OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

Annual Review 2025

Contents

Front page: A juvenile hawksbill turtle (HK6474), Raa Atoll, Maldives.
Photo: Abdulla Hameed for ORP.
This page: Sea turtle biologist Juliette taking Photo-ID of a hawksbill turtle in Laamu Atoll, Maldives.

Our mission

We depend on the ocean for our survival. It gives us half the oxygen we breathe and absorbs more carbon dioxide than all the world's forests combined.

To stay healthy, the ocean relies on every animal and plant that lives in it. But like a Jenga tower, if too many blocks – or the wrong one – are removed, it becomes unstable. Sea turtles are one of those vital blocks. Without them, the whole system risks collapse.

Most of the world's seven species of sea turtles are threatened with extinction due to human-induced pressures such as bycatch, entanglement in marine debris, habitat loss, and climate change.

ORP is on a mission to protect sea turtles and their habitats.

Our vision is simple:

A world where sea turtles can roam free from human-induced threats.

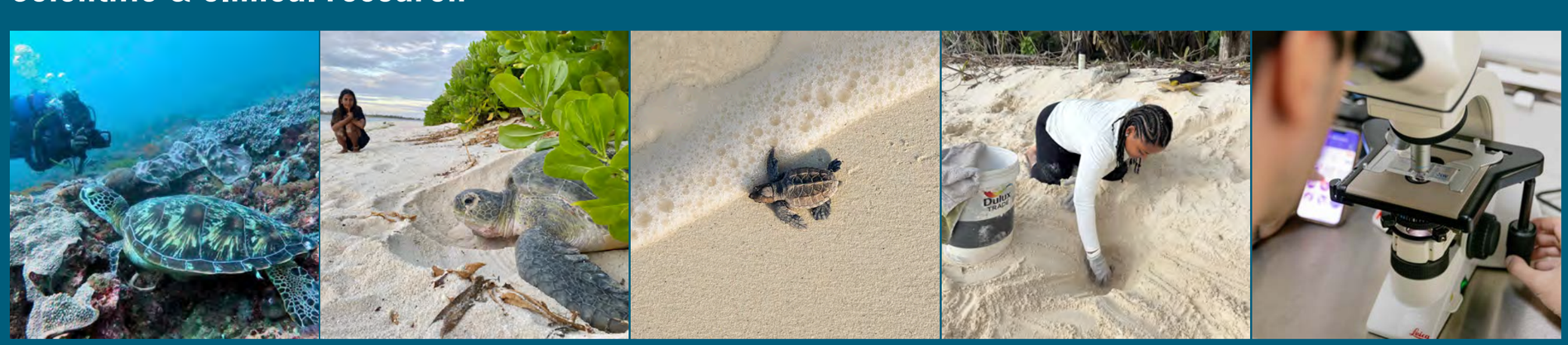
GR1380, green turtle, Maldives. Photo: Julian Gervolino for ORP.

What we do

Rescue & conservation medicine

We provide specialist veterinary care for diseased and injured sea turtles. Our clinical approach focuses on treating individual sea turtles and advancing sea turtle population health guided by a One Health framework.

Scientific & clinical research



We cannot protect what we do not understand. Our research advances knowledge to guide effective conservation strategies and safeguard their habitats.

Education & community outreach

Education creates change. By inspiring people and partnering with communities, we build a future where people, wildlife, and the natural world thrive together in balance.

Our locations

United Kingdom

Established: 2013
Main Activities: Headquarters; fundraising; educational outreach.

Oman

Established: 2015
Base: Musandam
Main Activities: Sea turtle population research; ghost gear recovery, research, and mitigation; educational outreach.

Pakistan

Established: 2015
Bases: Abdul Rehman Goth & Kakapir, Karachi
Main Activities: Ghost gear recovery and mitigation; ghost gear repurposing through circular economy projects; educational outreach; sea turtle population research.

Kenya

Established: 2018
Base: Diani
Main Activities: Sea turtle population research and habitat connectivity; educational and community outreach.

Maldives

Established: 2013
Bases: Baa, Laamu, Noonu, North Malé, Raa & Shaviyani atolls
Main Activities: Sea turtle rescue and conservation medicine; research; ghost gear recovery, mitigation and research; educational outreach
Facilities: Martine Turtle Rescue Centre, Baa Atoll and Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centres in North Malé, Noonu and Raa atolls

Seychelles

Established: 2021
Base: Félicité
Main Activities: Sea turtle population research and habitat connectivity.

Organisational Note
Olive Ridley Project operates across multiple countries through different legal entities:

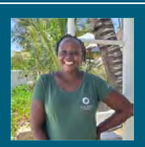
- **Olive Ridley Project** (ORP) is a registered charity 1165905 in England & Wales.
- **Olive Ridley Project – Kenya** (ORPK), registered NGO-EPFPJ6 in Kenya, operates as a branch of Olive Ridley Project
- **Olive Ridley Project – Maldives** (ORPM), registered NGO CR/04/2022 in the Republic of Maldives, is an independent entity.

All activities reported here were jointly delivered.

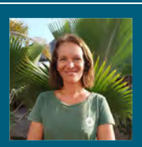
Meet the team

ORP – Kenya

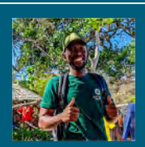
JENNI CHOMA
PROGRAMME MANAGER



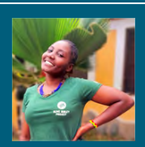
LEAH MAINYE
ASSISTANT PROGRAMME MANAGER



DR JOANA HANCOCK
RESEARCH COORDINATOR



JUMA GWERENYA
COMMUNITY EDUCATION OUTREACH OFFICER



DIANA KERUBO NYAKUNDI
SEA TURTLE BIOLOGIST

DENNIS ONAN SIFUNA
INTERN

SANDRA KETER
INTERN

ORP – Kenya Trustees

LEAH MAINYE
CHAIRPERSON

SAHYA HARIA
TRUSTEE

DANIEL OSEMBE
TRUSTEE

AMANDA COSTAIN
TRUSTEE

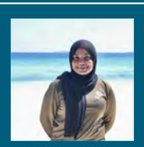
LEE CANNAN
TRUSTEE/TREASURER

ORP – Maldives

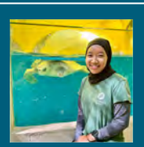
ISHA AFEEF
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AHMED IYAADH (IYAD)
PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

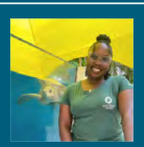
SARAH IBRAHIM
PROJECT ASSISTANT



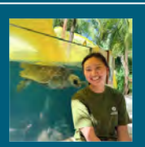
AISHATH ENASH
ADMINISTRATOR & VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR



DR HASNAULHUSNA
HEAD VETERINARY SURGEON, MALDIVES

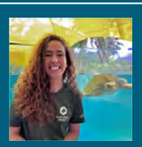


DR ROP MICHELLE CHEPNG'ENO
VETERINARY SURGEON



DR CELENA WU
ASSOCIATE VETERINARY SURGEON

DR PAU BENET
CLINICAL VETERINARY FELLOW



DR MARIANA FRAGOSO
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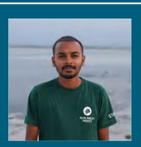

IBRAHIM INAN
SEA TURTLE RANGER PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

MOHAMED SAROOF
ASSISTANT SEA TURTLE RANGER, LAAMU ATOLL

ZAYAAN IBRAHIM KHALEEL
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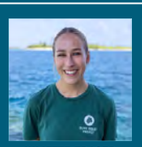
SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION OFFICER, LAAMU AOLL



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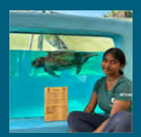

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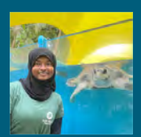

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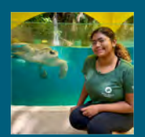

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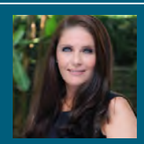

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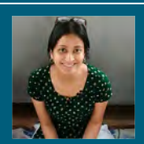

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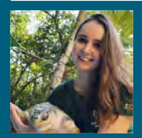
TRUSTEE

MARY ANDERSON
TRUSTEE

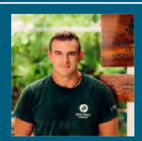
LAUREN WOODLEY
TRUSTEE

Volunteers



DR MINNIE LIDDELL
PODCAST HOST, EDUCATOR & AMBASSADOR

LAUREN VALENTINE
EDUCATOR & AMBASSADOR



JOE RIGBY
RESEARCHER

LARA KALISCH
RESEARCHER

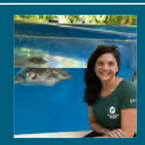
UMNA AFEEF
COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT

