



OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

Registered Charity in the UK #1165905

ISSUE 2 | 2016

NEWS FROM THE FIELD



Image credit: Pro Divers Maldives

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

Maldives trip April 2016

ORP Project Scientist Jillian Hudgins travelled to the Maldives in April to carry out training and awareness presentations for tourists, school children and citizen scientists.

Speaking to staff of Coco Prive Resort. All staff members were in attendance.

Image credit: Lisa Bauer



The trip was partially funded by an educational grant from State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWOT).

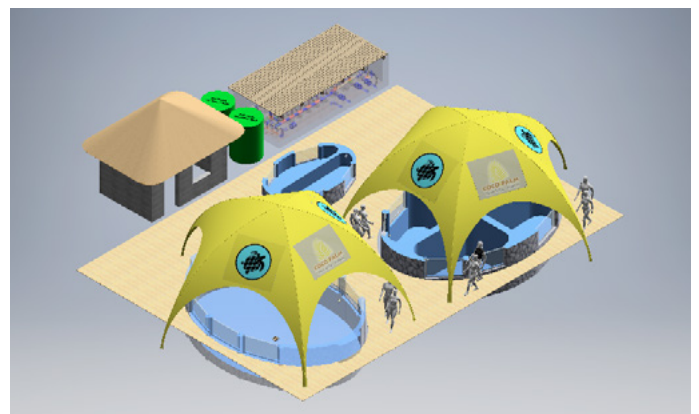
Surprisingly, many tourists in the Maldives have never heard the term “ghost gear”. Despite a great majority of people consuming fish and using fish related products, a connection between buying seafood in their home town and the impact this may have on marine resources is often overlooked. ORP is always excited to have the opportunity to engage with tourists, providing a better understanding of how buying sustainable seafood back home may directly reflect the impact of ghost gear and the health of the Indian Ocean thousands of miles away.

ORP doesn't only engage tourists, but makes a concerted effort to educate our youth. We truly believe that providing children with information surrounding environmental issues must be a key component to any environmental action plan. During our visit, we had the opportunity to visit with the students of Baa Kihaadhoo and Baa Thulaadhoo schools. We covered topics from sea turtle biology and marine debris to facts about ghost gear and details on the new legislation protecting all life stages of sea turtles in the Maldives (effective 4 April 2016). We always like to enrich our programs by providing hands-on educational experiences, like games and competitions, that encourage the students to be actively engaged and eager to learn. This time we cleaned the school grounds and sports field. Then, the students separated the rubbish into what could and could not have been reused. The students were surprised by just how much “one time use” waste we produce.

A relatively new, but effective, method of data collection within the scientific community is to train regular

citizens as scientists. In ORP's case, we train tourists, boat crew, divers, marine biologists, snorkel guides and just about anybody with an interest in collecting data to build evidence on the issue of ghost gear in their local region. During this trip, we continued to train our citizen scientists on what to do when finding entangled turtles and how to collect detailed and complete information. This ensures proper documentation of each ghost gear encounter in order to build evidence to help mitigate the problem.

Of course no trip to the Maldives is complete without visiting our friends at Coco Collection Resorts. Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu, home to our Turtle Rescue Centre project has reached over half of its target goal, which was raised by the resort's generous guests. Construction will begin in July with a grand opening scheduled for the end of September 2016. Final tweaks are being made to the design. Check it out below!



Schematic of the ORP Turtle Rescue Centre at Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu due to open in fall 2016.

Image credit: Mohamed Didi

MALDIVES TRIP APRIL 2016

By the Numbers

6 tourist resorts visited:

LUX* South Ari, Coco Bodu Hithi, Coco Privé, Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu, Amilla Fushi, One & Only Reethi Rah

100 tourists attended an education presentation about sea turtles and ghost gear

150 staff members (citizen scientists) trained on data collection protocol and basic sea turtle first aid.

