



# OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

Registered Charity in the UK #1165905

ISSUE 3 | 2017

NEWS FROM THE FIELD



*Image credit: Umair Bin Habib*

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





ORP's veterinarian, Dr Claire Petros, with Coco's Group General Manager, Antony Paton (Left) and Resident Manager, Nasrulla Ali (Middle), at the turtle rescue centre opening ceremony, held on Dhuni Kolhu resort.

Image credit: ORP/Coco

## ORP welcomes Dr Petros as the vet for its new rescue centre

*Greetings from the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre in Dhuni Kolhu. We have had an extremely eventful three months, from arrival in mid-November to the opening ceremony at the beginning of February!*

Our veterinarian, Dr Claire Petros, arrived in the Maldives in November, becoming the first and only sea turtle veterinarian in the country! As part of Claire's training she was introduced to the local school in Hithadhoo, where thirty or so children were eager to learn about what was happening on their neighbouring island. This partnership is one that will greatly benefit the community of Hithadhoo, as we will set up a close relationship with the school, which will include regular presentations and teaching opportunities. We will also have school trips to the centre, so the children can meet the patients, and learn a little more about how they are treated with veterinary medicine.

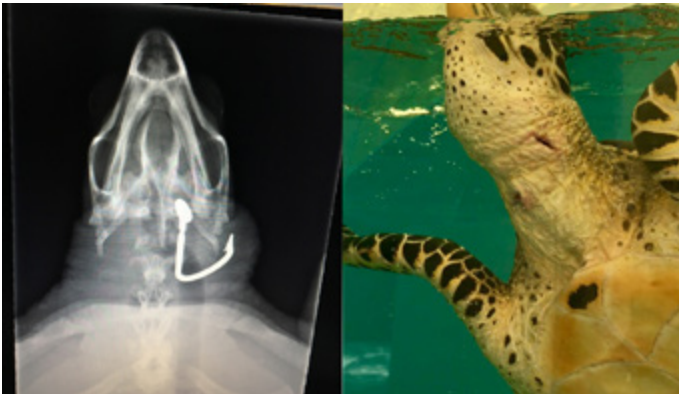
By December, Claire had designed the layout of the operation room and ordered the larger equipment, such as the operation table, lamp, scales and microscopes. This equipment will enable local children to learn about parasites and blood samples on their visits to the centre. Just after Christmas, an Olive Ridley was found by guests out on a jet ski tour. The turtle was affectionately named Pauline by the girl who rescued her. Pauline was floating with netting wrapped around her neck. Upon further investigation, this poor turtle had tried to free herself



Claire's first workshop with the children of Hithadhoo. The start of a long and successful partnership.

Image credit: Martin Stelfox

from the net by swallowing the majority of it! Once the 25 cm long net was pulled free and de-leached, she was taken to our tanks to establish her swimming and diving capabilities. She passed with flying colours and looked so relieved to be free from the net, so we released her later that day. Our first successful release!



Hawksbill turtle found with a hook in its throat by our friends at Amilla Fushi resort. After minor surgery, Ali-Jappo is making a full recovery and will be released close to where it was found.

*Image credit: Claire Petros*

Since the start of 2017, we have already had two more patients, both juvenile hawksbills suffering from severe infections. Unfortunately, when juvenile hawksbills are found floating in the shallow waters, it is usually because they are extremely unwell, and despite medical treatments they are often too sick to be saved.

We are excited to announce an official partnership with Trans-Maldivian Airlines, who have agreed to help

transport injured turtles to our centre free of charge. Our first official flying patient will be transported from Lhaviyani Atoll to our rescue centre on the 19th of February. This adult Olive Ridley has been cared for by Atoll Marine Centre, which is on the local island, Naifaru.

February has so far brought hope and excitement to Dhuni Kohlu. We opened our centre officially on the 2nd! This was a brilliant chance to show guests and the press the centre, so that we could spread the word amongst the other resorts in the Maldives. We are also thrilled to have received a grant from the Pacsafe Turtle Fund to purchase medical equipment for our Rescue Centre.