BERT LANG
IT SPECIALIST

JULIAN GERVOLINO
RESEARCHER

Scientific Advisors

DR JILLIAN HUDGES
SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR



DR CLAIRE PETROS
SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR

DR MICHAEL SWEET
SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR

Ambassadors

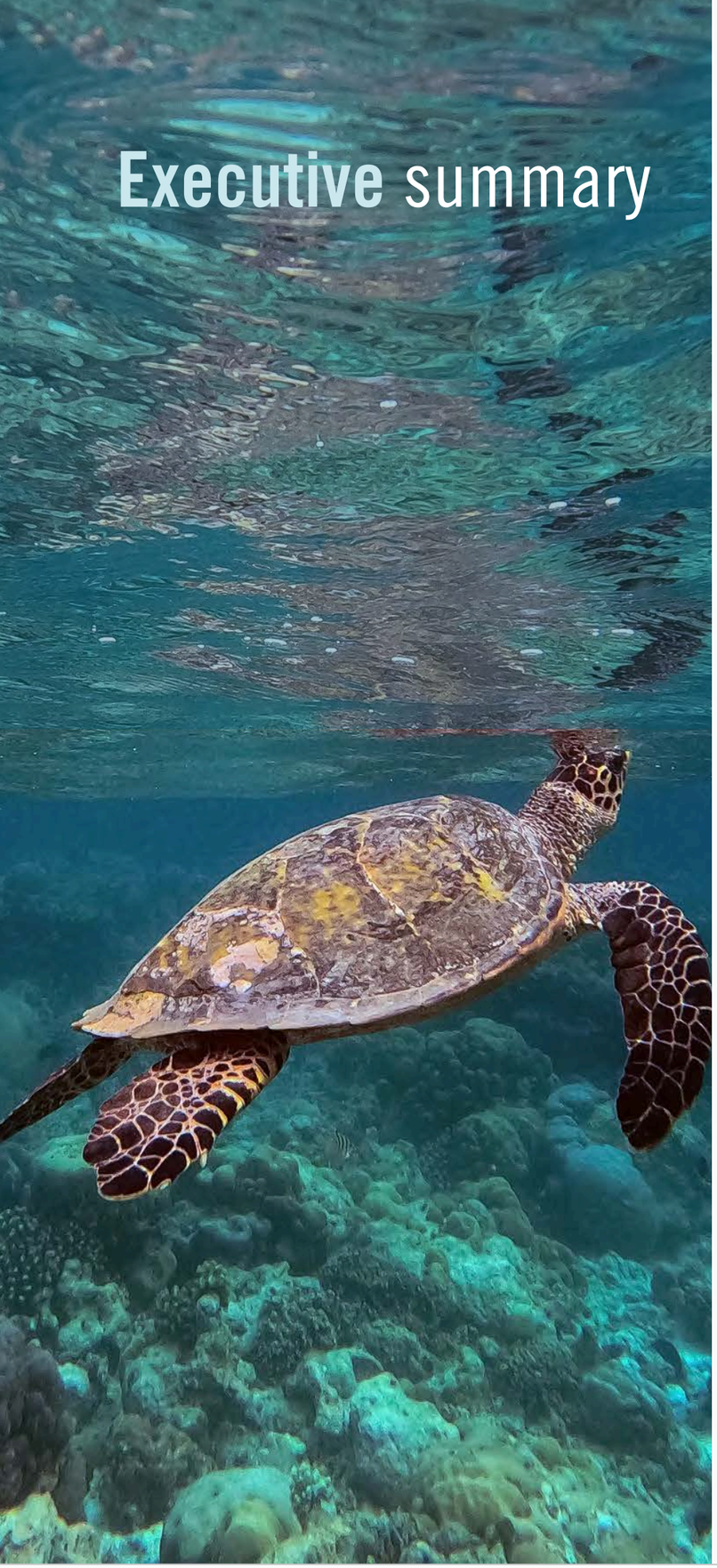
ANDY TORBET
AMBASSADOR

MATT SORUM
AMBASSADOR

AXELLE DEFOSSEZ
AMBASSADOR

VANSJIKA AHUJA
AMBASSADOR

MARTEYNE VAN WELL
AMBASSADOR



Executive summary

In 2025, sea turtle conservation reached an important global milestone. Green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) were downlisted from *Endangered* to *Least Concern* on the IUCN Red List, reflecting decades of sustained conservation effort. Yet this progress remains uneven.

In many parts of the Northern Indian Ocean where we work, green turtles are still endangered, hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) remain critically endangered, and olive ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) continue to face threats, particularly entanglement in ghost fishing gear, often resulting in prolonged injury and suffering. These pressures highlight the importance of working in underrepresented regions.

Against this backdrop, we continued to advance the science of sea turtle conservation through long-term monitoring, targeted research, and rescue and conservation medicine across Kenya, the Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, and Seychelles. We also worked closely with communities, governments, and partners to build strong national and regional datasets that guide evidence-based action.

Thanks to the support of our donors, partners, volunteers, and funders, we expanded our impact across five countries, completed a new sea turtle teaching hospital, engaged more tens of thousands of people, advanced critical scientific knowledge, and strengthened conservation capacity in regions where it is needed most.

A major milestone this year was the completion of the Sea Turtle Health Institute (STHI) at Jawakara Islands in Lhaviyani Atoll, Maldives, set to open in early 2026. Developed as part of our growing conservation medicine programme, the facility will become one of the world's largest dedicated sea turtle teaching hospitals and the first of its kind in the region. It will significantly expand regional capacity for sea turtle treatment, veterinary training, and clinical research.

This achievement builds on ten years of partnership with Coco Collection, which began with a shared commitment to helping injured and distressed sea turtles. Over the past decade, that collaboration has grown into one of the Maldives' most established long-term sea turtle conservation programmes, encompassing rescue, veterinary care, research, and education. During this period, the programme evolved into a comprehensive conservation medicine initiative guided by a One Health framework, supported by substantial growth in technical capacity and operational reach.

Alongside the development of the STHI, we strengthened our rescue network and long-term care facilities, supported by an expanded veterinary team and a step-down facility, Raa Atoll Sea Turtle Care Centre, based at at Joali Being. These investments not only ensure that individual sea turtles receive the care they need, but also generate valuable scientific knowledge that informs conservation efforts far beyond the animals treated.

Science remained at the heart of everything we did throughout the year. Across all programme locations, our researchers continued long-term monitoring programmes, completed important research projects, and launched new studies to address critical knowledge gaps.

Our research team contributed to international collaborations that help guide global sea turtle conservation, including the updated edition of Research and Management Techniques for the Conservation of Sea Turtles, a key global reference originally compiled by the IUCN-SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group. The first chapter supported by our team, focusing on sea turtle Photo-ID and providing practical guidance on identification methods, database management, and citizen science applications, was released as a preprint in early 2025.

Among these collaborations was a global assessment of sea turtle populations involving more than 140 scientists worldwide. While the assessment identified encouraging signs of recovery for some populations, it also highlighted fisheries bycatch as a continuing threat and persistent knowledge gaps in parts of the Indian Ocean – gaps that we are helping to address through long-term research and monitoring.

These efforts ensure that decisions affecting sea turtles are informed by robust evidence and that underrepresented regions contribute to the global understanding of marine turtle conservation.

Alongside research and conservation medicine, education, community engagement, and capacity development remained central to our approach. Our outreach activities, workshops, public events, and peer-led conservation initiatives engaged more than 30,000 people. Educational programmes engaged more than 500 students and teachers, while community-led clean-ups and ghost gear recovery initiatives removed more than three tonnes of coastal waste and discarded fishing gear from coastal and marine environments.

We also continued to invest in the next generation of conservation leaders through professional training, internships, and veterinary training programmes. By supporting both local and international participants, we helped build conservation expertise, strengthen regional capacity, and improve access to specialised conservation medicine training and resources.

In 2025, our Ambassador Programme expanded to include new voices and perspectives, helping us engage audiences not traditionally reached through marine conservation initiatives. By working with ambassadors from diverse backgrounds, we broadened participation in conservation and increased the accessibility and reach of sea turtle conservation messaging.

This year demonstrated once again that meaningful conservation progress depends on long-term partnerships between communities, researchers, governments, businesses, and supporters. Every rescued sea turtle, every research project completed, every student inspired, and every community empowered is made possible through these collective efforts.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our collaborators, donors, funders, partners, volunteers, and supporters. Together, we are advancing the science of sea turtle conservation, improving outcomes for threatened populations, and helping secure a future where sea turtles and marine ecosystems can thrive.

Dr Martin Stelfox, FMBA
CEO & Founder,
Olive Ridley Project

Impact in numbers

Scientific research, rescue, and conservation medicine

>52.2K

Sea turtle sightings recorded in the Indian Ocean

8,749

Sea turtles identified in the Indian Ocean

1,090

Sites w/sea turtles sighted in the Indian Ocean

2,387

Nests recorded in the Indian Ocean

>72.0K

Hatchlings counted in the Indian Ocean

263

Turtle patients admitted Maldives

150

Turtle patients released Maldives

6

Rehabilitated olive ridley turtles satellite tagged Maldives

Environmental education, collaboration, and community outreach

15.1K

Kgs of ghost gear removed in the Indian Ocean

77.5K

Square metres of ghost net repurposed in the Indian Ocean

334

Volunteers hosted at the Rescue Centre Maldives

33

Sea Turtle Guardian Programme Graduates

52.8K

Individuals educated

2.45M

YouTube views

36

Publications

4.6K

Podcast Downloads

ORP-Kenya

Identified sea turtles: Kenya

Green Turtles	Hawksbills	
703 Since 2018	**89** Since 2018	**792** Total sea turtles identified
72 2025	**6** 2025	
41 Sites w/sea turtles sighted		**5,699** Sea turtle encounters

Over seven years have passed since we began monitoring sea turtles in the Diani - Chale Marine National Reserve (DCMNR) using Photo-ID during scuba surveys – the first initiative of its kind in Kenya. Since then, we have expanded our approach to include aerial drone surveys, strengthened local conservation through collaboration with fishing communities, and invested in the next generation through internships, student attachments, and outreach events such as the Diani Sea Turtle Festival.

Since the Kenyan way of life is deeply connected to oceans, spanning both livelihood and culture, our approach honours this connection by ensuring that local communities lead the way for marine conservation.

Fishers test bright solutions to sea turtle bycatch

With bycatch being a critical threat to sea turtles both locally and globally, we launched our first bycatch mitigation study in June 2025 in collaboration with fishers and local authorities. The study involved adding LED lights on bottomset gillnets to test its effectiveness in reducing sea turtle bycatch whilst maintaining fish catch.

At first, there was hesitation from the community as fishers were concerned about the lights affecting their catch or complicating work. But through the Sea Turtle Ambassador (STA) programme, trusted community members helped bridge this gap, explaining the idea to fellow fishers, encouraging participation as well as ownership over the process.

Nine fishers joined the pilot study, and received training in installing the lights, recording data, and safe release of sea turtles. After six months, the results were encouraging. Fishers using LED lights recorded 50% fewer sea turtle bycatch incidents and landed over 500 kg more sellable catch in total, compared to nets without lights.

We shared these early findings with fishers and authorities, addressed challenges and gathered feedback. As the study continues, we will analyse seasonal and spatial trends, along with long-term feasibility and cost-effectiveness of LED technology. These results show that livelihoods and science can come together to bring effective solutions.

Sea Turtle Ambassador Programme

This community-led conservation initiative that began in 2023 is now firmly embedded across nine fishing communities. In 2025, all participating Beach Management Units (BMUs) established formal ambassador committees, strengthening local ownership and governance. Our sea turtle ambassadors expanded their roles to include data collection on strandings, bycatch, and nesting, while leading peer-to-peer outreach that engaged nearly 20,000 people, particularly young adults. The sea turtle ambassadors also organised clean-ups, removing over 335 kg of ocean waste and hosted fisher workshops on sea turtle awareness and sustainable fishing practices.