2 local island schools visited: Baa Kihaadhoo & Baa Thulaadhoo

60 school children and their teachers attended an education presentation about sea turtles and joined in an island clean up

50 university students and concerned citizens (including members of the government ministries and local NGOs) attended a seminar on the effects of ghost gear on sea turtles in the Indian Ocean at the Maldives National University hosted by IUCN Maldives & MNU.

Left: Approximately 25 grade 9 students joined in a sea turtle and marine debris awareness session on Thulaadhoo Island in Baa atoll.

Image credit: Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu



Coco Bodu Hithi staff members put their new skills to work by removing marine debris, including this derelict fishing line that was tangled on the reef.

Image credit: Lisa Bauer



A large ghost net removed from the reef by the staff of Coco Prive resort who underwent a training session by ORP.

Image credit: Coco Prive Resort



Meet ORP's Charity Trustees

*The Olive Ridley Project became a registered charity in the UK in March 2016.
Take a closer look at our board members.*



Nicola Weeden – Chair of Trustees

Nikki graduated from the University of Plymouth in 2009 with a BSc (Hons) in Marine Biology; the focus of her studies was the diversity of shark populations in the Bahamas. After graduation, Nikki worked alongside Martin Stelfox and Dr. Jillian Hudgins in Mexico, monitoring coral health and diversity on the Meso-American Barrier Reef and teaching volunteers about the marine environment.

Since August of 2011, Nikki has worked with UK Diving Tour Operator blue o two. She has spent a lot of time in the Maldives on blue o two liveaboards, hosting “Project Shark” itineraries, which teaches divers about shark ecology, biology and threats to the shark populations.

Nikki has always had a passion for conservation; when Martin approached her about getting involved with the Olive Ridley Project, she was only too happy to get stuck in.



Dr. Michael Sweet –Trustees

Dr. Michael Sweet, an Early Career Researcher, is the head of the Molecular Health and Disease Laboratory at the University of Derby and Manager of the Aquarium Research Facility. Since completing his PhD in 2011, he has published 38 papers in peer reviewed journals, co-written a book on Molecular Ecology and spoken at numerous conferences and workshops.

He currently has four PhD and two master students in his research team who are all working on various topics, including studying reproduction and development in corals and sharks and the effects of ghost gear on marine turtles. Dr. Sweet's diversity in research areas makes him an all-round generalist Marine Biologist with a clear drive and passion for understanding what is happening in the marine environment as a whole.

Dr. Sweet has been associated with the Olive Ridley Project since meeting founder Martin Stelfox in the Maldives. Martin Stelfox is currently conducting his PhD at the University of Derby under the guidance of Dr. Sweet.



Mark MacDonald –Trustees

Mark MacDonald (MScF) is a Wildlife Ecologist at the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources in American Samoa, where he manages several wildlife recovery projects and is the marine turtle biologist for the territory.

The focus of Mark's avian projects is concentrated on the use of translocation and captive rearing as a means for species recovery in listed or locally rare bird species. Mark grew up in Prince Edward Island, Canada, flipping rocks and sloshing through vernal pools in search of critters. Today, he does much the same throughout the South Pacific and has had the great fortune of spending time with some of the world's most wonderful wildlife. *“We need more groups with the dedication and passion of ORP to fight for the preservation of our natural heritage.”*

International Turtle Symposium: Lima, Peru, March 2016

Between the 29th of February and the 4th of March, ORP conducted a ghost gear workshop at the 36th annual International Sea Turtle Symposium held at the Universidad Científica de Sur.