Claire will be travelling to Las Vegas in April to present our centre at the International Sea Turtle Symposium and to contribute information about the current situation of ghost nets in the Maldives in a seminar regarding marine debris.

If you find an injured turtle, have any turtle first aid questions, or to organize training, please contact [vet@oliveridleyproject.org](mailto:vet@oliveridleyproject.org).

## 2016 International Sea Turtle Society (ISTS) meeting in Lima, Peru

*Last year's ISTS meeting marked the first time that a sea turtle Photo-ID workshop associated with ISTS was held.*

ORP's project scientist, Dr Jillian Hudgins, was excited to be involved as one of the organisers of the meeting along with Stephen Dunbar (ProTECTOR Inc.) and Claire Jean (Kelonía).

There were 41 participants and 8 presenters who shared aspects of how Photo-ID was being used in their projects. Dr Hudgins presented the research that she's been working on in the Maldives for the last several years, with a specific focus on how the involvement of citizen scientists in data collection has helped overcome the logistical and financial restrictions of gathering large amounts of information from remote islands in the Maldives.

The afternoon session was focused on the development of web and smart phone applications for Photo-ID, including a presentation by the team from Image-Based Ecological Information System (IBEIS), a program that is currently being developed for sea turtle photo-ID. Dr Hudgins has shared photos from the Maldives to assist




Participants at the Photo-ID workshop in Peru co-organised by ORP.

*Image credit: Jillian Hudgins*

in the development of the program, which will hopefully be available for use in 2017. The workshop concluded with some productive small discussion groups about how to create better connections between groups that are working on Photo-ID for sea turtles.

ORP is looking forward to being an organizer again for the 2017 ISTS Photo-ID workshop, happening mid-April in Las Vegas, USA.





Facial profile of a Hawksbill turtle  
in Baa Atoll (Maldives) Turtle-ID  
HK2597.

Image credit: Lauren Arthur

## Photo ID

*Another aspect of our research is Photographic Identification, or photo-ID. This is the process of recognizing individual animals of a species from unique markings on their body.*

Photo-ID is a scientifically proven method of “tagging” animals. Individual turtles can be ID’d by comparing their facial scales, which are unique. This method was developed by Jean et al. (2010).

Photo-ID is a cost-effective, non-invasive technique that can easily be used to monitor sea turtles without disturbing them. It is a great way to involve “citizen scientists”, that is, members of the general public with little to no scientific training. The Maldives is particularly suited for a citizen science data collection program, given the number of tourists that visit the country specifically to dive, snorkel, and view marine wildlife. Photo-ID can be used as a “capture-mark-recapture” method. Statistical modelling of a series of photos can reveal patterns of residency and movement between reefs, determine the population and population structure of a reef at a given time, calculate inter-nesting periods, etc.

The results can be combined with the government’s TurtleWatch database to develop and evaluate turtle

conservation measures. ORP is also working with other groups around the world to develop “The Internet of Turtles”, which will be a data-sharing platform for Photo-ID research. As of January 2016, there were over 9,000 sightings logged in the Photo-ID database of almost 1,900 unique hawksbill turtles, over 320 green turtles, and over 25 olive ridley turtles.



Facial profile of a Hawksbill turtle in Baa Atoll (Maldives).  
Turtle-ID HK2737. Image credit: Lauren Arthur

If you’d like to participate in ORP’s Photo-ID project, email [jillian@oliveridleyproject.org](mailto:jillian@oliveridleyproject.org) for more information.





