



OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

Registered Charity in the UK #1165905

ISSUE 1 | 2016

NEWS FROM THE FIELD



THE OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT ACTIVELY FIGHTING GHOST NETS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN



Welcome to the Olive Ridley Project Newsletter

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you up to date with our latest projects and research. We also wish to highlight the importance of the information you send us. We believe that the fight against ghost gear cannot be solved by one entity. The solution relies on collaboration and a strong connection with fishing communities in the region.

2015 in brief

Early in 2015 ORP travelled to the Maldives to announce an exciting new partnership with Coco Collection Resorts. Find out more about our partnership on page 3.

Continuing the development of our volunteer base in the Maldives, we conducted workshops at Amilla Fushi, Taj Exotica, Gili Lankanfushi, Kuredu and Komandoo Resorts, Kurumba, Constance Moofushi, One and Only, and Soneva Fushi.

MARCH We released an animated video, which can be found [here](#), detailing the dangers of ghost nets in the Indian Ocean.

APRIL We made our way to Turkey for the 35th International Sea Turtle Symposium (ISTS) where we presented our work in the Maldives. ORP's founder and chief executive, Martin Stelfox, brought the issue of ghost gear to the Indian Ocean and South East Asia Regional Meeting. Read more about our work at ISTS on page 5.

MAY We welcomed a new team member, Imaha Mohamed (Kaia), as our Community Outreach Officer. Meet Kaia on page 9.

Chief executive Martin Stelfox spent three months on Koh Phi Phi, Thailand where he carried out a number of workshops to train divers on data collection and bring awareness about ghost nets and marine debris.

JUNE Kaia, along with Jesse from Coco Collection, represented ORP at the One Nation Coral Revival event,

which was organised by Save the Beach. See the story on page 6.

Throughout June and July, Annie Kurian from the Terra Marine Research Institute, along with students from St. Josephs College, (Diksha, Archana, Nitya and Shravan), surveyed beaches in Karwar on the western coast of India for injured turtles and ghost nets. Meet Annie on page 9.

SEPTEMBER We made our way to London, England for the second annual Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) meeting. Read about the GGGI meeting on page 5.

OCTOBER Martin was back in the Maldives to be part of the Northern Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force meeting and to give a seminar at the University of Malé. He then travelled to Karachi, Pakistan where he spent a few weeks training divers, meeting fishers and working with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Read more on page 8 and meet ORP-Pakistan's Project Coordinator, Absar Khan on page 9.

NOVEMBER We announced a partnership with Fourth Element, a company who makes clothing, swim wear and technical gear. Their new line of swim wear, Ocean Positive, is made using recycled ghost gear.

DECEMBER By the end of December our volunteers had reported 118 entangled turtles and 2 entangled manta rays. We recieved data for 148 ghost net conglomerates made up of more than 280 single nets! Find out our top data submitter on pg 10.



Coco Collection Partnership

At the beginning of this year, ORP partnered with Coco Collection Resorts in the Maldives. Our partnership will be based on their Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu and Coco Bodu Hithi properties, which are located respectively in Baa and North Malé Atolls.

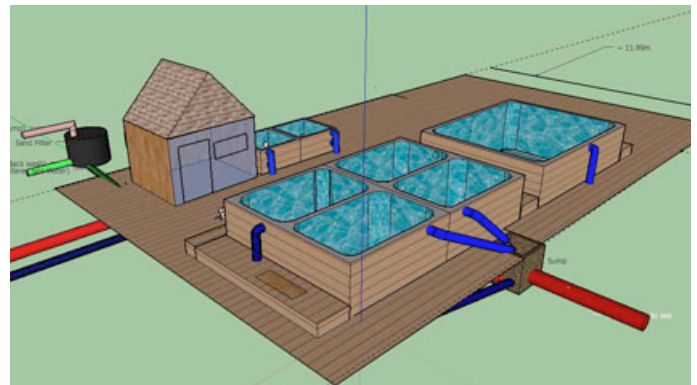
We are very excited about this partnership, as it will allow us to build a turtle rescue center on both properties; the first rescue center is expected in 2016 at Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu with plans to build the second on Coco Bodu Hithi in the following years.

By opening these rescue centers, we will be able to help injured turtles under the guidance of a turtle expert/ veterinarian and further educate guests and locals from nearby islands. Because there is a shortage of animal rescue facilities in the Maldives, many injured turtles go uncared for and are released back into the wild before they are ready.

