

BLUE & GREEN LAAMU

*The Marine Conservation & Sustainability
Newsletter by the Maldives Underwater Initiative*

JUNE 2022

*A submission by Ibrahim Yameen, Deep Blue Divers photographer,
to the 2021 MUI Underwater Photography Competition ranked in
the top 10 shots.*



SIX SENSES

LAAMU



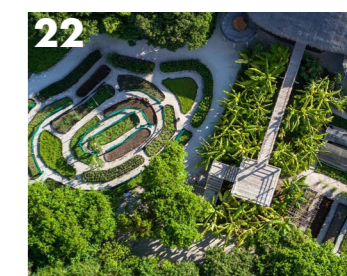
MALDIVES UNDERWATER INITIATIVE by Six Senses Laamu



This shot by Marteyne van Well, Six Senses Regional General Manager, was ranked in the top ten of last year's Six Senses Laamu's Underwater Photographer of the Year Competition.

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THE BIG STUFF



104 megafauna surveys were conducted by the MUI and DBD teams



353 sharks were sighted



196 rays were sighted



276 turtles were sighted

OUR EDUCATION



1,223 moments of education were shared with guests



207 moments of education were shared with hosts



123 moments of education were shared with the community

SIX SENSES CONSERVATION

WORLD OCEANS DAY 2022!

On the 8th of June, World Oceans Day was successfully celebrated in Six Senses Laamu with a splash! The MUI team and Deep Blue Divers together hosted SCUBA dives to two amazing sites, Fushi Kandu (a channel site known for its sightings of sharks and eagle rays) and Haleema Haa (a beautiful inner reef site with healthy, diverse corals). Guests and hosts enjoyed and appreciated the beautiful reef scenes and spotted eagle rays, white tip and grey reef sharks, green and hawksbill turtles and Napoleon wrasse.

The MUI team also took guests out on a very special snorkel to one of our favorite but less visited reefs. The team were joined by 15 guests, who spotted sharks, turtles, and rays! All guests were delighted to learn more about our oceans, and curious to know more.

In the afternoon, 15 hosts gathered in strong spirit to clean up reefs on two sides of Olhuveli island, the location of Six Senses Laamu. A large amount of trash was collected and segregated.



5000+
students reached
globally

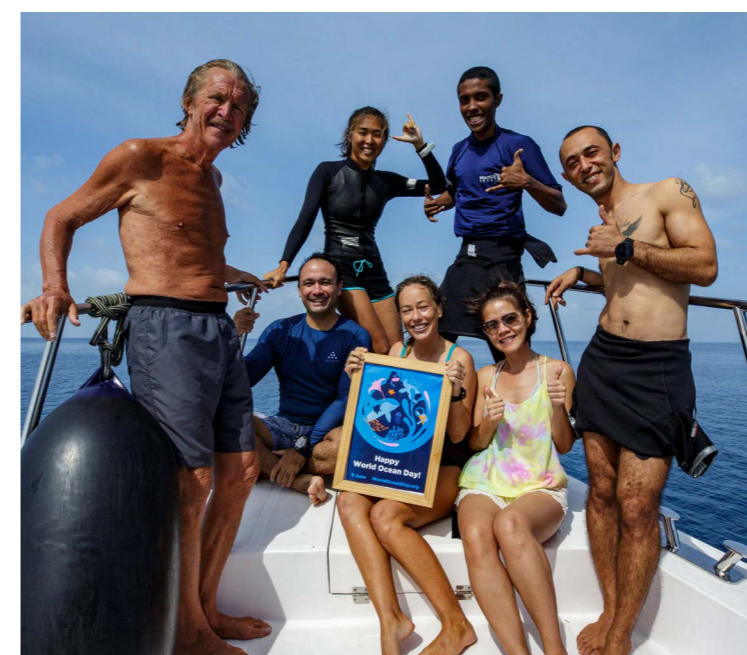


60+ kg trash
collected



Throughout the day, 90 hosts also participated in a Kahoot quiz made by the MUI team, about our oceans. The quiz was available in both English and Dhivehi languages. One lucky winner from all participants was picked at random and won a dinner for two in one of the guest restaurants!