Sea turtle monitoring

Our long-term monitoring within the DCMNR continues to build one of Kenya's most robust sea turtle datasets. In 2025, we recorded 1,083 sightings and added 88 green turtles and seven hawksbills in our Photo-ID database, reinforcing the area's importance as a developmental habitat for juvenile greens. Through aerial drone surveys, we expanded our work into previously under-explored lagoon habitats, which helped improve our understanding of sea turtle population distribution, and habitat use. With two scientific manuscripts in preparation for publication in 2026, we aim to use these findings for future conservation planning.

Educational outreach

Our awareness efforts were strengthened by structured programmes for students, including workshops delivered in partnership with Camp Kenya and Infinity Outdoors. We worked with 367 students and 62 teachers on hands-on conservation activities such as beach clean-ups, and microplastic surveys, removing over 290 kg of waste. The Diani Sea Turtle Festival amplified our message and reached over 500 attendees, bringing together communities, students, and conservationists, with STAs taking on leadership roles. These initiatives are helping build a network of engaged individuals willing to contribute to marine conservation.

Looking ahead

2025 offered important learning opportunities; Bycatch reporting remains sensitive, with fishers hesitant to share data, hence building trust through the Sea Turtle Ambassador network will remain crucial.

In 2026, we will focus on completing the 12-month bycatch mitigation study and running 'Jumba Turtle Patrol' (following invitation from the founders) in Mtwapa to support locals with nest monitoring and protection along the beach.

Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to the communities we work alongside, whose trust and leadership make progress possible. Our sincere thanks to our funders and partners – Diving the Crab, Pacsafe, Animal Saviours, SEE Turtles, and International Fund for Animal Welfare, as well as our citizen science contributors for their continued enthusiasm. We recognise the dedication of our interns and students in 2025 – Dennis, Sandra, Clara, and Emmanuel – whose contributions have bolstered both our work and the future of conservation.

Photo-ID: Kenya

Sea turtles

Green

Hawksbill

Total encounters

2,200
1,100
1

MPA

Kenya

0 2.5 5 10 km

Earthstar Geographics

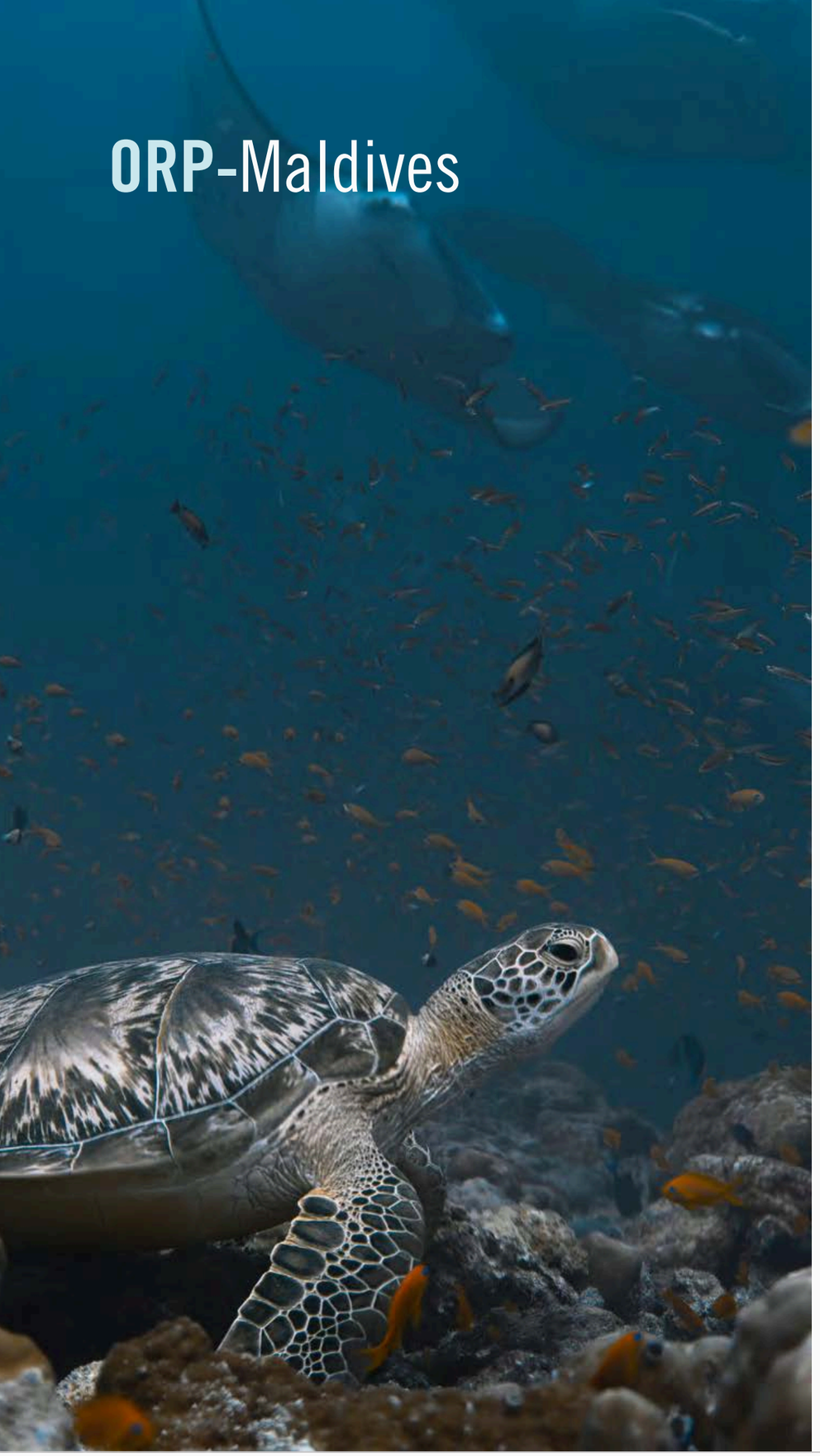
N

0 400 800 km

Earthstar Geographics

*These numbers reflect a reassessment of all our sightings, moving a portion of previously identified individuals to candidates

ORP-Maldives



ORP-Maldives, our largest programme, continued to scale in 2025, delivering progress in leadership, infrastructure, partnerships, and outreach. These milestones strengthen our ability to deliver long-term, locally led conservation impact by building national capacity and expanding programme reach.

In 2025, we appointed Executive Director Isha Afeef and expanded our operational team, reinforcing in-country leadership and organisational capacity. This investment supports more effective programme delivery, stronger national engagement, and the long-term sustainability of our work.

Advancing sea turtle conservation medicine

As we marked 10 years of partnership with Coco Collection, supporting sea turtle rescue and conservation medicine in the Maldives, we completed the development of the Sea Turtle Health Institute of the Maldives (STHI) in partnership with Jawakara Islands. As the largest and most advanced sea turtle hospital facility of its kind in the region, STHI will serve as our flagship centre for clinical care, research, and professional training when it opens in 2026.

The facility will significantly increase our capacity to treat injured sea turtles, reducing pressure on the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre in Baa Atoll. It will also play a critical role in developing national expertise through internships and collaboration with Maldives National University to establish an accredited Sea Turtle Veterinary Assistant diploma.

Research

2025 was another strong year for research in the Maldives. We continued long-term monitoring of sea turtle populations and nesting activity, while advancing new projects and scientific outputs.

Our national Photo-ID database, established in 2013, surpassed 45,000 recorded encounters and 7,000 identified individual turtles. Our research now spans Photo-ID, nesting monitoring, satellite tracking, genetics, epibionts, spatial analysis, foraging behaviour, habitat use, and socio-economics, providing the evidence base needed to identify trends, key habitats, and conservation priorities (see page 15).

Sea Turtle Ranger Programme

Our Sea Turtle Ranger Programme continued to deliver measurable conservation impact in 2025. Introduced in 2023 in partnership with the Environmental Regulatory Authority (ERA) and local councils, the programme combines beach and drone monitoring with community engagement to reduce illegal take on key nesting beaches (see page 12).

Outreach and engagement - inspiring action

Educational outreach remained central to our approach. In 2025, activities were primarily delivered across North Malé, Baa, and Laamu atolls, as well as selected island communities, in collaboration with government institutions, resorts, NGOs, and community groups. We reached school and university students, resort guests and staff, and local communities through school sessions, youth workshops, university lectures, and site visits, helping to inspire participation in conservation.

We also contributed to national platforms for awareness and knowledge exchange, including the Lhaviyani Sea Turtle Festival, a conservation cruise with Secret Paradise Maldives, and the Theveli International Conference, strengthening stakeholder collaboration and public awareness.

A highlight was the World Sea Turtle Day public lecture – ‘Tackling Turtles in Trouble’, delivered with Maldives National University (MNU) and Atoll Marine Centre, bringing together students, professionals, and community members.

We also delivered a sea turtle research workshop with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, engaging government and ERA staff. The workshop strengthened institutional collaboration and supported knowledge exchange on research, conservation priorities, and future opportunities for joint action.

In a key milestone, we formalised our partnership with MNU, creating pathways for locally led research, training, and skills development. These partnerships ensure that our work contributes directly to national priorities and supports the next generation of conservation professionals.

Looking ahead

In 2026, we will build on this momentum, focusing on scaling community engagement, strengthening partnerships, and expanding national outreach. A key priority will be the Vaavoshi Turtle Festival in Kulhudhuffushi, bringing together conservation, culture, and community participation as a national platform for awareness. We will also launch a children’s book to engage younger audiences.

Additional priorities include expanding training programmes, community workshops, school sessions, and citizen science initiatives, particularly in Laamu Atoll.

These efforts will be supported by continued research outputs and the ongoing development of STHI as a regional centre of excellence – ensuring that investment translates into sustained conservation outcomes in the Maldives.

Sea Turtle Ranger Programme

Reducing illegal take through local leadership and technology

Our Sea Turtle Ranger Programme continues to show how sustained, locally led conservation can reduce threats and protect critical nesting habitats. Originally launched in 2023 as the Laamu Sea Turtle Beach Guardian Programme, the initiative was developed in collaboration with the Environmental Regulatory Authority – Maldives and supported by Laamu Atoll Council and Laamu Fonadhoo Council.