We are currently about half way towards our fundraising goal to build our first rescue centre.

Ahead of the announcement, Martin Stelfox, founder of ORP, Jillian Hudgins, ORP's senior project scientist, and Chiara Fumagalli, Coco Collection's resident marine biologist, conducted a series of workshops for guests and staff at Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu. The team went through procedures to follow when encountering a ghost net and/ or entangled turtles. See more photos on our blog [here](#).

Our team also visited the local school of Thuladhoo, where we educated students about turtle biology and why ghost nets pose a serious threat on the Olive Ridley sea turtle. We held a competition between the students to see who could create the most interesting image regarding turtles and the threats they face.



Above: 1st place drawing by Abaan Sharyf grade 10. Second place by Mohamed Yoosuf Grade 10 and Third place by Hunaidha Abdul Raheem Grade 10.

We want to thank Coco Collection's staff and guests for their continued support for our project.

Introducing Chiara Fumagalli

Chiara Fumagalli has been a part of Coco Collection's environmental initiatives since July 2012.

She has been familiar with the Maldivian waters since early 2000, when she joined a local resort group after having completed her postgraduate studies at the University of Milan in the field of Marine Biology.

During her time in the Maldives, she has initiated numerous projects focusing on the protection of vulnerable species such as whale sharks, manta rays and sea turtles.

Chiara has always been curious and passionate about Marine Biology. She is particularly concerned with conservation, environmental changes and education with an emphasis on environmental awareness and preventative measures.

"The most relevant part of my work", Chiara explains, "has always been filling the gap between science and the public. I believe sustainable tourism plays a key role in the conservation of our environment and people's spontaneous engagement is essential. A holiday in a beautiful destination is a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness about the strong bonds we have with the oceans, regardless our place of origin. What I do appreciate most about the Olive Ridley Project is that it brings together all of these aspects. It's a citizen science project, and it's about sustainable fishing, ocean pollution, sea turtle conservation and more. It exposes how our lifestyle choices impact the environment and beloved animals, particularly sea turtles. "

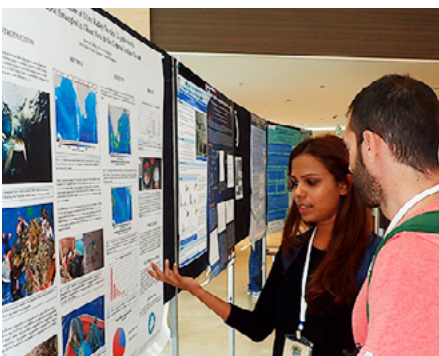
"I believe sustainable tourism plays a key role in the conservation of our environment and people's spontaneous engagement is essential."

Chiara Fumagalli snorkeling with a resident Hawksbill Turtle.





Turtle Necropsy techniques to determine cause of death, how to analyse stomach contents and diagnosing DCS.



Martin Stelfox presenting ORP's poster at the Turtle Symposium.

International Sea Turtle Symposium

In April, ORP staff Martin and Jill attended the 35th ISTS meeting, the biggest annual gathering of sea turtle researchers, which took place in Dalaman, Turkey.

We were happy to meet people from all over the world who are involved in the protection of sea turtles through research, rehabilitation and community outreach. However, it was evident that there is still a lot of work to be done! Sea turtles face a number of natural hazards, but anthropogenic threats (human-related), such as bycatch, pollution, poaching and ghost nets pose even greater risks to all species. We were surprised to find that the dangers of ghost gear to turtles did not seem to be a well researched subject, although we did see entanglement encounters presented from other places in the world.

Martin Stelfox gave a short presentation of ghost gear and their effects on sea turtles at the Indian Ocean – South-East Asia regional workshop. ORP presented a poster about its first year findings, which was well received. We also went off-site to visit the Dekamer Turtle Rescue Center near Iztuzu Beach on the south west coast of Turkey. Touring the facility, we got some ideas for our own rescue center opening soon at Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu Resort in the Maldives.

The ISTS organized workshops on several first aid procedures including the proper way of removing circle hooks, J hooks and lines that have been ingested by turtles. There was also information on necropsy techniques for determining the cause of death, stomach content analysis, decompression sickness diagnosis, and bio-logging and satellite tag attachments techniques.