"For three and a half decades, the Annual Symposium has been the focal point of building scientific knowledge of sea turtles. The Symposium encourages discussion, debate, and the sharing of knowledge, research techniques and lessons in conservation, to address questions on the biology and conservation of sea turtles and their habitats."

internationalseaturtlesociety.org

ORP organised the first ever ghost gear workshop at the event and invited some of the world's leading experts to share their research and experience on the topic. Amongst the speakers was Dr. Kiki Dethmers from the Northern Australia Marine Research Alliance (NAMRA), who gave us a summary on her genetic work with entangled olive ridleys in the Gulf of Carpentaria (GoC). Kiki studies suggest that Australian rookeries in the Northern territory and within the GoC are losing turtles to ghost nets. We were also joined by veterinarian Mariluz Parga from Subman, who shared her extensive experience on turtle entanglements around the world. Mariluz

provided a range of information from how to deal with the ingestion of hooks and necropsy in flippers to how to recognise clinically deceased turtles and administer CPR. After our guest speakers, ORP opened the floor to discussion on how we can collectively manage the issue of ghost gear in relation to sea turtles. It was agreed that its impact on turtle populations continues to remain unknown and future studies should try to focus on exploring this relationship further. ORP is one of very few groups quantitatively building evidence on the impact of ghost gear on sea turtles. Recognising this gap in data, we are now working on developing an open-access database that records ghost gear encounters and turtle interactions throughout the Indian Ocean. We hope that such a platform will better quantify the issue and centralise all existing information on ghost gear and turtle entanglement that currently exists.

During the Symposium, we had the opportunity to give a short presentation about our work to members of the Indian Ocean and South East Asian regional meeting. In addition, a poster highlighting the need for regional cooperation between governments, NGOs, scientists and fishers was presented. We look forward to next year's International Sea Turtle Symposium in Las Vegas.

We would like to thank Coco Collection Resorts for helping us attend this symposium.

Check out the ORP Report in SWOT: Action on Ghost Gear

"Marine debris, including ghost gear, affects all seven species of sea turtles in various ways. The life cycle of sea turtles makes them particularly vulnerable to entanglement in ghost gear because they occupy various habitats during different life stages. Ghost gear on nesting beaches may act as obstacles for nesting females or may entangle hatchlings trying to crawl to the ocean. The early life stages of sea turtles are relatively unknown, but it is generally accepted that once hatchlings reach the ocean, they drift with the currents and winds to convergence zones, where they encounter floating mats of algae that provide protection and shelter. Unfortunately, marine debris follows those same paths and accumulates in the same convergence zones..."



Read the full ORP report here on pages 36-39



Mitt i Naturen crew and Tina get to work removing a ghost net that was smothering the coral reef.

Image credit: Joakim Odelberg

© Joakim Odelberg

Mitt i Naturen Document the Impact of Ghost Gear

As part of a documentary following Dr. Sylvia Earle, we had the pleasure of welcoming a film crew from Mitt i Naturen channel, Sweden's leading nature programme.

Our partner resort, Coco Collection, and resident marine biologists, Tina Buchegger, welcomed Mitt i Naturen. Tina explained the threats faced by sea turtles in the Maldives and the impact that ghost gear has on marine resources. It didn't take the team long before they found a ghost net on a local reef and got to work removing it. We look forward to watching their program later this year.



Tina Buchegger explaining the issue of ghost gear in the Maldives.

Image credit: Joakim Odelberg

Asif, a local fisher from Rehman Goth (centre), and Shoaib from WWF (right) pulling up a ghost net retrieved by divers.