Finally, this year's celebrations were not only on island, we went global! Greg, MUI's Guest Education Coordinator, hosted a talk on the topic 'Protecting blue spaces in the Maldives' to schools around the world as part of the 'World Oceans Day for Schools' event. A whopping 5000 students were estimated to have been reached and inspired! 🌊



369 guests joined
MUI for a guided house reef
snorkel



155 guests joined MUI
for an evening talk

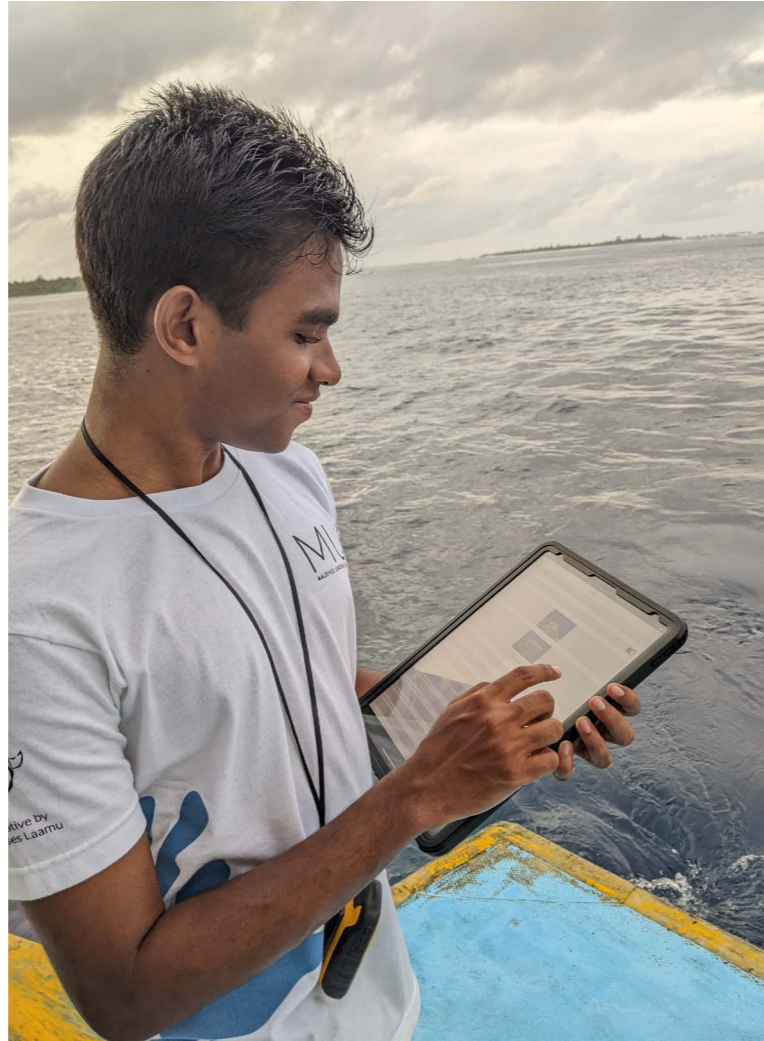


220 guests
joined MUI for sunset
dolphin cruise

MUI TRANSITIONS INTO A NEW ERA OF MEGAFUNA DATA

This month, the MUI team has started transitioning to a new way of collecting data for their megafauna research. As frequent readers and followers know, MUI and their dive center partner Deep Blue Divers, collect data on megafauna sightings such as sharks, rays, turtles, Napoleon wrasse and larger groupers, on a daily basis across the atoll. This data is giving MUI vital insights into the populations of these species, allowing the identification of seasonal and spatial distribution patterns- in other words; when and where are these species sighted. It has long been in MUI's plan to spread this data collection further, to involve other organizations from across the atoll to get even more insights into the abundance and distribution of these charismatic and important animals and with this development we are one step closer to achieving this.

For this to happen MUI has to make sure the data collection is as quick and easy to use as possible, available to everyone that's interested in participating. This is when Oliver Burdekin, spatial analyst from the UK, came into play. Oliver is helping the Six Senses Laamu team develop a data collection app for MUI, that does exactly that. After weeks of training the team online in spatial programs that build the foundation of the app, this June Oliver finally came to Six Senses Laamu as visiting expert, training the team in the application of their newly developed megafauna data collection app. The app is an easy-to-use, available on all smart devices, free of charge and the best is yet to come: the team has learned how to change and tweak the app in the way they need it to work.