We are excited for the upcoming 36th ISTS in Lima, Peru happening in March 2016!



Martin Stelfox presenting the threat of ghost gear to sea turtles in the Indian Ocean.

Global Ghost Gear Initiative Meeting

In September, we made our way over to London, England for the second annual Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) meeting.

The GGGI is a global cross-sectoral alliance of NGOs, IGOs, governments, and industry representatives that aims to improve the health of marine ecosystems, protect marine animals, and safeguard human health and livelihoods by driving solutions to the problem of lost and abandoned fishing gear worldwide.

ORP was one of only two representatives from the South-East Asia and Indian Ocean Region. Martin gave a presentation on ORP's past work and future plans in the Indian Ocean. ORP has joined the "Building Evidence" Working Group, with Martin Stelfox acting as a co-coordinator. Our Working Group is currently attempting to standardize data collection protocols on ghost gear on a global scale.



One Nation Coral Revival & The Maldives Whale Shark Festival

In June, ORP's Community Outreach Officer Kaia, along with Jesse Carrizzo from Coco Collection, represented ORP at the "One Nation Coral Revival" event, organized by Save the Beach.

Jesse gave two presentations on both days explaining how ghost nets can trap and kill marine wildlife. He highlighted how marine turtles are particularly at risk of entanglement.

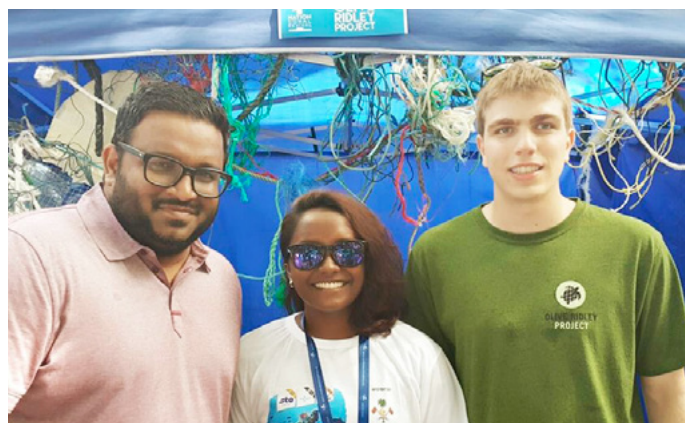
A large Olive Ridley Sea Turtle made entirely out of recycled materials (created by Project Damage Control with material found in the streets of Villingili) was the first thing you could see when you approached our tent. Its body was made from plastic bottles representing the problem of turtles eating plastic. Its flippers and shell were wrapped in ghost gear sending out a powerful message on what happens to turtles that are unlucky enough to encounter ghost nets.

A strong message was portrayed with the art and it was a great opportunity to bring communities together to show their creative side.

In August, Kaia gave a presentation that summarized ORP's previous two years of data at "Science Fest" a two day event that preceded the 2015 Maldives Whale Shark Festival in South Ari Atoll.

The Whale Shark Festival is an annual celebration of Maldivian Marine Life. The festival culminated in a parade involving sculptures of marine animals made of recyclable or renewable materials. Project Damage Control was on hand once again to create a turtle out of plastic bottles and ghost nets.

See more from the festival [here](#).



From left: Minister of Tourism Ahmed Adeeb, Kaia and Jesse outside the ORP stand.



Filling the main body of the turtle with bottles found in the streets of Villingili.

Northern Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Taskforce

The Government of the Maldives together with the secretariat of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU) invited the Olive Ridley Project (ORP) to a subregional workshop to establish a Northern Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Taskforce that was held in Malé, Maldives in October of 2015.

Country representatives from the Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh gathered to discuss ways to protect sea turtles in the region. The workshop addressed common threats in each country including poaching, the threat of domestic animals on nesting beaches, poor headstarting programs and coastal development to name only a few.

ORP discussed the issue of ghost gear to the group which was widely recognized as an emerging threat with an unknown consequence. Pakistan was the first country to recognize the issue. ORP and Pakistan are now working together to address this issue. We are excited to work with other countries in the coming months.



From left: Rebecca Regnery from Humane Society International, Project Scientist Annie Kurian and Martin Stelfox.