Today, under the leadership of Sea Turtle Ranger Programme Coordinator Ibrahim Inan, the programme combines monitoring, technology, and community engagement to deliver measurable conservation outcomes.

In 2025, our ranger team conducted 73 surveys across key nesting beaches in Laamu, recording 101 nesting activities, including 48 confirmed nests. Despite challenging conditions such as beach erosion, coral rubble, and plastic accumulation during the monsoon season, nearly half of all nesting attempts were successful.

Technology continued to play a critical role in programme delivery. Drone surveys accounted for 51 of the monitoring surveys conducted during the year – our highest aerial coverage to date. These surveys not only improved our ability to monitor nesting activity, but also strengthened efforts to detect and deter illegal take through night-time thermal surveillance during high-risk periods.

Encouragingly, only 6% of nests showed evidence of illegal take in 2025, compared with 12% in 2024. This drop reflects the impact of sustained monitoring, increased community awareness, and a consistent on-the-ground and aerial presence.

Evidence from communities where the programme operates also suggests wider conservation benefits. On islands where rangers and drone monitoring have been established, local councils report substantial declines in illegal take, showing the value of combining technology with community-based conservation approaches.

Beyond nest protection, drone surveys are also helping us better understand the wider ecosystem, including documenting hawksbill turtles foraging in nearby seagrass habitats, erosion mapping, sediment movement assessment, and monitoring of seagrass beds and nearshore habitats.

Conservation Officer Ibaadh and Sea Turtle Ranger Programme Coordinator Inaan deliver teacher training in Laamu Atoll.

Building local stewardship

Community engagement remains at the heart of the programme. In 2025, we engaged more than 300 community members across Laamu Atoll and trained 64 individuals in Photo-ID and beach monitoring, equipping them with the skills to actively contribute to conservation and data collection. By working closely with schools, councils, and local stakeholders, including teacher training to support marine conservation education, we are helping to build long-term stewardship of nesting beaches and strengthen local ownership of conservation efforts.

The programme also provides a platform for sharing lessons learned and promoting locally led conservation approaches. Inan presented the programme at the Theveli Conference, highlighting how community engagement, technology, and partnership can work together to reduce threats while strengthening resilience and stewardship.

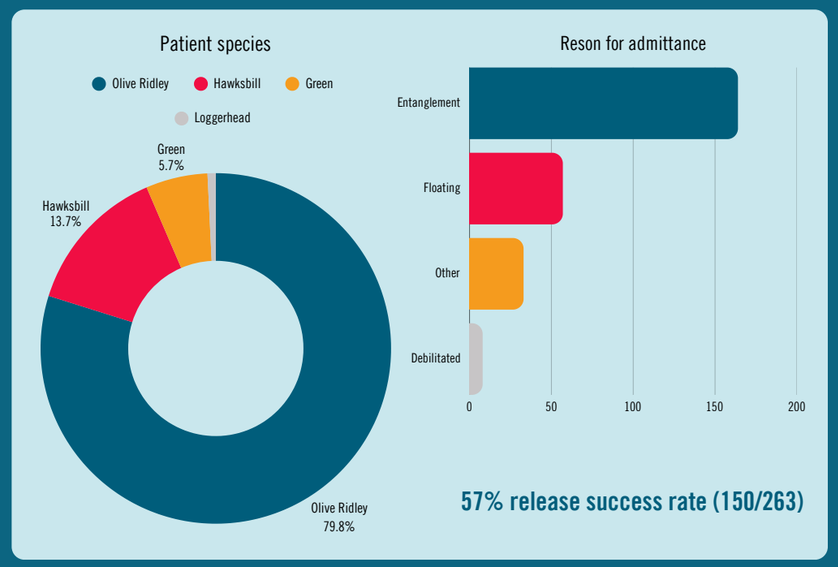
Why this matters

Together, these efforts are delivering measurable results: reduced illegal take, increased monitoring coverage, stronger community engagement, and improved understanding of critical habitats. They also demonstrate a scalable model for conservation – one that combines science, technology, and local leadership to protect sea turtles and their habitats over the long term.

We are grateful to Six Senses Laamu for their continued support and funding of the Sea Turtle Ranger Programme in Laamu Atoll.

Rescue & Conservation Medicine

Turtle patients admitted, Maldives



57% release success rate (150/263)

All clinical activities are conducted under permits issued by the Environmental Regulatory Authority - Republic of Maldives.

2025 marked a defining moment for our sea turtle rescue and conservation medicine programme in the Maldives. It was a year that brought both reflection and momentum – marking ten years since the beginning of our partnership with Coco Collection to establish the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre (MTRC), while also highlighting the increasing scale, complexity, and demand of our work on the ground.

Across the year, our team advanced clinical care for injured and sick sea turtles, and continued to invest in training and education. At the same time, operational changes and external pressures required us to adapt, reinforcing the importance of a resilient, well-coordinated rescue network.

Together, these experiences reflect a programme that has evolved significantly over the past decade – from a small, reactive initiative into a multi-faceted conservation medicine effort – and one that is continuing to grow in both scale and impact.

10 years of partnership and progress

We first partnered with Coco Collection to support injured and distressed sea turtles in the Maldives in 2015. What began as a modest initiative has grown into one of the country's most impactful long-term sea turtle conservation partnerships, spanning rescue, conservation medicine, research, and education.

When the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre (MTRC) opened in early 2017, it was the first veterinary-led facility of its kind in the country, providing specialised clinical care for injured and sick sea turtles.

In the early days, each rescue case was managed by a single veterinary surgeon supported by an intern, with a focus on stabilising patients and returning them to the ocean as quickly as possible.

Since then, our clinical approach has evolved into a comprehensive conservation medicine programme guided by a One Health framework, recognising the vital connections between the wellbeing of animals, people, and the planet we share.

Alongside this shift, the centre's technical and operational capacity has expanded considerably. What began as a single-room clinic with limited equipment has grown into a multi-room facility supported by professional-grade equipment.

Today, the on-site veterinary team includes two veterinary surgeons, an intern, and volunteers under the supervision of ORP's Director of Conservation Medicine, Dr Max Polyak.

This growth reached a new milestone in 2025 with the completion of the Sea Turtle Health Institute (STHI) in Lhaviyani Atoll, set to become the first dedicated sea turtle teaching hospital in the region, and among the world's largest. Our veterinary team has now grown to six members – the largest sea turtle clinical team in the world. Together, these developments reflect the continued growth of our programme and our capacity to deliver long-term care – extending well beyond our original partnership with Coco Collection.

Head Veterinary Surgeon Maldives Dr Naul and Veterinary Fellow Dr Pau triaging an olive ridley turtle.

2025: A gradual start, a critical final quarter

The year began steadily, allowing the veterinary team to focus on patient care, training, and facility development. However, operational constraints shaped our capacity throughout the year.

New government regulations requiring a veterinarian to be physically present on site led to a temporary pause in patient intake at the Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centres in Raa and North Malé atolls, leaving the facilities without patients. In September, the closure of the Noonu Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre, following the conclusion of our partnership with Soneva Jani, further shifted our operational footprint and placed additional pressure on the MTRC.

Emergency response demands escalated sharply with the onset of the entanglement season in December when the Northeast Monsoon carries ghost gear into Maldivian waters.

During the year, we admitted 15 new patients and welcomed back Fida from our North Malé satellite centre. These included ten olive ridleys, two hawksbills, and three green turtles representing multiple life stages. As in previous years, entanglement remained the leading cause of admission, accounting for 10 of the 15 cases, highlighting the ongoing and pervasive threat of ghost gear.

We released four patients in 2025. The final release of the year – Theen – marked a significant milestone: the 150th successfully treated turtle patient returned to the wild from MTRC. Since opening, we have treated 263 sea turtles, achieving an overall release rate of 57%.

Against all odds

One of the four turtle patients released in 2025 was Kihaa (seen on the right), an adult female olive ridley found floating in the waters of Dhaalu Atoll in September 2024.

Although Kihaa was not found entangled, her injuries showed clear signs of previous entanglement in ghost gear. She was missing her right front flipper and had suffered partial amputations of both hind flippers. In addition, she had abrasions on her carapace (top shell), a fracture to her plastron (bottom shell), and was unable to dive. Upon admission, we also diagnosed a bone infection.

Kihaa remained at the MTRC for nine months. During this time, she underwent surgery, repeated wound debridement, cold laser therapy, and Targeted External Weight Training (TEWT). She steadily gained weight, and her ability to dive gradually improved.

Despite having only one fully intact flipper, with her remaining limbs reduced to stumps, Kihaa adapted remarkably well. She began swimming actively in her tank, resting comfortably, and feeding from the bottom with ease.

In June, after completing all medical treatment, she was released from the beach at Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu. Kihaa's recovery is a powerful reminder of both the resilience of sea turtles and the impact of sustained, specialist veterinary care.

Education with purpose

Educational outreach remained a key focus of our work. We welcomed students from Thulhaadhoo School and Hithadhoo School to mark World Turtle Day and World Sea Turtle Day respectively. These visits were designed to share our conservation work, highlight the vital role sea turtles play in maintaining healthy marine ecosystems, and inspire young people to become future ocean stewards.

Two students from Hithadhoo School told us they now want to become veterinary doctors, and others said they'd like to pursue marine biology, which was especially rewarding for our team.

Ensuring preparedness for sea turtle emergencies is also a crucial part of our outreach efforts. This included basic sea turtle emergency response training for resort staff, equipping them with the knowledge to recognise injured or entangled sea turtles and respond appropriately until veterinary support is available. These efforts help strengthen our wider response network and ensure rapid, informed action during emergencies.

Veterinary Training Programme, volunteers, & interns

We also resumed our Veterinary Training Programme and were delighted to welcome Dr Hussain Misfah (Mikki) to MTRC – the first and only Maldivian veterinary surgeon to practice in the country. He currently works with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Welfare. Dr Misfah spent two weeks with us on-site, getting hands-on experience about sea turtle rescue and husbandry.

We also hosted 58 volunteers from 16 countries, while three young Maldivians completed internships at the MTRC. Since launching the internship programme, 26 interns have taken part, several of whom have gone on to work with ORP and other conservation organisations. The programme continues to play an important role in strengthening in-country expertise, providing practical pathways into conservation for Maldivian youth, and supporting the long-term sustainability of our work.