Seher Mirza investigating the different net types used by the fishers at Rehmanogth.  
Image credit: Umair Bin Habib

## What to do with all that ghost gear?

*One of the greatest obstacles the Olive Ridley Project faces is knowing just what to do with the vast quantity of ghost gear collected. We have recently embarked on an exciting partnership with Seher Mirza, a textile researcher at the Royal College of Arts. Our partnership with her will enable us to reuse ghost gear in creative community projects in Pakistan.*

### Seher's story:

**S jo accessories** is the creative outlet of design-led research and development project 'Threads of the Indus', committed to empowering village-based marginalised craft communities towards creating social change through their own agency. Central Saint Martins (UAL) textile design graduate, Seher Mirza, initiated the project in 2009/10, as part of her PhD design research at the Royal College of Art, London. The products created in rigorous design workshops are a combined effort between Seher and the traditional craftswomen, a testament to their design journey together. The project is now self-funded, having worked with Sindh Rural Support Organisation in the past.

Concerned about the deteriorating quality of craftsmanship in traditional textile crafts in her native country, and the lack of emotional connection between maker and craft, Seher decided to address this through her own design and craft practice and started the project. S jo's unique pieces reignite passion, excitement, and inspiration between craftswoman and her traditional craft. By encouraging creativity, design thinking, and

design decision-making, it enables personal development of the women while creating a sustainable fair wage income.

The work has been sold at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London among other venues. It was featured in the World of Interiors magazine and listed as an ethical brand in the Ethical Fashion Forum directory of 2016.



Seher Mirza explaining how ghost nets can be reused to provide an alternative income for the fishers of Rehmanogth.

Image credit: Umair Bin Habib





Nazatun keen to help Seher clean ghost nets before being used by the women of Rehmanogth.

*Image credit: Martin Stelfox*

## The partnership

It is our hope that Seher will be able to use her textile expertise to transform the large amounts of ghost gear collected by our team in Pakistan. Our collaboration will result in the production of a range of handcrafted products that build on local artisans' existing unique skills. The women of Rehmanogth are busy testing the ghost nets and have produced incredible samples, showcasing the possibilities of this unusual material. We are excited to see this project develop over the next few months and are extremely hopeful that it will eventually provide an alternative income for the women and the community. If this pilot project is successful, we will replicate it in other coastal villages. Furthermore, if the results of the project are positive, we hope that in time it will become a self-sustaining initiative.

Stay tuned for updates and to find out how you can give a new life to recycled fishing nets by purchasing ghost gear products made by traditional artisans in Pakistan.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to [World Animal Protection](#) and [Ocean Conservancy](#) through the platform of the [Global Ghost Gear Initiative \(GGGI\)](#) and [WWF-Pakistan](#). We would also like to thank volunteers Sharmeen Khan, Umair Bin Habib, Syed Khurram Jamal, Hasan Lanewala, Abdul Aleem Shekhani. Without the help of these organizations and individuals this project would not have been possible.



Artisan showing an example of what can be made from ghost nets.

*Image credit: Sharmeen Khan*



Made with ghost nets by the women of Rehmanogth fishing community. *Image credit: Sharmeen Khan*





Local fishers of Rehmanogth repair damaged nets.  
Image credit: Umair Bin Habib

## ORP-Pakistan update

*ORP's Pakistan project has taken positive strides thanks to the local fishing community at Rehmanogth in the Province of Sindh, Pakistan.*

With a population of around 2000 people and 300 fishing boats, the community of Rehmanogth is our pilot-project site, as we develop ways to minimise fishing gear and reuse the gear already there. Our field supervisor, Asif Baloch, comes from a family whose members have historically been fishers, which means his expertise on local fishing practices greatly benefits the project and the community. Since the project's infancy, Asif has been an integral member, passionately facilitating and supporting all of our work in the village. In the last six months, Asif and Absar Khan, our project coordinator in Pakistan, along with many generous volunteers have successfully removed over 500kg of ghost gear by hand! The nets are temporarily stored in a small hut constructed of reused plastic bottles, which acts as their home before the nets are made into something new. (see page 5 and 6 for details about how the community is reusing the nets!) We will continue to focus our efforts on developing ways to minimise gear loss, whilst providing an eco-friendly, alternative livelihood for small-scale fishers in the community.