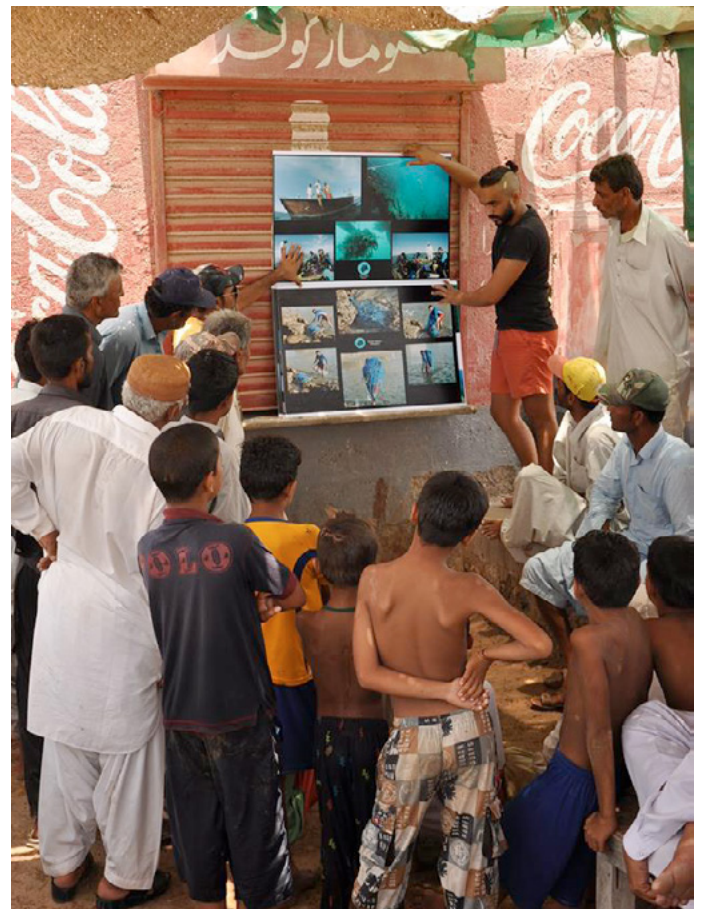
Image credit: Umair Bin Habib

ORP-Pakistan Update

ORP volunteers and Project Coordinator, Absar Khan, together with the help of WWF-Pakistan and local fishers, have been working closely to reduce ghost gear at the Rehman Goth fishing village in Karachi.

ORP continues to conduct educational presentations and ghost gear removal dives for the people in Rehman Goth village with the intent of building a long lasting relationship with the community. So far, the fishers of Rehman Goth have collected a staggering thirty bags of ghost nets (two van loads). The majority of nets were collected from the turtle nesting beaches of Sandspit and Hawksbay. Nets were temporarily stored and then repurposed for an art project that uses the material for sculptures (see page 12 for the full story). We continue to work closely with the community and have very exciting projects lined up for the future. We would like to thank the kind contribution of Californian Pizza and Divers Reef Karachi for donating scuba tanks and emergency equipment for all of our recovery dives. We also want to thank Umair Bin Habib, Shoaib Abdul Razzaque, Kashif Ayoub, Usman Iqbal and countless volunteers for continually supporting the project and striving for change in Karachi. This project would not have been possible without the generous financial contribution of The Rufford Foundation. www.rufford.org

ORP and WWF-Pakistan organised a workshop to engage with the local trawling community with the aim of understanding their needs, perspective and their position in the complex problem of ghost gear. Twenty-three fishermen, ten people from Marine Fisheries Department and five people from Karachi Fish Harbour Authority and Fishermen Cooperative Society attended the workshop.



Project Coordinator, Absar Khan, teaching the Rehman Goth fishing village the dangers and impact of ghost gear on the environment.

Image credit: Maximilian Loh.

Educational slides produced by Umair Bin Habib

Project Coordinator Absar Khan and local fisher Asif investigate the ghost nets collected by Rehman Goth village.

Image credit: Umair Bin Habib



ORP-Pakistan Update

Of course, ghost gear is not the only challenge the community faces, but it was recognised as a problem. Many fishers expressed that they had multiple encounters with animals entangled in ghost gear.

Video footage of ghost nets trapping commercially valuable fish helped reinforce our message to the trawling community. It allowed them to not only see the environmental impact of ghost gear, but that these drifting nets can affect their livelihoods as well. We are happy to have made a point of contact with the fishing village, so that they might reach out to us when encountering discarded gear and entangled animals. Only together can we understand the effects of ghost gear and try to find solutions. In addition, we produced an educational leaflet with contact details to our project coordinator, Absar Khan, who is able to collect damaged or lost fishing gear, which encourages fishers to bring back damaged nets or floating ghost gear. This leaflet has been translated into four local languages (Urdu, Balochi, Sindh and Pushto) and 300 copies have been distributed throughout the community.

