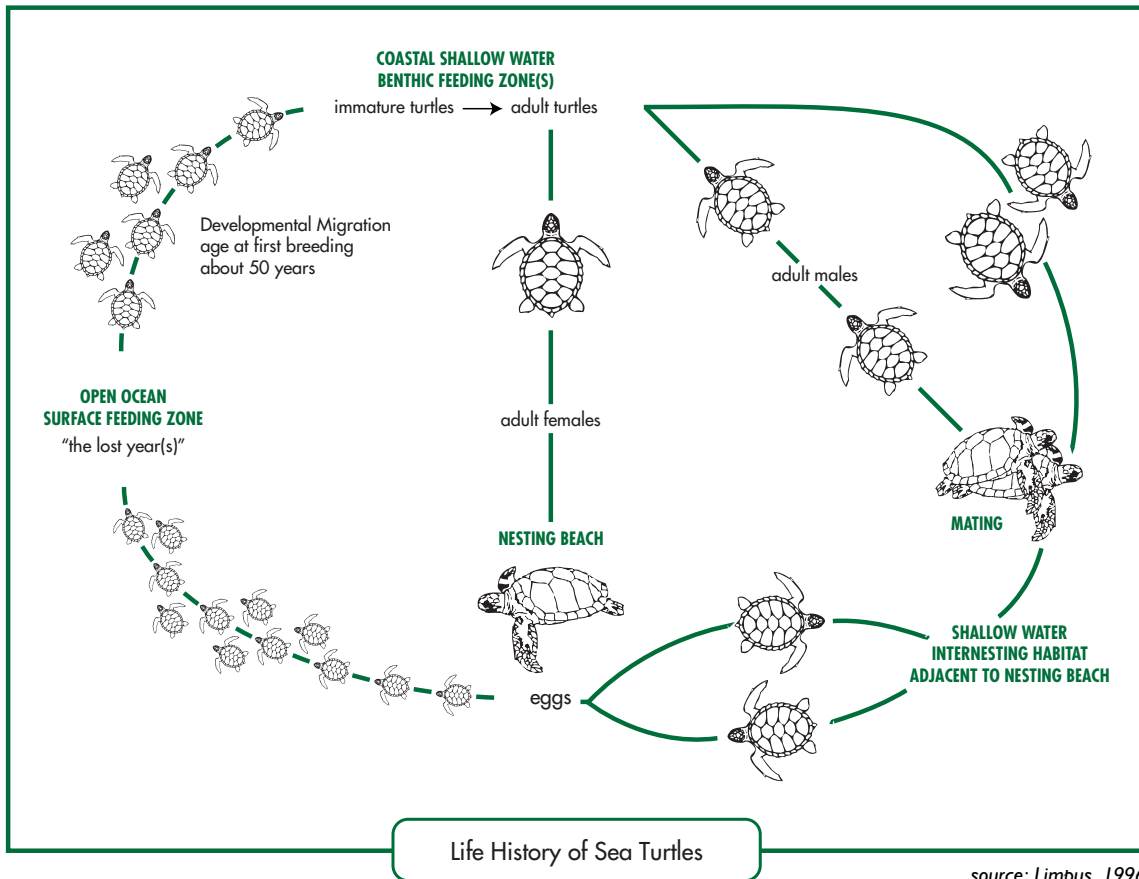
The **Tri-national Sea Turtle Marine Biodiversity Conservation Corridor** harbors the largest aggregation of nesting green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and significant nesting populations of hawksbills (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in the Southeast Asian region. It comprises an area of over 7.8 million hectares spanning Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Extensive and highly productive mangrove forests, seagrass beds and coral reefs characterize the corridor. However, the area is increasingly subjected to serious man-made threats such as destructive fishing, overfishing, siltation and poorly planned coastal development.

The **Tri-national Sea Turtle Marine Biodiversity Conservation Corridor** is situated in the waters and islands of three Southeast Asian countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Government representatives and stakeholders from these three countries are working together to protect this critical habitat of sea turtles and other marine creatures.