We would like to thank our sponsors: World Animal Protection, Ocean Conservancy, and Gili Lankanfushi - Maldives for their continued support. Our work is also made possible through the help of WWF-Pakistan, an organisation that brings a wealth of experience to this project. And we cannot thank the many volunteers, without whose hard work this project wouldn't be possible.



Asif Baloch – ORP's Field Coordinator in Pakistan and local fisher of Rehmanogth.

Image credit: Umair Bin Habib



Asif and Pakistan project coordinator, Absar Khan, highlighting the indiscriminate impact of ghost nets to marine fauna. Here a Carpet shark was found dead in the net.

Image credit: Martin Stelfox





Mesh breaking strength analyses of ghost nets. This method needs further testing, however a promising tool to calculate minimum drifting times.

*Image credit: Martin Stelfox, University of Derby*

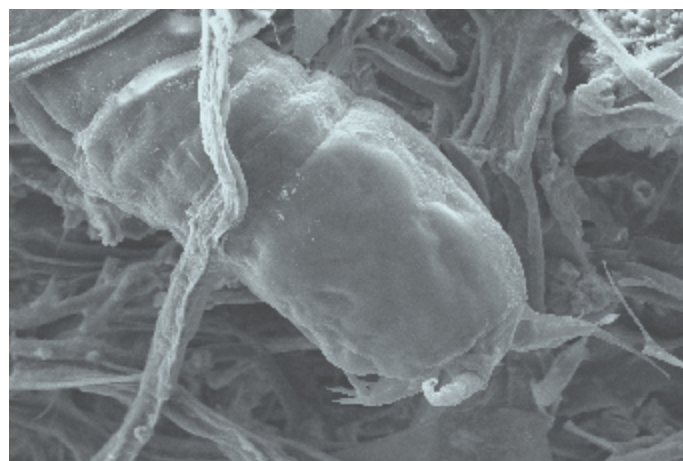
## How long has that net been drifting?

*As part of his PhD at the University of Derby, our founder and CEO, Martin Stelfox, has been exploring different techniques to age drifting ghost nets found in the Maldives.*

It is not currently known how long nets drift before being stranded or found. If an answer to this question can finally be found, we may be just one step closer to finding out where ghost gear entering the Maldives comes from.

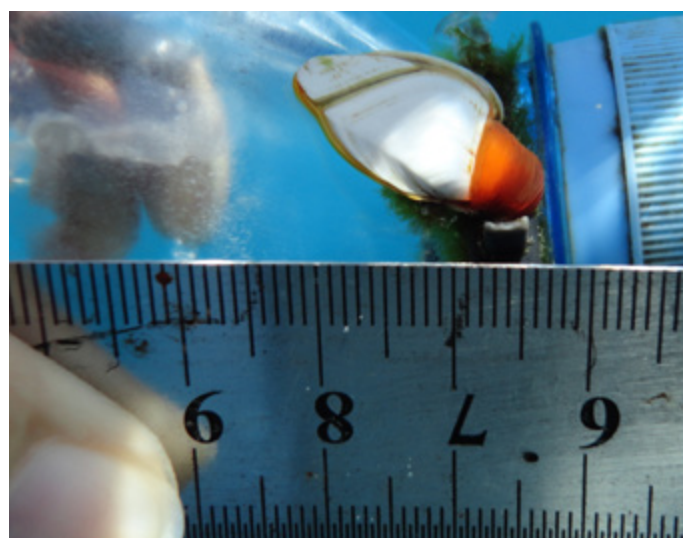
To help answer this question, Martin set on a mission to recruit a team of “ghost busters”, err, well, marine biologists, from around the Maldives: Lisa Bauer at Coco Palm Bodu Hithi, Deborah Burn at Gili Lankafushi, Jenni Choma and Oscar Iagnetik from Six Senses – Laamu, Tina Buchegger from Lux South Ari, and Sonia Valladares from Coco Bodu Hithi. Collectively, they are conducting pilot projects that include: measuring barnacles, measuring changes in mesh-breaking strength at different exposures to sun and UV radiation, and mapping the change in fouling (algae and sponge) communities over time. Tested and developed further, one of these methods could be a reliable technique to help estimate the age of ghost nets. These estimates can then be plugged into an ocean current modelling program to give us a better understanding of drifting paths, turtle interaction, and possibly an origin of gear loss.