Looking ahead

In 2026, we look forward to the opening of STHI at Jawakara and the reopening of the Raa Atoll Sea Turtle Care Centre at JOALI BEING, now supported by a full-time onsite veterinary surgeon. With STHI becoming operational, we will expand our veterinary training programme to run year round. This will allow us to support more aspiring wildlife and marine veterinarians while maintaining high standards of hands-on training. In collaboration with the Maldivian National University, we are also developing a Sea Turtle Veterinary Assistant diploma – the first programme of its kind – designed to build long-term local and international capacity in sea turtle care, husbandry, and conservation.

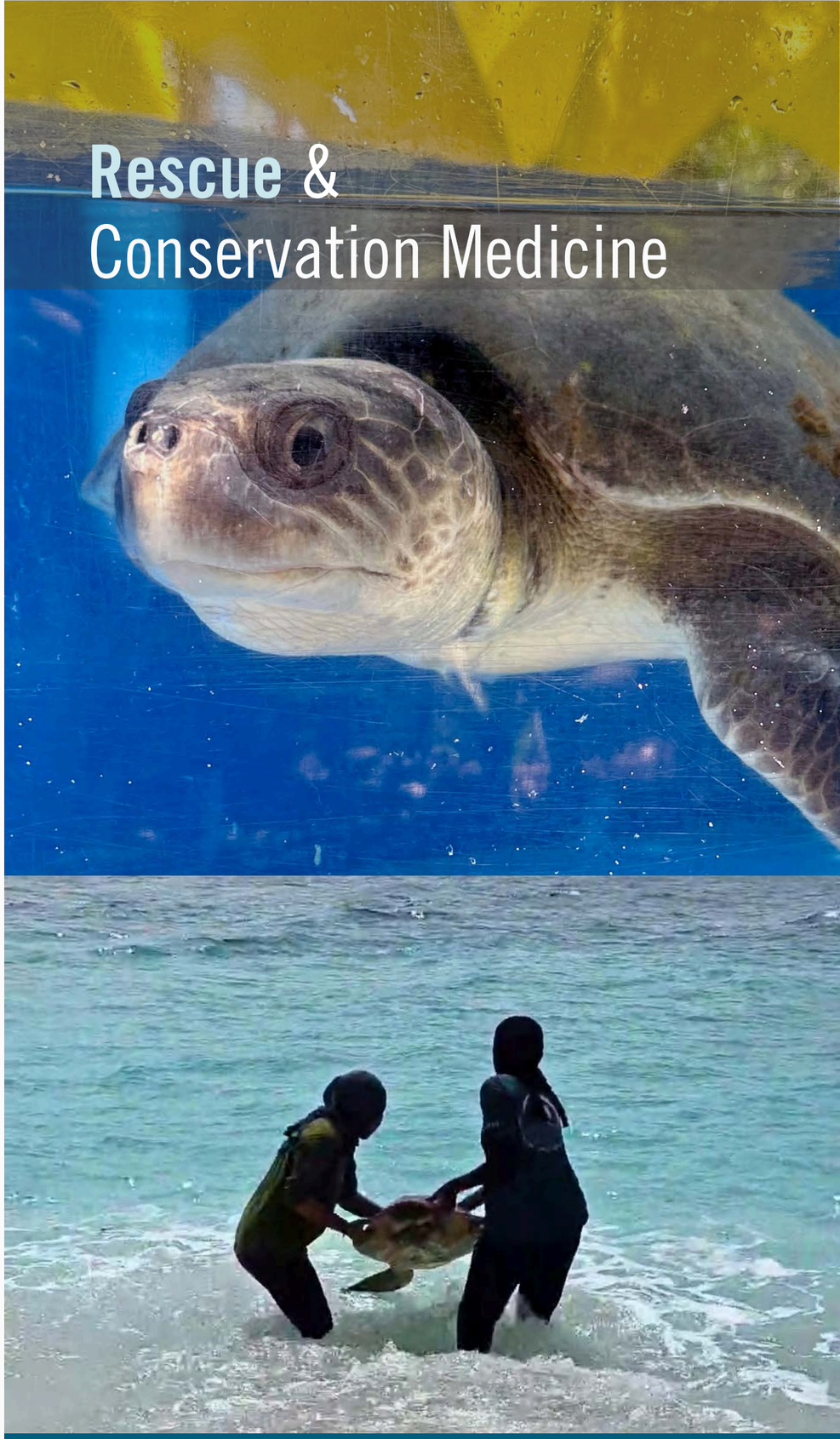
Acknowledgements

We extend our deepest gratitude to our resort partners and stakeholders who made our work in 2025 possible: Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu (Coco Collection), One&Only Reethi Rah, JOALI BEING, Soneva Jani, Jawakara Islands Maldives, and the Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance.

We are grateful to Trans Maldivian Airways for transporting our turtle patients, and to the Environmental Regulatory Authority for their continued support. We also recognise the volunteers who have dedicated their time and resources to caring for our turtle patients, and of course to the rescuers who help ensure that injured sea turtles reach us safely and receive the care they need.

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to our donors and turtle patient adopters. We are especially grateful to OceanCare for their long-standing partnership, which has played a vital role in sustaining our work over the years. We also thank NSB for their valued and growing support. Together, your contributions enable us to deliver critical care, respond to emergencies, and continue protecting sea turtles in the Maldives.

Rescue & Conservation Medicine



Kihaa in the tank at the MTRC (top) and being released (bottom).

Sea turtles & nesting: Maldives

Green turtles	Hawksbills	New nests laid
1,857 Since 2018	**5,445** Since 2018	**199** 2025
135 2025	**298** 2025	**6,400** Hatchings counted 2025
1,025 Sites w/sea turtles sighted		**7,302** Total sea turtles identified

All research activities are conducted under permits issued by the Environmental Regulatory Authority - Republic of Maldives.

Maldives Research

Understanding sea turtle population trends requires long-term, collaborative data collection. With contributions from citizen scientists, resort marine biologists, and our field team, our Maldives dataset is now one of the largest of its kind and continued to grow in 2025.

Spanning Photo-ID, nesting, satellite tracking, genetics, epibionts, spatial analysis, foraging behaviour, habitat use, socio-economics, and more, this dataset is essential for identifying trends, key habitats, and conservation priorities. But collecting data is only the first step. In 2025, we made strong progress in analysing and translating data into impact.

Expanding the national Photo-ID database

Our Photo-ID database, established in 2013, grew by 3,421 verified encounters in 2025, thanks to submissions from more than 200 contributors, bringing the total to 45,251. From these, we identified 135 new green turtles and 298 hawksbills.

These long-term records allow us to track individuals, assess site fidelity, and identify key aggregation areas.

Monitoring nesting activity

Alongside in-water monitoring, we continued to track nesting activity across the Maldives. In 2025, 199 confirmed nests were recorded, primarily in Laamu (72) and Noonu (56) atolls. With an average nesting success rate of 77%, more than 6,400 hatchlings safely reached the ocean.

While slightly lower than in 2024, these nesting numbers reflect natural breeding cycles rather than decline. This work relies on a growing contributor network, including 14 citizen scientists reporting nesting activity nationwide.

Advancing satellite tracking insights

Satellite tracking remains an important tool for understanding sea turtle movements. Through ORPTrack, we tag successfully treated olive ridley patients on release to identify foraging areas in the North Indian Ocean.

In 2025, we focused on analysing existing data and preparing our first publication, expected in 2026. Additional tag deployments are planned for the coming year, further strengthening our understanding of post-rehabilitation movement and habitat use.

Spotlight on hawksbill turtles

While green turtles show signs of recovery globally, hawksbill turtles remain *Critically Endangered*. In 2025, we launched three targeted studies to better understand their habitat use and inform protection, focusing on reef habitat characterisation, diet and prey identification, and the role of seagrass meadows as a potentially under-recognised habitat. Early findings suggest seagrass may play a greater role than previously understood, highlighting the need to consider a broader range of habitats in conservation planning. We also progressed research in genetics, epibionts, and spatial analysis, improving understanding of population connectivity, health, and key hotspots.

Identifying threats and emerging risks

In 2025, 47 injured or distressed turtles were reported nationwide. Most (81%) were olive ridleys, with entanglement in marine debris, including ghost gear, the primary cause. Cases were concentrated between Haa Alif and Ari atolls. The remaining sea turtles were found floating and unable to dive, consistent with previous years. We also continued investigating emerging threats, including microplastics in nesting beaches.

Strengthening collaboration and scientific impact

In the past year, we contributed to several international research collaborations, advanced scientific publications, and supported national workshops with government stakeholders. We also strengthened academic partnerships, including supporting new student-led research in collaboration with Maldives National University – a first for ORP and MNU.