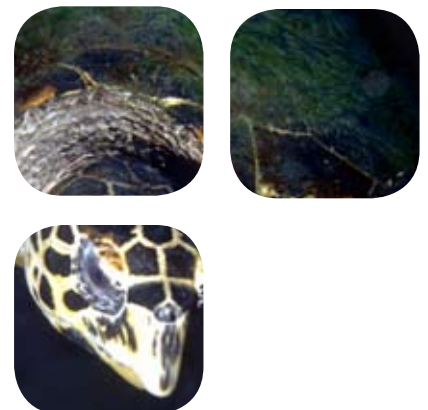


To demonstrate the link between human welfare development and biodiversity conservation, CI and its partners are working together to protect the Tri-National Sea Turtle Corridor as one of its priority sites under the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape initiative.

Essential activities in the corridor include the establishment and management of marine protected areas (MPAs), species research and conservation, strengthening partnerships and alliances with stakeholders from Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as the development of sustainable financing mechanisms to protect this conservation corridor.



Sea turtles underscore the significance of the tri-national corridor to global biodiversity. Turtles, just like any flagship species, tell us the big story, about the state of natural systems crucial to biodiversity. The turtle population is an indicator for the environment's capacity to sustain living organisms, a basis for projecting future scenarios if current levels of exploitation and other threats remain. It is also a basis for the extent of conservation and management interventions needed, and a measure of the successes or failures of these interventions.



# Protecting Turtles for future generations



CI in partnership with governments and local organizations in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia continued to strengthen five (of seven) MPAs in the corridor.



Conservation activities have been geared towards strengthening of existing MPAs; supporting the gazettlement of a new, large and co-managed MPA; providing the science for the network of MPAs through genetic mapping of turtles; and designing an MPA network that will protect turtles in nesting habitats, foraging areas, and migration routes.

## Critical Conservation Outcomes



- To step up the monitoring of green and hawksbill turtles in a relatively new MPA, the Sugud Islands Marine Conservation Area (SIMCA), which consists of the islands of Lankayan, Bilean and Tagaipil. SIMCA is located about 80 kilometers off Sandakan mainland and about 40 kilometers from Turtle Islands Park.



SIMCA is threatened with turtle egg poaching and other illegal and destructive fishing activities. In close cooperation with Sabah Wildlife Department and the Police Field Force, Reef Guardian protects SIMCA by intensifying sea patrols and maintaining marine law enforcement in and around the MPA.

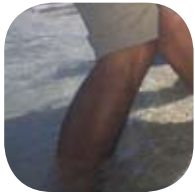


- In Turtle Islands Park (Selingan, Gulisaan & Bakungan Kecil Islands), a major site for Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and hawksbill turtle (*Erectmochelys imbricata*), CI through a partnership with WWF-Malaysia prepared a business plan, including measures to increase revenues for management from tourism. The plan has been submitted to the government for review and implementation.
- In the Sugud Islands Marine Conservation Area, Sabah, CI facilitated strengthened law enforcement through a 50 percent increase in sea patrols in three islands (Lankayan, Bilean and Tegaipil). Prior to this, sea patrols were non-existent. Now, the sea patrols are credited for reducing dynamite fishing and turtle egg poaching. Sea turtle nesting beach monitoring has also been expanded from Lankayan to Bilean Island.



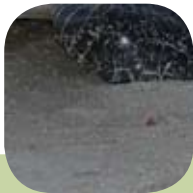
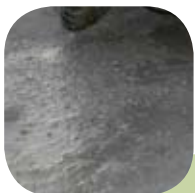
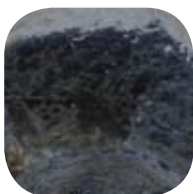


- In the Philippines' Turtle Islands Wildlife Sanctuary, CI worked with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau to draft a management plan for the area. The next step is to present the plan to the central government in the Philippines for approval.