Ten hosts were trained on site to use the app in the field and will now start trialing it on surveys. The app allows anyone that has been granted access to enter sightings data using their phone GPS, which allows the team to pinpoint the start and end location of each individual survey. This is a great step forward as previous data collection was limited to purely the name of the survey site, without detailed information on where at the specific site the team visited.

The app will be an ever changing throughout the next few months while the team is trialing out the data in the field. In the long run, MUI hopes to involve other divers and citizen scientists from across the atoll and beyond in megafauna data collection to get a much wider understanding of the distribution of such important and vulnerable megafauna. 🌊



10 hosts were trained in spatial analysis software



1 new data collection app was developed



THE MANTA TRUST



A GOOD MONTH FOR MANTA RAY RESEARCH

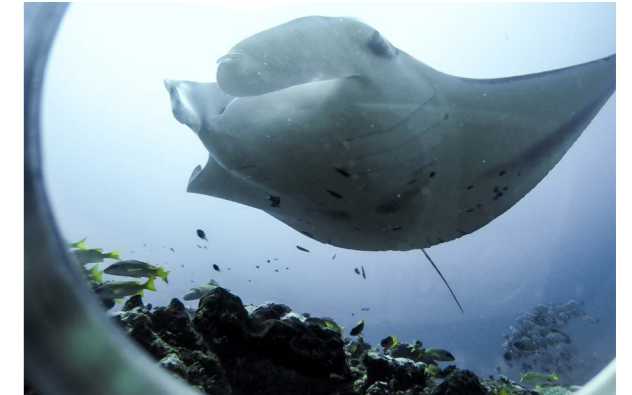
With the help of Olive Ridley Project, Blue Marine Foundation and Deep Blue Divers, the Manta Trust team was able to conduct 23 research boat dives to Hithadhoo corner, also known as Manta Point, due to its abundance of 'cleaning stations' where mantas can regularly be found cruising getting cleaned. This is a considerable number of research dives in comparison to recent months, allowing the team to consistently survey this site for mantas. During these surveys, the Manta Trust team was able to confirm 21 manta ray sightings and deployed five Remote Underwater Video cameras. These cameras help the team to continue monitoring the cleaning stations between dives, when no one is in the water.

Specific research dives also allow the Manta Trust team to conduct their other research projects, including monitoring the growth of individuals. This is done using a paired stereo-video system- two cameras set at a specific distance apart, which combine to build a 3D image of the manta. By swimming behind the manta and filming with these cameras, the software can measure precisely it's size. This month the Manta Trust team successfully measured four individual manta rays. Environmental data such as current strength and direction, tides, lunar cycles, and temperature are always collected, to pinpoint what environmental conditions determine manta ray presence or absence at the site. 🌊

A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH EFFORT

Hithadhoo Corner, or 'Manta Point', is not only a hot spot for manta rays, but also for turtles. Many Green turtles visit the site for the same reason as the mantas, to be cleaned by cleaner fish, and for turtles, these are also good spots to rest under the coral and take a nap. In June, Olive Ridley Project joined the Manta Trust on eight dives to Hithadhoo Corner to also gather some data on the turtles at the site.

This site is also a hot spot for other animals, such as particular fish, sharks and Napoleon wrasse, therefore it's great to be able to combine research efforts amongst the team which build to wider collaborative conservation goals. Protecting mantas goes beyond the animals themselves, but also caring for the wider ecosystem. 🌊