We are currently working on incorporating education and gear management, storage, marking, disposal and retrieval programs into a detailed action plan that can be used in Pakistan. We look forward to keeping you updated with this project.



Fishers of Rehman Goth responsible for collecting ghost gear in the community. *Image credit: Umair Bin Habib*



Founder, Martin Stelfox, presenting the issue of lost fishing gear to the trawling community of Karachi (translated by Mohammad Moazzam Khan - WWF-Pakistan). *Image credit: Umair Bin Habib*

Sustainability officer, Marelle Venter, from Six Senses Zighy Bay, Oman removing a ghost net from the local reef.

Image credit: Martin Stelfox

Oman Trip

Thanks to Six Senses Zighy Bay and Extra Zighy Bay Divers, ORP had the chance to conduct presentations and workshops for guests and divers at the resort. The training now enables divers to retrieve and record all ghost nets found whilst out diving in the bay. This information will be sent to us to help build evidence on the impact of ghost gear in Oman. We also had the opportunity to dive on the colourful coral reefs, and we managed to remove lots of ghost gear along the way. In Oman, fish traps are often deployed, but unfortunately, many are lost during operation and continue to catch and kill marine wildlife.

We then flew to Muscat to meet with the local NGO Environment Society of Oman (ESO), who took us to Masirah Island, home to the largest population of Loggerhead turtles in the Indian Ocean. We spoke with numerous fishers in the region to understand how much gear is lost and why. It quickly became apparent that ghost gear was a problem in Oman. Large volumes of ghost gear could be found discarded on beaches with nobody responsible for removing the gear.

ORP then travelled back to Muscat to present a series of workshops to numerous stakeholders including: local divers, Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA), Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth (MAF), Five Oceans Environmental Services, Royal Navy of Oman, universities, coast guard and the general public. The workshop had an open discussion about how best to manage the issue and how leadership on



Project Scientist, Dr. Jillian Hudgins, removing a ghost net that was smothering a coral reef at a local dive site.

Image credit: Martin Stelfox



Dr. Jillian Hudgins (left) and the Zighy Bay dive team showcase the nets retrieved from the bay.



Martin giving a talk to government and non-government stakeholders about the impact of ghost gear in Muscat, Oman.

Image credit: Jillian Hudgins



Bashaar Zaitoon, who guided the ORP team on Masriah Island, displays a monofilament ghost net. *Image credit: Martin Stelfox*

Oman Trip

installing policy and regulations on lost gear could be implemented. We also discussed how local divers and fishers could be more connected with each other, since a clear divide currently exists that prevents divers from removing ghost gear for fear of being fined by fishers. Although the project is in its infancy, we are working closely with ESO, MECA and MAF to establish a clear action plan to reduce ghost gear in Oman. We look forward to revisiting the area later in 2016.



This entangled crab trapped in a ghost net was later released on to the reef. *Image credit: Martin Stelfox*

Rasheed removing a ghost net.
Image credit: Coco Bodu Hithi Resort

Results

as of the end of May 2016...

TURTLES RESCUED:



3 GREEN
3 HAWKSBILL
29 OLIVE RIDLEY

TOP TURTLE RESCUERS (2016)


Tess Moriarty (Velaa Private Island),
Marine Savers, & Huvaafenfushi: all
with 3 turtles rescued

NETS REMOVED:

122 CONGLOMERATES
MADE UP OF
164 SINGLE NETS

**TOP SUBMITTERS OF NET DATA
IN 2016 (NETS)**

- 1 Pakistan: Absar Khan: 50
- 2 Maldives: Coco Bodu Hithi : 7
- 3 Oman: Extra Divers Zighy Bay: 7



Sculpture designed by Ramla Fatima. Ramla hopes to use ghost gear in a similar way to create another work of art.
Image credit: Ramla Fatima

Ghost Gear Art

Knowing what to do with unwanted ghost gear is a big challenge, so, when Pakistani artist Ramla Fatima asked us to collect ghost gear for her art, we quickly got to work and collected as much as we could! Ramla hopes that her art will remind us that the sea is an important part of our lives. We caught up with Ramla and this is what she had to say...