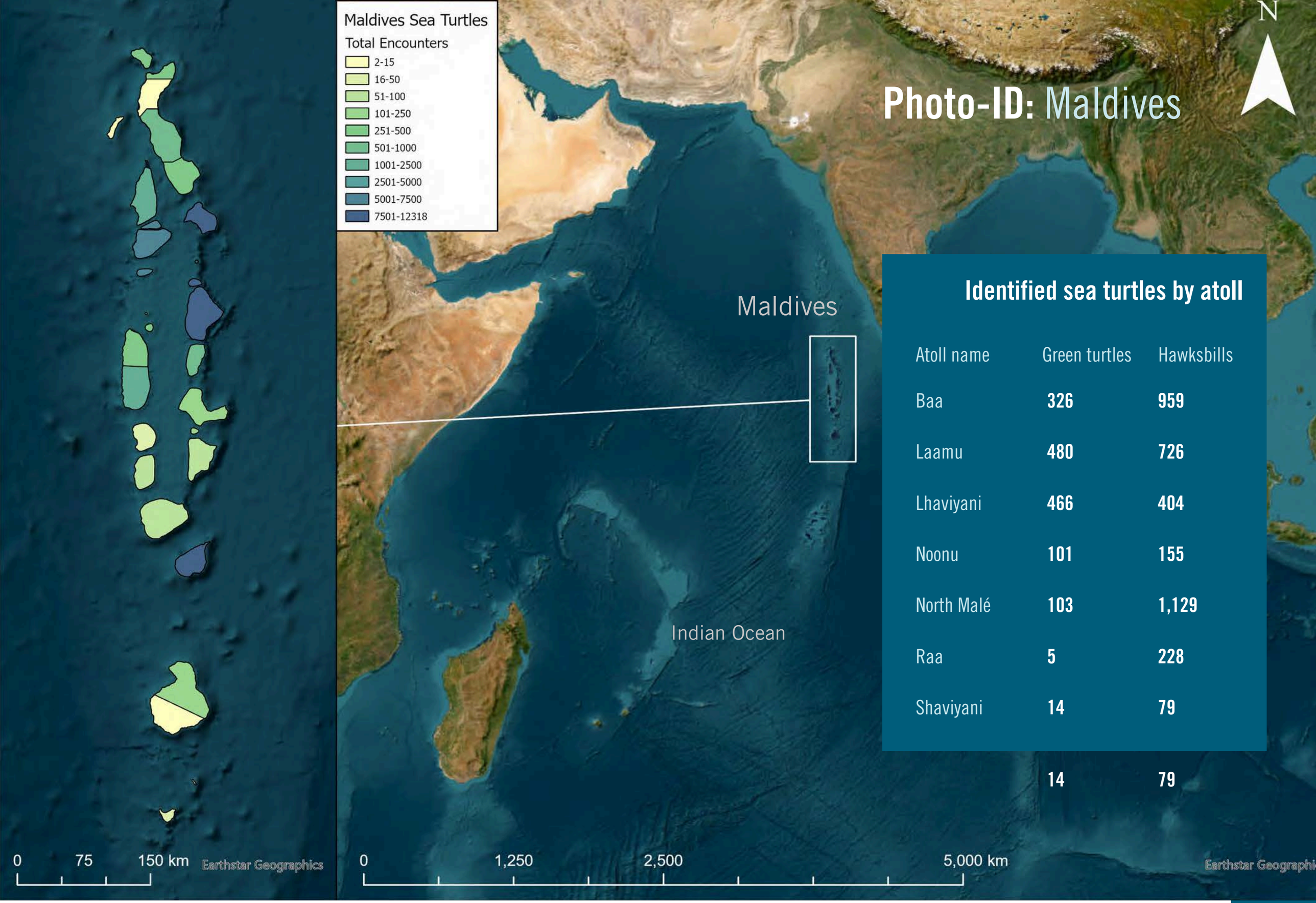
Acknowledgements

Our work in the Maldives is made possible through strong partnerships and a dedicated network of contributors. We thank all our contributors and we are grateful to Enas Mohamed Riyaz, the Environmental Regulatory Authority (ERA) Maldives, and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment for their continued collaboration, ensuring research informs national policy and conservation action.

We thank our academic collaborators, including Prof Dr Mike Sweet (University of Derby), Dr Nancy Mercado Salas (Leibniz Institute for the Analysis of Biodiversity Change), and MEDASSET.

Finally, we acknowledge our partner resorts that host our researchers, supporting our shared mission to protect sea turtles in the Maldives and beyond.

Photo-ID: Maldives



Identified sea turtles by atoll

Atoll name	Green turtles	Hawksbills
Baa	**326**	**959**
Laamu	**480**	**726**
Lhaviyani	**466**	**404**
Noonu	**101**	**155**
North Malé	**103**	**1,129**
Raa	**5**	**228**
Shaviyani	**14**	**79**
	14	**79**

Photo-ID contributors

As in the previous years, we are grateful for the fantastic and enthusiastic citizen science supporters who contributed to another great year for our Photo-ID programme!

In 2025, over 200 individual submitters added photos and encounters to our Photo-ID database.

We would like to highlight our most prolific contributors from the past year:

Most sea turtle encounters shared

- **Megan / Coco Bodu Hithi, North Malé**
- **Núria / OZEN Life Maadhoo, South Malé**
- **Sam / OBLU Select Sengeli, North Malé**
- **Ridhwan / Kurumba, North Malé**
- **Piero / Grand Park Koddiparu, North Malé**

Highest number of new sea turtles identified

- **Núria / OZEN Life Maadhoo, South Malé**
- **Chiara / North and South Malé**
- **Sonia / Raffles Meradhoo, Gaafu**
- **Claire / Citizen Scientist, Baa**
- **Erin / OZEN Life Maadhoo, South Malé**

If you would like to know more and support our Photo-ID project as a citizen scientist, contact: **seaturtleid@oliveridleyproject.org**

Honorary Mentions

Thank you to everyone at Atoll Marine Centre, MantaTrust, and the enthusiastic guests of Six Senses Laamu and Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu, who together contributed immensely to our project!

Our Collaborators

Special thanks to everyone sharing their photos at Maldives Underwater Initiative, Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu, Sirru Fen Fushi, Deep Blue Divers, Soleni Dive, SubOceanic, Soneva Jani, JOALI BEING and One&Only Reethi Rah!

Sea turtle sightings

3,421

New sea turtle IDs

433

ORP Oman

Northern Oman, located on the Musandam Peninsula, has received little research attention despite being ecologically rich.

At the same time, mounting pressures – from bycatch and pollution to climate change and habitat degradation – are putting its marine ecosystems at risk, including sea turtles that rely on these waters as important feeding and resting grounds.

Since 2019, through our collaboration with Six Senses Zighy Bay, we have been undertaking sea turtle research, bycatch monitoring, habitat restoration, and community engagement to address these challenges.

First-ever publsihed study of Musandam's in-water sea turtle population

Musandam's in-water sea turtle population has long remained understudied with most research focused on nesting sites like Masirah Island, south of Musandam. To address this gap, our sea turtle biologists at Six Senses Zighy Bay, have been conducting regular in-water surveys.

In 2025, in collaboration with the Environment Authority and the Environmental Society of Oman, we published the findings of this multi-year research project in the journal Chelonian Conservation and Biology. The study, Photo-ID for Capture Mark Recapture Study of Sea Turtles in Musandam, Oman, 2019–2023, represents the first baseline assessment of sea turtles in the waters of Musandam.

Our study identified 156 individual sea turtles across 828 encounters. Our most interesting finding was that a whopping 94% of the identified sea turtles we identified were juveniles, highlighting Musandam as an important feeding and resting habitat for developing sea turtles. Nearly half of all sightings (46%) were of just 19 individuals, suggesting a small resident population with high site fidelity. Most other sea turtles were seen only once or twice, indicating a more mobile or transient juvenile population.

These findings give us a better understanding of how sea turtles – especially a juvenile population – use Musandam and shows that simple tools like Photo-ID are a powerful way to track and study sea turtle populations over time.

Reducing coastal pollution and entanglement risk

A key milestone in 2025 was the approval of a formal permit for proactive ghost gear removal, granted by the Environmental Agency. Previously, our efforts were limited by case-by-case approval, often delaying response time. This new system, enabled us to conduct regular underwater clean-ups, leading to removal of over 2.4 tonnes of marine debris. This reduced entanglement risks for sea turtles and other marine life, while strengthening long-term collaboration with authorities on marine pollution management.

Bycatch threat response

In 2025, we rescued, recorded, and released a total of 13 sea turtles caught as bycatch. All individuals were juvenile green turtles, which, upon rescue, were successfully disentangled following our response protocol, assessed for injuries, and then safely released. Interestingly, three green turtles out of the ones rescued had been previously identified through our Photo-ID programme, and three were even re-sighted in the weeks after their release, indicating survival and recovery post-intervention. These findings highlight both the scale of bycatch risk, particularly during periods of increased fishing activity, and the impact of our rapid response and monitoring.

Increasing coral coverage

We transplanted nearly 100 coral fragments as part of Six Senses Zighy Bays' ongoing restoration efforts to increase coral cover on local reefs, a key habitat for foraging hawksbills and resting green turtles. We have already seen a juvenile green turtle foraging around the nursery, an encouraging sign that this restoration project is already having a positive effect on the local ecosystem.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead, our efforts will focus on expanding benthic and habitat monitoring, increasing Photo-ID surveys, strengthening bycatch prevention with fishing communities, scaling up coral restoration, and improving collaboration with authorities on spill response and data sharing.

Acknowledgments

Our sincere thanks to the Environmental Agency and Six Senses Zighy Bay – particularly to the Experience and Sustainability teams. Their continued support, collaboration, and commitment made this work possible. We deeply value this partnership and look forward to another year of working together in creating meaningful conservation.

Identified sea turtles: Oman

Green turtles	Hawksbills
254 Since 2019	**10** Since 2019
37 2025	**1** 2025
16 Sites w/sea turtles sighted	

264 Total sea turtles identified

ORP Pakistan

Sea turtle conservation in Pakistan continues to face significant knowledge gaps, limiting effective protection efforts.

Despite the country's long coastline, only a few beaches are monitored as confirmed nesting sites, while much of the coast remains understudied due to political instability and limited research access. Since 2016, ORP has worked in the region to improve understanding of sea turtle populations through research, while also addressing threats through community collaboration and outreach.

Solar-powered change

Our circular economy project upcycles discarded fishnet nets (ghost nets) into pet leashes, tackling the twin problem of marine debris and coastal waste disposal, while also generating additional income for fishing communities.

In Abdul Rehman Goth village, Karachi, we work with fishers to recover ghost gear from coastal habitats. The nets are then repurposed by the community – men clean and twist these nets into ropes, while the women stitch and assemble them into pet leashes. However, frequent power outages often disrupt production by halting sewing machines.

In 2025, the community set out to use their collective funds (amassed from pet leash sales) to install solar panels with battery backup, ensuring reliable, carbon-neutral production.

With stable power, the women launched special leashes for small dog breeds in the final quarter of the year, selling 35 units by the end of 2025 and generating additional income.

Protecting marine ecosystems and supporting livelihoods

We removed almost 700 kgs kilos of ghost gear from coastal waters in the last year, helping reduce the risk of entanglement for sea turtles and other marine life.

At the same time, the initiative generated PKR 147,500 through the sale of upcycled ghost-net products, creating additional income opportunities for local artisans, particularly women. Together, these efforts demonstrate how community-led conservation can deliver both environmental and economic benefits.

Safer handling, stronger stewardship

Through targeted training sessions with 40 fishers in Ibrahim Hyderi and Abdul Rehman Goth, we improved knowledge of safe sea turtle handling and release of sea turtles accidentally caught in fishing nets. Fishers learned about sea turtle anatomy and practical techniques such as supporting sea turtles by the shell rather than their fragile flippers to reduce injury. Following this training, several fishers shared videos of safe releases with our team, demonstrating growing awareness and stewardship within the community.