- In Tun Mustapha Park, Sabah, CI in cooperation with Sabah Parks and WWF-Malaysia has supported the gazettement of marine areas in the Park. Ethnobiological surveys that identify important sea turtle nesting and feeding areas have been completed. This information will be used to support a sea turtle conservation component in the management plan and zoning. Outreach efforts are currently focused on building support among local communities and government for establishment of no-take areas within the Park.
- In the Berau Coastal and Marine Conservation Area of Indonesia, CI worked with Udayana University to undertake genetic studies on green and hawksbill turtles have been completed and the results are ready for presentation to stakeholders in order to improve MPA zoning and sea turtle and habitat protection policy.

On a broader scale, CI and partners have prepared a Regional Action Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape. The plan includes all available information on sea turtles in the Seascape, the rationale for a network of MPAs in the tri-national corridor and beyond, and recommendations for management. CI is also supporting efforts to mitigate the impacts of fisheries on sea turtles and their habitats in the corridor. Specifically, CI supported studies on by-catch, with the cooperation of the fishing sector, to identify by-catch areas and to provide recommendations for policy reform aimed at reducing trawl fishing impacts on sea turtles. CI is also supporting the incorporation of conservation and best practices in aquaculture planning for the corridor.



Conservation International supported surveillance and patrols in the Tri-national Sea Turtle Conservation Corridor including the apprehension of a Chinese vessel with 12 crew and 387 dead sea turtles. CI currently supports the legal process against the illegal turtle hunters.

Efforts to limit fishing to non-destructive methods in four islands of the Berau Coastal and Marine Conservation Area are also underway.

# Interlocking goals of turtle conservation and human well being

- Sustained technical and financial assistance for the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area (TIHPA) from the international community to address the issue of nests flooding due to erosion and the shifting of nesting beaches;
- Completion of the gazettelement of the Tun Mustapha Park, to become a model of large and co-managed MPA in Malaysia that links human survival and protection of species and habitat. This will be the first of this kind and of this scale in Malaysia. This is a significant transborder corridor not only between the Philippines and Malaysia, but also between the Sulu Sea and South China Sea;
- Creation of a network of MPAs that protects turtles in its different developmental stages, benefits other wildlife, sustains productive ecosystems and human populations and is fully supported by stakeholders;
- Institutional networking of MPA management units for the purpose of exchanging experiences, lessons, and skills for better MPA management;
- Implementation and enforcement of relevant park and fishery laws through cooperative arrangements among concerned groups;
- Management cost of MPA network shared by stakeholders and supported by sustainable financing mechanisms;
- Development of fishery policies in support of the protection of turtles and other wildlife in their critical habitats and migration routes; and
- Strong and functional tri-national governance fully implementing species conservation action plan that directly benefits marine biodiversity, protects habitats and sustains the people of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas



*"Beyond the survival of turtles, there is also the issue of human welfare. In the Tri-National Sea Turtle Marine Biodiversity Conservation Corridor, it is imperative to have a strategy to establish a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) that primarily targets sea turtles, and also implement actions to pursue the goals of conservation and sustainable development for the benefit of the peoples in the three nations."*

Evangeline Miclat  
Marine Program Coordinator  
Conservation International-Philippines



Sea turtles are key to the vitality of web of life that inhabits the Sulu-Sulawesi. We let them live and we let the oceans live.

**Be at the center of conservation.**

**Help us keep the Tri-national Turtle Conservation Corridor alive.**



If you are interested to learn more about the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape, contact:

Conservation International-Philippines  
No. 6 Maalalahanin Street, Teacher's Village, Diliman, Quezon City  
1101 Philippines  
Tel. No. +632 924 8235  
Fax No. +632 435 6446  
Email: [sssi\\_info@conservation.org](mailto:sssi_info@conservation.org)

Founded in 1987, Conservation International believes that the earth's natural heritage must be maintained if future generations are to thrive spiritually, culturally, and economically. Our mission is to conserve the Earth's living heritage, our global biodiversity, and to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature.

For more information, visit [www.conservation.org.ph/sssi](http://www.conservation.org.ph/sssi)

*Photo credits: Juergen Freund, CI Philippines*