Although in its infancy, Martin is hopeful that results from this experiment will bring us closer to reducing sea turtle entanglements in the Maldives.



Taken by a scanning electron microscope at the University of Derby, this close up view shows an unidentified invertebrate found on the surface of a ghost net sample after floating on the surface for four weeks.

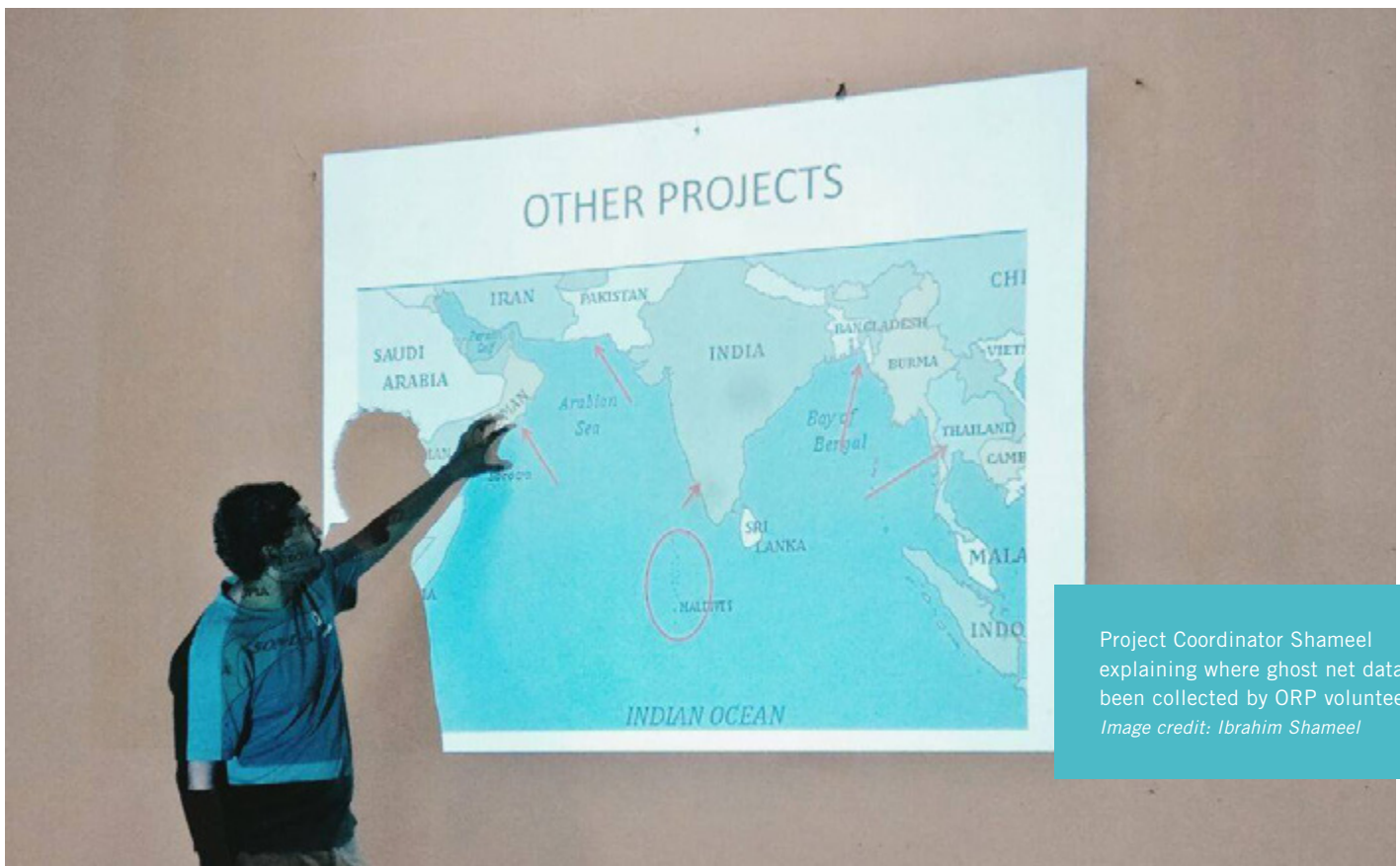
*Image credit: Martin Stelfox*



Sonia measures a barnacle growing on a plastic bottle after 72 days of floating on the ocean's surface.