Expanding sea turtle research in Pakistan

In September 2025, our nesting surveys at Hawke's Bay and Sandspit reached an important milestone: we completed two full years of data collection, creating the first consistent multi-year dataset on sea turtle nesting in Pakistan. At the same time, our new exploratory surveys along six coastal areas in Balochistan revealed over 200 body pits and sea turtle tracks, highlighting active nesting and previously undocumented potential nesting sites. Together, these discoveries are helping build the scientific knowledge needed to guide future sea turtle conservation in the country.

Contributing to scientific knowledge

In order to help consolidate current knowledge on sea turtles in Pakistan, we submitted a comprehensive review of our sea turtle research for publication. The paper is expected to appear in the Indian Ocean Turtle Newsletter in January 2026, and represents an important milestone for our research programme.

Looking ahead

Geopolitical tensions in 2025 restricted travel and complicated fieldwork in Balochistan. Despite this, we surveyed six areas, though many potential nesting sites, such as Daran and Gwadar, remain unexplored and will be priorities for future surveys.

In 2026, we plan to use sports events – popular with both fisher communities and school children – to promote sea turtle conservation and responsible behaviour towards these animals.

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere thanks to the Government of Balochistan for facilitating our travel, Karachi American School for inviting us to interact with their students, Indus Scuba for providing dive gear, and Diver's Reef Karachi for valuable Photo-ID submissions. We also thank the communities, funders, and partners who support and collaborate with us. Your commitment and trust makes this work possible.

Circular economy: Pakistan

Ghost gear recovered

>7.3K kg

Since 2018

679 kg

2025

Ghost gear repurposed

>77.5K sqm

Since 2018

11.4K sqm

2025

Pet leashes made

952

Since 2019

Pet leashes sold

797

Since 2019

Extra income generated

996,000 PKR

ORP Seychelles

Seychelles is globally recognised as one of the most important nesting regions for the critically endangered hawksbill turtle. While decades of conservation efforts have helped stabilise sea turtle populations across the archipelago, threats such as illegal harvesting, beach erosion, and increasing human pressures continue to affect sea turtles here.

Since 2021, we have been working on Félicité Island in partnership with Six Senses Zil Pasyon to monitor nesting sea turtles, study population trends, and strengthen community engagement.

Beneath the sand: A hidden threat to sea turtle nests

During the 2024–2025 nesting season, we began noticing a troubling pattern on Félicité Island. Several sea turtle nests that had been carefully relocated to safer areas of the beach, intended to protect them from erosion or flooding, were being heavily predated by ghost crabs (*Ocypode sp.*). When the nests were later excavated, many eggs showed clear signs of crab predation.

This observation sparked a new research initiative in 2025, focused on understanding the distribution and abundance of ghost crabs along Grand Anse, the island's main nesting beach. By mapping crab burrows across different sections of the beach, the team began building the first dataset on crab activity on Félicité.

Ghost crab abundance will be monitored fortnightly using burrow counts, a widely used non-invasive method. To address potential overestimation – caused by abandoned or multiple-use burrows – the Burrow Resetting Method (BRM) will also be applied. After initial counts, burrows are covered and reassessed the following morning to identify active ones. The proportion of reopened burrows will be used to adjust counts, providing a more accurate estimate of crab abundance.

By identifying areas with lower crab activity, the team hopes to guide safer nest relocation decisions, ultimately increasing chances of successful hatchings. This study therefore serves as an important step toward improving sea turtle nesting outcomes on the island.

Nesting monitoring

In 2025, we recorded 50 nests on Félicité, including 36 during the first quarter and 14 during the final quarter of the year. Our data collection efforts concerning the nests, including distance of nest from high tide line, clutch size, and now crab predation, are all aimed at improving nesting outcomes. Our consistent data on nesting activity also confirms the island's importance as a crucial nesting site for critically endangered hawksbills.

The nesting season for hawkbsill turtles in Seychelles typically lasts from October to March. The 2025-2026 season was off to a slow start with only 50% of the nest numbers compared to the previous year. The reason for this is unclear.

A growing sea turtle Photo-ID database

Through 79.9 hours of in-water surveys, we recorded 59 sea turtle encounters, including 27 new individuals that were added to our database, bringing the total number of identified turtles in the region to 280 and contributing to our long-term understanding of sea turtle populations in the region.

A new collaboration with Trek Divers helped increase citizen science contributions to our sea turtle Photo-ID database, enhancing our ability to identify and track individual sea turtles.

Building local conservation capacity

A key milestone in 2025 was the launch of ORP's first internship programme in Seychelles, created to provide young Seychellois with meaningful, hands-on experience in sea turtle conservation.

Looking ahead

We aim to expand our research through benthic habitat surveys and continuation of crab predation monitoring, while also strengthening community involvement through the launch of an education programme for La Digue secondary school.

Ackowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to Six Senses Zil Pasyon, Trek Divers, and the Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority (SPGA) for their support. Together, we can continue safeguarding Seychelles' marine ecosystems for future generations.

All research activities in the Seychelles are conducted under a permit issued by Seychelles Bureau of Standards.

Sea turtles & nesting: Seychelles

Green turtles
12
Since 2021

Hawksbills
268
Since 2021

280
Total sea turtles identified

1
2025

26
2025

New nests laid
50 2025

47
Sites w/sea turtles sighted

4,068
Hatchings counted 2025

Publications

The past year was a successful one for our research team, with multiple technical reports, conference attendances, and peer reviewed manuscripts shared with the public.

Firstly, at the beginning of the year, a collaborative benchmark publication entitled "*Updated global conservation status and priorities for marine turtles*" coordinated by the Marine Turtle Specialist Group of the IUCN was published in Endangered Species Research. We contributed our expertise on various regional evaluations for the Indian Ocean.

A second global collaboration investigating the abundance and impact of microplastics on sea turtle nesting beaches was published in Marine Pollution Bulletin and featured insights from samples collected in the Maldives in 2018. While these samples showed relatively low microplastic load, we are working on a follow up study with samples collected six years later, which will reveal if there have been changes over this period.

Green turtle GM043, one of the most frequently sighted sea turtles at Zighy Bay, Oman.

The last year also brought exciting news for our work in Oman, with a first paper entitled "*Photo-ID for Capture Mark Recapture Study of Sea Turtles in Musandam, Oman, 2019–2023*" published in Chelonian Conservation Biology in collaboration with the Environment Authority and the Environmental Society of Oman. This study focuses on the Musandam Peninsula, shedding new light on the underwater lives of sea turtles in the region and highlighting the potential of monitoring projects by implementing Photo-ID in Oman. We are excited to contribute knowledge about juvenile sea turtles in foraging habitats in the country.

Peer-reviewed articles & theses

Botterell *et al.* 2025. *A global assessment of microplastic abundance and characteristics on marine turtle nesting beaches*. Marine Pollution Bulletin 215:117768.

Panarese D, Al Shahhi MA, Al Dhahouri MJ, Sarrouf Wilson M, Köhnk S, Stelfox M & Lloyd J 2025. Photo-ID for capture mark recapture study of sea turtles in Oman 2019-2023. Chelonian Conservation and Biology 24(1):111–124.

Papafitsoros *et al. (IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group) 2025. Sea Turtle Photo Identification: A Practical Guide*, (Pre-print fro updated edition of *Research and Management Techniques for the Conservation of Sea Turtles*.

Wallace *et al.* (IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group Burning Issues 7 Working Group) 2025. *Updated global conservation status and priorities for marine turtles*. Endangered Species Research 56:247–276.

Selected technical reports

Dibble-Kahn M, Afeef I, Köhnk S and Stelfox M 2025. **Laamu Yearly Report 2025**. Olive Ridley Project, p. 1-43.

Inan I, Naeem M, Afeef I, Mohamed Riyaz E and Köhnk S 2025. L. Gaadhoo **Nest Monitoring - Sea Turtle Ranger Programme Annual Report 2025.** Environmental Protection Agency Maldives and Olive Ridley Project, p. 1-17.

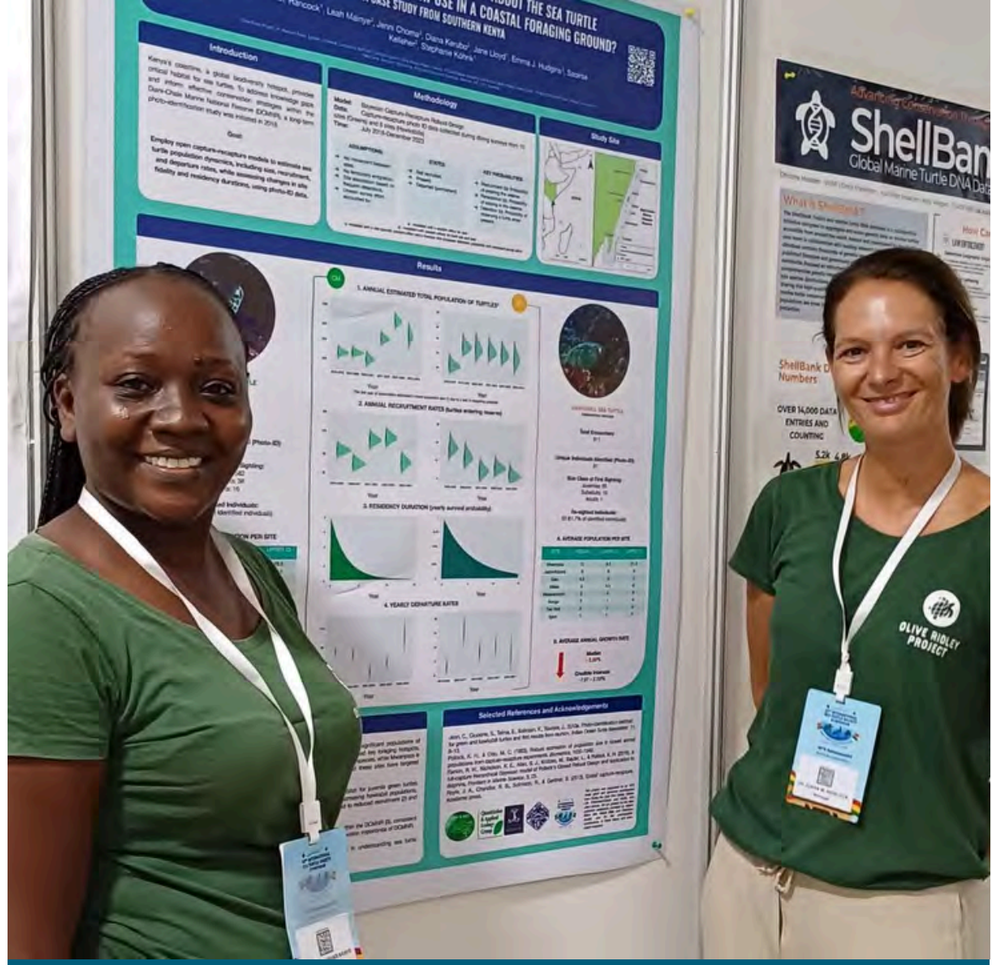
Selected conference presentations

Afeef *et al.* Between the atolls: Sea turtle nesting in the Maldives from 2018-2025. **Theveli Conference, Malé, Maldives.**