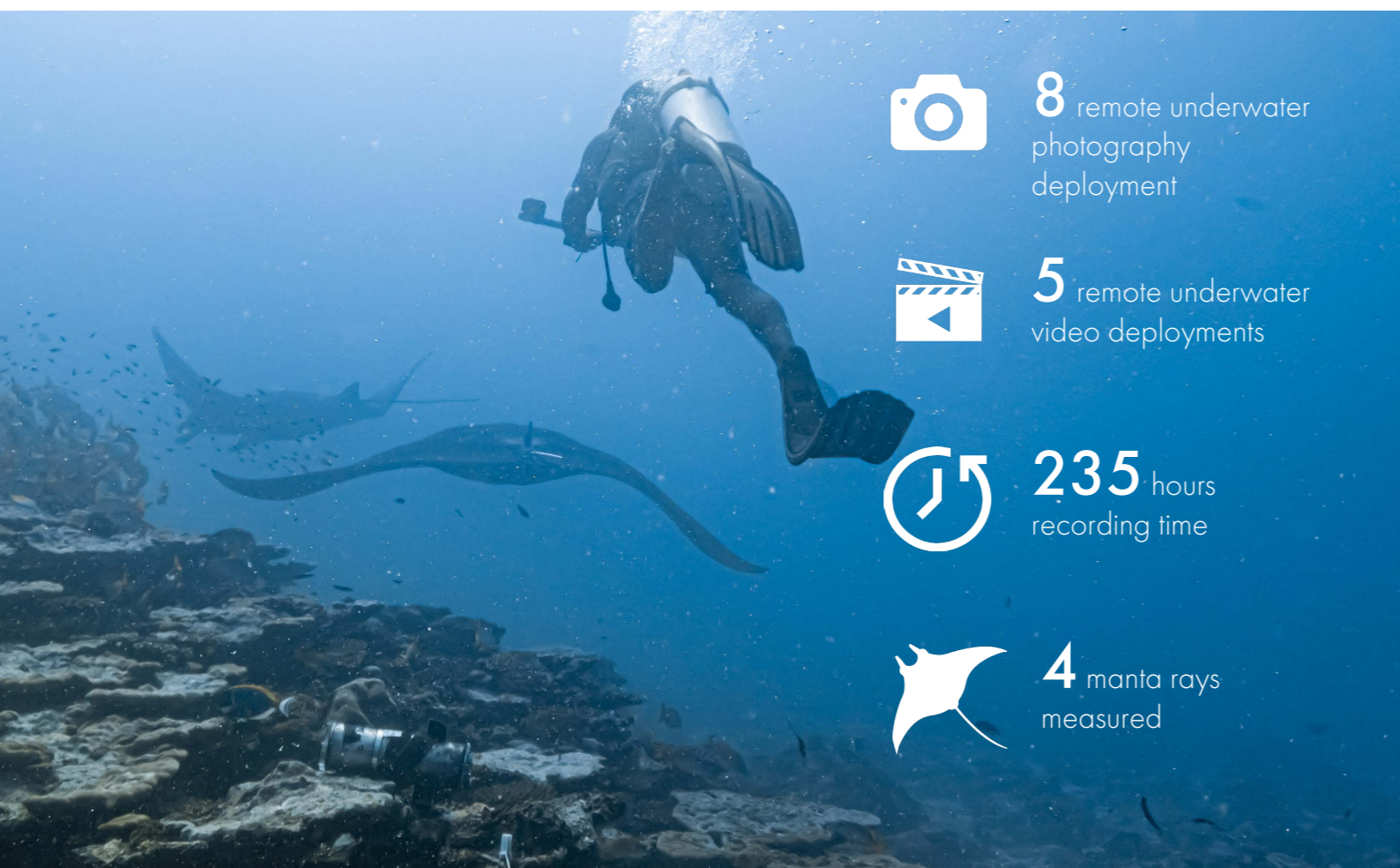
CARDO IS BACK



8 research dives were conducted with ORP

One of the Laamu atolls mantas, Cardo (MV-MA-4824), is back after a year. Cardo is a juvenile male manta who was first sighted in 2019 at Hithadhoo Coner. His most recent sighting in June was at Fushi Kanduu, recorded by Reveries Dive Center, a dive center located on the Gan island in Laamu atoll.

Manta Trust team has worked hard to encourage other organizations or individuals to submit manta sightings and is always grateful to receive information from the community, NGO's and Dive Centers. Receiving this information from around the atoll helps build a better picture of mantas, where and when mantas are, and also identify any changes. 🌊



8 remote underwater photography deployment



5 remote underwater video deployments



235 hours recording time



4 manta rays measured



1 Cardo sighted after 1 year



21 manta ray sightings confirmed through photo identification



BLUE MARINE FOUNDATION



11 guest fishing trips surveyed

221 sustainably sourced fish bought through the Laamaseelu Masveriyaa programme

LET THE FISHER RECRUITMENT COMMENCE!



This month marked the beginning of the new Laamaseelu Masveriyaa recruitment period. The Blue Marine Foundation (Blue Marine) and Maldives Resilient Reefs (MRR) teams met with council members from the local islands of Maamendhoo, Hithadhoo, Kunahandhoo, and Fonadhoo to discuss the newly re-developed Laamaseelu Masveriyaa program.