*Image credit: Sonia Valladares*





Project Coordinator Shameel explaining where ghost net data has been collected by ORP volunteers.  
Image credit: Ibrahim Shameel

## ORP welcomes our new Maldivian Project Coordinator

*Thanks to the Body Shop Foundation we are excited to welcome Ibrahim Shameel to the Olive Ridley Project team.*

Shameel is from the Maldivian capital, Male. Despite the city-boy tag this automatically gives him, he is happiest in the water.

After deciding on a change of course from an office job in human resources to marine research and conservation in 2013, Shameel has spent the last couple of years researching whale sharks with our friends at the [Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme \(MWSRP\)](#). He was a key member in carrying out the in-field research operation, as well as the community initiatives, such as the Maldives Whale Shark Festival.

After spending a year abroad in the UK to complete a foundation year in science, he is looking to complete his undergraduate degree in the next couple of years either in the Maldives or abroad. In the meantime, he has joined the Olive Ridley Project to work as a 'Project Coordinator' as we look to reach out to more fishers and island communities and maintain a consistent presence in the Maldives.



Community outreach officer, Kaia, showing newly appointed project coordinator, Shameel, the ropes at the Katti Hihvaru Festival.

Image credit: Kaia





Shameel removing a ghost net in Male.  
Image credit: Ibrahim Shameel

## Updates in the Maldives

Shameel and community outreach officer Kaia represented ORP at the Katti Hihvaru Festival (KHF). ORP took part in this festival to create awareness amongst the youth on the growing problem of ghost nets found in the Maldives.

Throughout the festival, ORP were approached by people from all ages wanting to know more about what we were doing in the Maldives. For some, this was the first time they heard the term “ghost net” and learning about their impact to the environment further fueled their interest.. It was great to have the opportunity to discuss the issue on such a personal level and really focus our message on how they could help and contribute to the fight against ghost nets in their local area. The event was very successful and we were delighted to have taken part. We would like to give a big shout out to the KHF 2016 team for all their help and for facilitating our stall at the event.

A few weeks after that, Shameel travelled to F. Magoodhoo and partnered up with the F. Magoodhoo Cooperative society to conduct a session on marine pollution and ghost nets in the Maldives. Shameel



Shameel discussing the issue of ghost gear with key community members of Magoodhoo.  
Image credit: Ibrahim Shameel

met with key members of the island community, who shared their views on marine pollution as well as their past encounters with ghost nets seen within the area. We will be revisiting F. Magoodhoo to further develop this relationship and coordinate with the eco club at F. Magoodhoo School to have some on-going workshops with their students.



## Updates in the Maldives continued...



Shameel teaching grades 8,9 and 10 at Madharusathul Sheikh Ibrahim school in Ha. Kelaa.

Image credit: Ibrahim Shameel

### Plans for 2017

Shameel's efforts for the next few months will be on creating awareness at a community level as well as work with the tourism industry personnel so that we can remove as many nets as possible. In January alone, we have had more than 40 entangled turtle's rescues.

Shameel removed a net just outside Male', and we are getting reports of many other nets found near different islands all over the Maldives.

In addition to the awareness component of the project in Maldives, Shameel will be conducting socioeconomic surveys to determine how much gear is being lost within the Maldives as well as its surrounding. This research is conducted under the supervision of ORP founder Martin Stelfox and we hope to get some valuable information from this study.