Hancock *et al.* What can 5.5-year of Photo-ID data tell about the sea turtle population dynamics and habitat use in a coastal foraging ground? A case study from southern Kenya. **43rd International Sea Turtle Symposium, Accra, Ghana.**

Omwoyo *et al.* Drone-based assessment of green turtle habitat in a seagrass lagoon, Diani-Chale Marine National Reserve. **Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association Meeting, Mombasa, Kenya.**

Simantiris N *et al.* Microplastic pollution impact on environmental parameters in sea turtle nests. **43rd International Sea Turtle Symposium, Accra, Ghana.**



Publications

Total scientific publications

26

Peer-reviewed articles, theses, official reports

Total technical reports

22

2025 conference presentations

10

Finances

Summary of financial performance

In 2025, ORP's finances showed notable growth, with income totalling £638,754 – representing a 11.2% increase from the previous year – and an expenditure of £707,449 across core charitable activities. The increase in total income was primarily driven by growth in donations and grants, particularly restricted funding, which increased by £49,244 compared to 2024. The year ended with net assets of £420,752.

The reduction in net assets reflects the deficit incurred during the year. However, we continue to maintain a sound financial position, supported by healthy unrestricted and restricted fund balances, strong donor support, and sufficient liquid resources to meet our ongoing commitments and deliver our charitable objectives.

As we enter 2026, we are well positioned to build on the progress made under our five-year fundraising strategy. We will continue to diversify our income, with a particular focus on expanding support from corporate partners to strengthen long-term financial sustainability. Securing the resources needed to maintain and expand our conservation impact remains a key priority, ensuring our work remains resilient, effective, and adaptable. ORP's 2025 financial performance reflects both strong fundraising outcomes and prudent financial management.

Olive Ridley Project – Kenya (ORPK) operates as a branch of the UK-based charity and their financial accounts are therefore reported jointly.

Olive Ridley Project – Maldives (ORPM), by contrast, is an independently registered Maldivian entity and maintains separate accounts. As such, restricted funds received directly by ORPM – totalling USD 48,500 in 2025 – are not included in these financial statements. However, the activities funded through these grants were delivered jointly with ORP and are included in this Annual Review.

ORPM's financial accounts are reported to the relevant Maldivian authorities and can be accessed upon request. In future years, a summary of ORPM's financial performance may be included for greater transparency and completeness.

Income

Total income achieved for the year was £638,754. The breakdown of income sources is as follows:

- **Donations, grants, and legacies accounted for £462,546** with unrestricted funds contributing £296,629 and restricted funds adding £165,917.
- **Charitable activities: £167,009**, compared to £179,763 in 2024.
- **Interest income: £9,199**.

Expenditure

Total expenditure for the year amounted to £707,449, up from £669,535 in 2024. The major areas of expenditure were:

- **Raising funds: £94,478**, up from £81,509 in 2024, supporting the generation of £638,754 in income. This represents a fundraising return on investment (ROI) of approximately 6.76 – meaning that for every £1 spent, ORP raised around £6.76.
- **Charitable activities: £612,971**, an increase from £588,026 in 2024. This expenditure includes equipment and medical supplies, staff costs, other charitable activities, and donated services and facilities.
- **Reserves:** In line with our Reserves Policy, ORP currently holds a reserve of £100,000, supporting the core operations of the charity for 6 months.

Net income and fund balances

We reported a net deficit of £68,381 for 2025, compared with a deficit of £94,330 in 2024, after accounting for net investment gains of £314. This resulted in a net decrease in funds of £68,381, with closing fund balances of £420,752, compared with £489,133 at the beginning of the year.

- **Unrestricted funds:** £344,312 (2024: £389,855)
- **Restricted funds:** £76,440 (2024: £99,278)

Financial position

As of 31 December 2025, ORP's total net assets stood at £420,752. The balance sheet highlights include:

- **Fixed assets: £59,884**, including tangible fixed assets and investments.
- **Current assets: £412,538**, comprising cash at bank and in hand, and debtors.
- **Creditors: £(59,323)**, representing amounts falling due within one year.

The financial information included in this report has not been independently audited or verified. It is presented in good faith based on the organisation's accounting records at the time of publication. Our statutory accounts will be filed with the Charity Commission of England and Wales and will be available for public inspection here in due course.

Looking ahead to 2026

Building on the progress achieved in 2025, we will continue to strengthen sea turtle conservation through programme expansion, investment in conservation medicine, stronger community partnerships, and organisational development. In the year ahead, we will focus on the following priorities:

The Sea Turtle Health Institute (STHI) at Jawakara Islands in Lhaviyani Atoll, Maldives.

Sea Turtle Health Institute (STHI)

With construction now complete, our focus will shift to the successful opening and operational development of the Sea Turtle Health Institute. We will expand and refine our volunteer and student programmes to provide more structured training opportunities and deeper engagement in conservation medicine. Investment in essential veterinary and diagnostic equipment, alongside continued development of facilities and staff, will strengthen clinical capacity and support the delivery of world-class care, training, and research.

Jumba Turtle Patrol joins ORP-Kenya

The Jumba Turtle Patrol is a community-led conservation initiative along the Jumba Ruins coastline in Mtwapa, Kenya. Founded by local residents to address the ongoing slaughter of nesting females and illegal egg harvesting, the patrol has been sustained through private support for more than 15 years. Beginning in 2026, we will assume operational leadership of the project, integrating its two community monitors into our team and strengthening local partnerships to enhance conservation impact along this important nesting coastline.

Strengthening research governance

We will establish a formal Research Ethics Committee to further strengthen our commitment to transparency, accountability, and best practice in conservation science. The committee will help ensure that all projects are reviewed and guided by clear ethical standards, supporting responsible, ethical, and high-quality research across the organisation.

New and expanding educational initiatives

Education remains central to our conservation approach, and in 2026 we will launch and expand several initiatives designed to inspire, equip, and engage communities across our programme countries. Highlights include:

Kenya: Further development of our internship and university attachment programmes, creating additional opportunities for Kenyan conservationists to gain hands-on experience in sea turtle conservation and community outreach.

Maldives: Publication of a sea turtle children's book to engage younger audiences; organisation of the Vaavoshi Sea Turtle Festival in Kulhudhuffushi, a national celebration of sea turtles through conservation, culture, and community participation; and collaboration with the Maldives National University to launch an accredited Sea Turtle Veterinary Assistant Diploma.

Pakistan: Combining community football tournaments with sea turtle education and training to promote responsible behaviour towards sea turtles and strengthen community support for our conservation mission.

Seychelles: Launching a structured education programme for students at La Digue Secondary School in collaboration with Trek Divers and our partner resort, Six Senses Zil Pasyon.

Growing the Ambassador Programme

We will continue to develop our Ambassador Programme to engage new audiences and strengthen support for sea turtle conservation worldwide. By expanding the programme's diversity and reach, we aim to build a stronger network of advocates and increase participation in conservation action across regions.

Building on our progress

To support the continued growth of our conservation, research, conservation medicine, and education programmes, we will expand strategic corporate partnerships and diversify income streams. These efforts will help ensure the long-term sustainability of our work and provide the resources needed to increase our conservation impact in the years ahead.

Through these investments and priorities, we will strengthen conservation outcomes, advance scientific research and clinical practice, and contribute to healthier marine ecosystems through a One Health approach that recognises the interconnectedness of wildlife, people, and the environment. In doing so, we will help build a more sustainable future for sea turtles and ocean health, upon which we all depend.

Acknowledgements

Our work is made possible through the support and collaboration of a committed network of partners, funders, collaborators, and stakeholders. We extend our sincere thanks to all those who contribute to advancing sea turtle conservation across our programmes.

We are especially grateful to our long-standing funders and strategic partners, whose sustained engagement provides the foundation for our work, as well as to our corporate partners, major donors, and grant-makers, whose investment enables the scale, continuity, and effectiveness of our programmes. We extend our particular thanks to Earthkeeper, Friends of Frontiers, and Karen Exell for their exceptional generosity and support, which have helped advance our mission and strengthen our impact.

We thank the governments, regulatory authorities, and institutional partners we work alongside, whose collaboration ensures our work contributes to informed decision-making and meaningful conservation outcomes.

Across all locations, we recognise the vital role of our operational partners, including resorts and local organisations, whose logistical support and on-the-ground collaboration enable effective programme delivery. We also thank those who report strandings, assist in rescues, and contribute data, strengthening both our response capacity and our understanding of threats facing sea turtles.

We are grateful to our wider community of donors and turtle patient adopters, whose generosity directly supports rescue, conservation medicine, research, and education efforts.

Finally, we acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of our staff, interns, and volunteers, whose hard work and passion underpin everything we achieve.

Together with everyone who supports our mission, we remain dedicated to protecting sea turtles and promoting the health and balance of the natural world.

From all of us at the Olive Ridley Project, thank you.

Partners & Collaborators

OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

Registered Charity #1165905
in England & Wales

OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT-MALDIVES

Registered NGO CR/04/2022

OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT-KENYA

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Hawksbill hatchlings emerging from their nest, Shaviyani Atoll, Maldives.
Photo: Afrah Abdul Sathaar for ORP.