"My work revolves around the dematerialization of the body and its identity. I often use small objects to build large, whole structures, much like the human body becomes a complete system only with the coming together of individual parts. Making use of found objects, the work assembles and reassembles everyday objects and discarded objects to explore the relationship between possessions and identity.

My recent body of work incorporates reclaimed fishing nets and ropes that have been lost at sea. I am working on a sculptural installation exclusively out of "ghost nets" and discarded material found on the sea shore. "Ghost nets" have proved to be a very exciting art material, which is quite relevant to my subject matter – i.e. "dematerialization of the body". I hope when people look at my work, it will remind them of the importance of the sea."

- Ramla Fatima



ORP Partners with Fourth Element OceanPositive

ORP is excited to partner with OceanPositive as part of our fight to combat ghost gear.

If you fancy purchasing swimwear for yourself, remember to apply the code **"Olive-Ridley"** at checkout, and ORP will receive 10% of the sale. If you would like to stock this line of swimwear at your resort or dive shop, please contact us: info@oliveridleyproject.org

Visit shop.oceanpositive.net to see the full range



More about OceanPositive

"OceanPositive is made using recycled nylon from "Ghost" fishing nets, abandoned by fishing vessels after snagging on reefs and wrecks. These "Ghost Nets" continue to fish, often ensnaring marine life and posing a hazard to divers. The Ghost Fishing Project enlists teams of divers to remove these nets and bring them to the surface, where they are recycled.

OceanPositive uses finest quality Lycra® fabric made with these recycled nylon yarns to turn the traditional product development model of "Cradle to Grave" on its head, as we create a line of swimwear from marine waste.

OceanPositive takes dangerous fishing gear, sourced by divers, and makes a practical product line, designed by divers, to be comfortable under a wetsuit.

We meet divers from all over the world who are

passionate about the health of the oceans. This is a product designed for them: one which is genuinely good for our environment and helps to clean up our seas"

OceanPositive new range of hydroskin rashguards are designed to wear under a wetsuit or semi-dry suit for comfort and as a UV shield for other watersport activities such as snorkelling. OceanPositive hydroskin rashguards and swimwear are made using sustainable techno-fabric made with Econyl® - 100% regenerated polyamide fibre from post-consumer materials - which, when tested in real life conditions are two times more resistant to chlorine, suntan creams and oils than other fabrics; these amazing results are achieved thanks to innovative construction and to the presence of LYCRA® XTRA LIFE™."

www.oceanpositive.net





ORP display made out of ghost gear that was found around the island. This gear has been brought back to Male to be reused in an art project.
Image credit: Kaia

Lhaviyani Turtle Festival

Many NGOs, companies and environmental groups gathered for an atoll-wide turtle festival hosted by Naifaru Juveniles. The event raised awareness on the issue of marine debris and turtle conservation. ORP volunteers were on hand to give information about the impact of ghost gear in the Maldives. Community Outreach Officer, Imaha (Kaia) Mohamed, along with our friends at Project Damage Control, shared a display and got to work on educating visitors. Of course, our stand got creative by spelling out ORP in ghost gear, which was collected by Kaia during her visit. These nets were taken back to Malé as part of our project Jinni Dhaa (Ghost net) that aims to reuse the material. We are excited to see how this develops over the coming months.

A special thanks to Aiham and Risla from Project Damage Control, Rai and Shuhan from Save the Beach and Zim for all their help with the ORP tent and display.



Community Outreach Officer, Kaia, working hard at the ORP stand, handing out information about marine debris and explaining the impact ghost gear has on marine turtles and other animals.
Image credit: Project Damage Control

Designed by: Susie Gibson www.susiegibson.co.nz; Edited by: Danielle Gravon www.daniellegravon.com; Subscription Manager: Jannicke C Hallum



**OLIVE RIDLEY
PROJECT**

Registered Charity in the UK #1165905

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](#)

Follow us



or contact us [here](#)