Here is what Shameel had to say about his time so far

*"I am excited for the next few months as we have a few partnerships being built with local NGO's and artists to recycle salvageable nets which are being found. We are hoping to partner up with local NGO Save the Beach Maldives who generously offered a space to store ghost gear for local artists. I am also working on a number of exciting community pilot projects which we are hoping to explore over the coming months".*

## ORP continues to work with the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) in Miami

*Recognising ghost gear as a serious threat to sea turtles, ORP have been key members of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) since its inception in September 2015.*

Its third annual meeting took place in Miami back in October 2016 with participation from the fishing industry, research and funding institutions, government agencies and non-profit organisation. The meeting offered the opportunity to showcase GGGI achievements over the last year. Our founder Martin Stelfox was the build evidence working group coordinator in 2016 and presented the achievements alongside Kelsey Richardson from CSIRO. With input from many GGGI members, under the leadership of CSIRO, the group kick started the development of a data portal with an aim to monitor ghost gear hotspots, as well as types of gears lost. The aim of the portal is to have a central location for people to input ghost gear events online so that comparisons can be made globally.



Group picture at the GGGI event in Miami 2016.

Image credit: GGGI

ORP also sit on the catalyse and replicate solutions working group and our work at the Rehmanogth fishing community in Pakistan has been selected as a collaborative GGGI solution project. Project partners World Animal Protection and Ocean Conservancy are supporting our work in Pakistan to eventually create a fully circular-economy ghost gear project with the aim for replication into neighbouring villages. We are excited for this new partnership and already have made positive steps to achieving our goals (see page 5-7).



# The numbers

2016 was a quiet year for rescues when compared with the 114 turtles rescued in 2015. However, 2017 had a busy start, with 41 turtles reported in the first three weeks of January. Thank you to all our volunteers who worked hard to remove ghost net conglomerates and rescue injured wildlife!

Baa and North Male continue to be “hot spots” for net removals and turtle rescues, possibly due to the concentration of resorts, guesthouses, and live-aboards. We also had our first turtles rescued from Oman after a visit by ORP scientists in February. December through May remains the most common time to find entangled turtles in the Maldives.

Our volunteer data collectors and staff removed 311 net conglomerates made up of 425 single nets from Maldives (66), Oman (11), Pakistan (215), and Thailand (1).

## TOP SUBMITTERS (RESCUED TURTLES)

Overall:

- 1 Marine Savers (14)
- 2 Moazzham Khan – WWF Pakistan (4)
- 3 Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu (4)

Maldives:

- 1 Marine Savers (14)
- 2 Dhuni Kolhu (4)
- 3 Velaa Private Island (3), Huvafenfushi (3)

## TOP SUBMITTERS (NET CONGLOMERATES)

Overall:

- 1 Absar Khan (209)
- 2 Coco Bodu Hithi (16)
- 3 Baros Maldives (8)

Maldives:

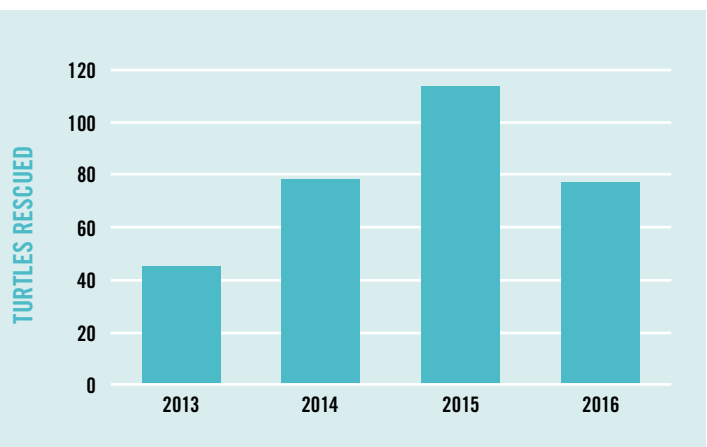
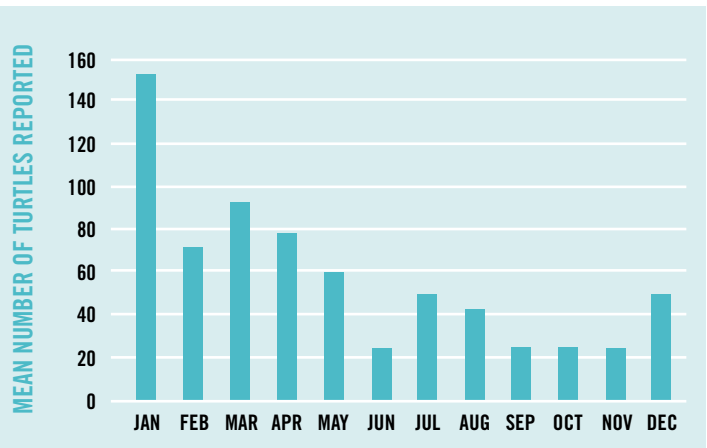
- 1 Coco Bodu Hithi (16)
- 2 Baros Maldives (8)
- 3 Dhuni Kolhu (7)