ORP would like to congratulate the appointment of Khadeeja Ali, Senior Research Officer at the Marine Research Centre (MRC) as Vice Chair and Muralidharan of the Dakshin Foundation, India as the Chair. Congratulations and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Project Jinni Dhaa

Project Jinni Dhaa – meaning ghost net in Dhivehi – is a collaborative effort between Project Damage Control, a social action project founded in Male' in 2013 as part of the Commonwealth Change Makers program, and ORP.

Project Jinni Dhaa will work with local Maldivian artists to recycle old ghost nets into artworks, small sculptures and jewellery, which will be sold through Maldivian resorts. The aim of Project Jinni Dhaa is to reduce the number of discarded ghost nets ending up back in the ocean and to provide a platform for local artists to create extra income. Project Jinni Dhaa will also work with local agricultural islands to reuse ghost nets in their gardens. We hope to expand these projects in 2016!



Agricultural use of a ghost net to grow creeping plants.

The Creation of ORP-Pakistan

In October 2015 ORP headed to Pakistan with the help of the Rufford Foundation. The Pakistan coastline stretches across two major provinces - Baluchistan and Sindh. Although it is known that fishers lose fishing gear in Pakistan, the true extent of the issue remains relatively unknown.

With the help of WWF and the knowledge of local divers, ORP started to speak with local fishers in the province of Sindh along the Karachi coastline, which included Baba and Bhit Island, Mubarak village, French Beach and Ibrahim Hyderi. ORP also visited numerous local markets to identify the types of fishing gear currently used in the local area. In collaboration with the University of Derby in England, we are planning to incorporate these nets into an ID atlas to identify ghost gear throughout the region. During the visit, ORP also worked with local divers to clean up the popular dive site of Charna Island.



Martin Stelfox talking with local fishers on Baba Island in Pakistan.

ORPs close work with local divers created a passionate and dedicated team working towards helping fishers in the region. Soon after ORP-Pakistan was created, we appointed a local Project Coordinator, Absar Khan. The aim of ORP-Pakistan is to promote discussion and increase awareness of the issue of ghost gear amongst the local community. The team not only responds to lost fishing gear by retrieving and giving it back to the local community, but we work with fishers to find potential solutions. We are extremely excited to have Absar on board and we are confident that building strong bonds

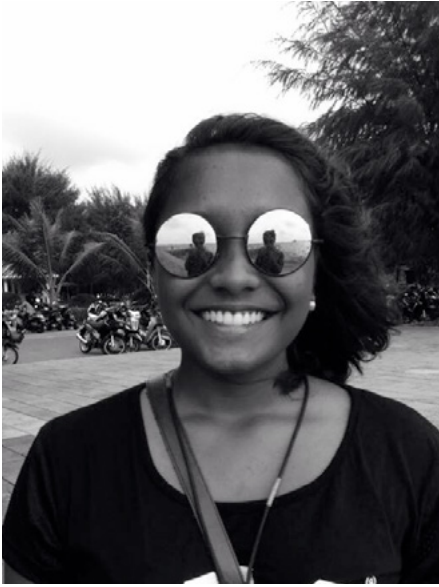
with local fishers will open up new possibilities in the fight to reduce ghost gear.

We sincerely thank WWF-Pakistan, Scuba Adventures Pakistan, Absar Khan, Sindh Wildlife Department and The Rufford Foundation for all the help given during this pilot trip.

Image credit Umair Bin Habib



Introducing Our New Staff Members



Imaha Mohamed, or Kaia as she is known, was born in the Maldives but lived in Sri Lanka much of her childhood. She was fascinated by the ocean and with marine life from an early age, and decided to become a Marine Biologist after learning about the threats facing the ocean and its organisms. Once she returned to the Maldives, Kaia volunteered for various ocean conservation organisations, began studying Marine Science, and embarked on a course of PADI dive certifications to realize her dream of becoming a Marine Biologist.

When Kaia was introduced to the Olive Ridley Project in 2015, she immediately wanted to be a part of the work to save turtles. Along with other volunteers at Project Damage Control, a social action project founded in 2013 as part of the Commonwealth Change Makers program, Kaia is heading up a project for the Olive Ridley Project that aims to recycle old ghost nets into arts and craft. Kaia is currently working as a Coordinator for the MSPEA (Maldives Seafood Processors and Exporters Association) and continue to study Marine Science.