## IN 2016, 77 TURTLES WERE RESCUED:

**4 GREEN**   
**8 HAWKSBILL**   
**65 OLIVE RIDLEY** 

**FROM: OMAN (5), PAKISTAN (4)  
AND MALDIVES (68)**

**OUR VOLUNTEERS HAVE NOW  
REPORTED A TOTAL OF 391 ENTANGLED  
OR INJURED TURTLES.**





# Rock 'n' roll legend Matt Sorum joins the ORP team

*We are excited to welcome Rock and Roll legend Matt Sorum as an ambassador to ORP.*

Read about his bio below:

*At 14-years-old, Sorum was wailing with his band, The Prophecy, alongside the likes of Van Halen and Devo at The Whisky-A-Go-Go and Crazy Horse West. Rock 'n' roll had always called to him, and he embraced it with an unshakable grip. Over the next few years, Sorum honed his chops in numerous session gigs with artists, such as Shaun Cassidy, Belinda Carlisle, and King Solomon Burke, solidifying his reputation as a go-to studio drummer.*

*It was next step, though, that skyrocketed him into the consciousness of music fans worldwide. Hearing about auditions for The Cult, he tried out. Bashing out each track with unshakable conviction, he got the job. For two years, Sorum rocked all over the world in The Cult on tours with Metallica and Aerosmith. The jaunt brought Sorum back home in the summer of 1990. Duff McKagan and Slash of Guns N' Roses caught that particular tour-ending gig. They were so blown away by Sorum, that they quickly asked him to join Guns N' Roses.*

*Matt also joined up with Alice Cooper, Joe Perry and Johnny Depp to tour Europe and the US with Hollywood Vampires, which started with warm up gigs at the world-famous Roxy on the Sunset Strip followed by a headlining slot at Rock N' Rio in Rio, Brazil. The Vampires also appeared on the 2016 Grammy*



*awards, performing an original track entitled "Bad as I am" followed by a tribute to the late Lemmy Kilmister with a rowdy version of "Ace of Spades".*

We are thrilled to have Matt join the team as an ambassador and help spread the message on sea turtle conservation. We caught up with Matt and this is what he had to say:

*"The issue of ghost nets and debris in our oceans is staggering. When I found out about the Olive Ridley Project and the great work their team is doing, I had to reach out and become one portion of their voice. Saving our ocean's turtles from deadly nets and fishing debris is a problem that demands urgent response. Thank you ORP, I am so proud to know your organization and everything you do to save these wonderful sea creatures."*

[mattsorum.com](http://mattsorum.com)

Designed by: Susie Gibson [www.susiegibson.co.nz](http://www.susiegibson.co.nz); Edited by: Danielle Gravon [www.daniellegravon.com](http://www.daniellegravon.com); Subscriptions: [newsletter@oliveridleyproject.org](mailto:newsletter@oliveridleyproject.org)



**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](#)

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