Kaia



Dr. Annie Kurian has helped to lead the charge in the study and conservation of sea turtles in India. From a dream that took birth during her University days, when she studied Environmental Sciences in Bangalore in 1999, she pursued sea turtle research in her Masters in Marine Biology in Karwar, resulting in some pioneering research and conservation work on Olive Ridleys in the area between 2000 and 2002.

During her Ph.D., she investigated the ecology of selected turtle nesting habitats in nine coastal states and the major islands of India.

Annie is co-founder of Terra Marine Research Institute (TeMI). At TeMI she directs the Programme for Sea Turtles and Coastal Resources, studying how the livelihood of traditional fishing communities are factored into research and conservation programmes. Annie was the editor of the 2013 WWF-India publication “Marine Turtles along the Indian Coast”.

Annie



Driven by passion for the natural world, Absar Khan is a scuba diver, a mountaineer, and an adventure-loving soul, who left his former career of practising law in England and moved to back to his home country of Pakistan to pursue his lifelong dreams. Marine and mountain conservation resonated within him and he is the newest member of the ORP team. Focusing on field surveys, logistics, and planning for expeditions, Absar has been directly trained by Martin Stelfox and continues to work on our projects in Pakistan. As a divemaster as well as an assistant climbing instructor with Mountain Wilderness – Pakistan, he brings a wide range of skills to the field that help him tremendously in achieving our goals. Our latest projects in Pakistan include conducting surveys to identify the scale of the problem as well as reusing ghost nets and working with the local communities for which Absar is an essential member of the team.

Absar



2015 Results

We've tallied up the numbers and want to give a huge THANK YOU to all of our data submitters in 2015! 118 turtles and 2 manta rays were reported to us along with 148 net conglomerates (large masses of nets, ropes, floats and other debris) made up of 283 single nets.

Our top 3 turtle rescuers in the Indian Ocean:

- 1 Marine Savers and Four Seasons Resorts Maldives with 16
- 2 Amilla Fushi Maldives with 7
- 3 Prodivers Maldives and DivePoint Meedhupparu Maldives both with 6

Our top 3 ghost net reporters in the Maldives:

- 1 Coco Collection Coco Bodu Hithi with 12
- 2 Coco Collection Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu and Eco Centre Kuramathi Island Resort on Kuramathi Island Maldives both with 8
- 3 Amilla Fushi Maldives and Prodivers Maldives both with 6

Our top 3 ghost net reporters in the Indian Ocean:

- 1 Terra Marine Research Institute - TeMI in India with 43
- 2 Blue View Divers in Thailand with 17
- 3 Coco Collection Coco Bodu Hithi in the Maldives with 12

Thank you to everyone else who submitted data on ghost gear and entangled animals!

Just a reminder, our data collection protocol and online submission form can be found [here](#)





Plans for 2016

2016 will be a busy year for ORP staff as we continue to work towards cleaner oceans.

In 2016 we are planning to open our first rescue centre at Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu. We are also planning for the expansion of Project Jinni Dhaa in the Maldives, and a second trip to Pakistan planned for January in order to conduct fisher surveys and engage with the Indus School of Art in order to brainstorm ways to rework ghost nets into works of art.

In February, the team is off to Oman thanks to Six Senses Zighy Bay and Extra Zighy Bay Divers. We will be conducting presentations and workshops for divers and tourists. We will then fly to Muscat to work with local NGO the Environmental Society of Oman, who have offered to take us to Masirah Island, home to the largest nesting population of Loggerhead turtles in the Indian Ocean. We will engage the local community on this island and then returning to Muscat to give a workshop

to the Ministry Of Environment (MECA), Navy, Ministry of Agriculture, divers and the general public.

In March, we will be attending the 36th International Sea Turtle Symposium in Lima, Peru, where we will be holding the first ever ghost gear workshop. We will be gathering with turtle researchers from the Indian Ocean and around the globe to talk about standardizing entanglement records on a regional and global scale. We are happy to announce that sea turtle veterinarian Mariluz Parga from SUBMON in Spain will be giving a presentation on turtle emergency first aid procedures.



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PROJECT**

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Join us in the fight against ghost gear

Found a ghost net?

Download our data collection protocol and submit your ghost net data [here](#)

Find out how you can get involved:

Visit our [website](#) or read more about our projects on the [blog](#)

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