Advertisement posters were then spread across the islands and the island councils made an announcement on the island megaphone. The aim of this recruitment period is to promote the program within local communities and engage new fishers to consistently and sustainably sell seafood to Six Senses Laamu.



The team will be conducting Laamaseelu Masveriyaa sign-up days on each island later in July, where fishers will be informed of the role and responsibilities of Laamaseelu Masveriyaa fishers as well as the rewards on offer for dedicated fishers.

4 islands visited

16 advertisement posters handed-out

BLUE MARINE GOES GLOBAL!

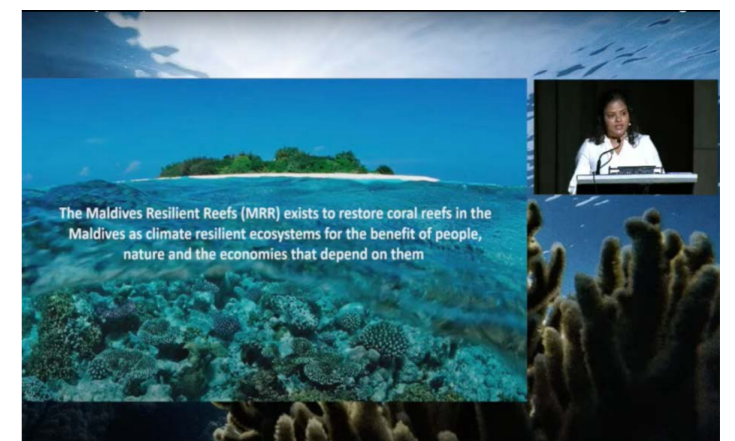
This month, Blue Marine's very own Shaha Hashim delivered an eloquent and inspiring presentation at the United Nations Ocean Conference 2022 in Lisbon.

Shaha spoke of the beauty and issues facing the Maldives marine environment, as well as the work of Blue Marine Foundation and Maldives Resilient Reefs in conserving these environments for future generations.

The Blue Marine and MRR team are very proud and inspired by Shaha, and look forward to pressing forward in their work to ensure the protection of Maldivian marine ecosystems.



1,592 online views





SNORKEL TRAINING FOR SCHOOL KIDS, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS.

In June, the Blue Marine and MRR team in Gan conducted snorkeling programs for three schools in Gan and Fonadhoo – Ihahdhoo School, Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thaanee, and Laamu Atoll Education Center. In these camps, over 35 students and 25 parents and teachers were taught snorkeling skills and taken on a guided snorkel of a nearshore coral reef in Laamu Gan. The program was a great success and enabled many people to appreciate the beauty of Laamu’s coral reefs for the very first time! 🌊



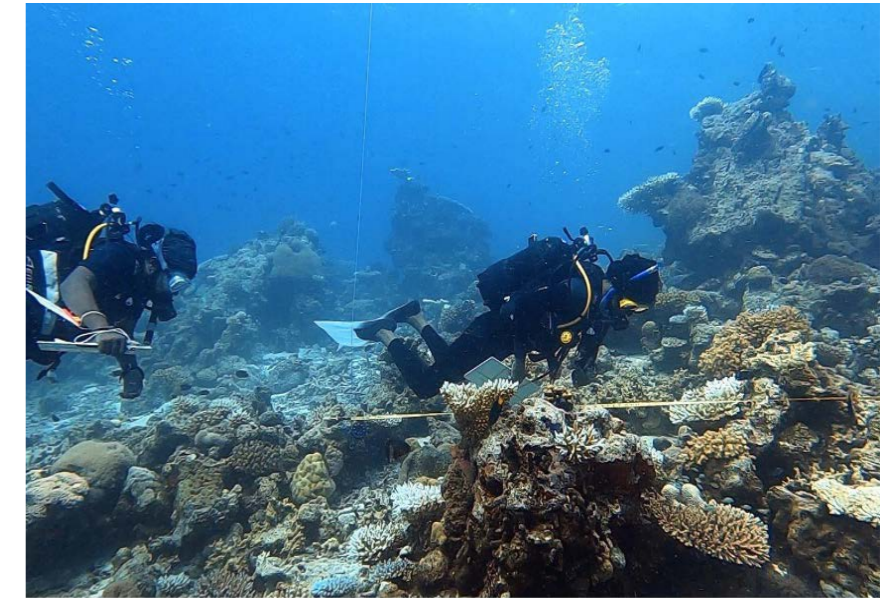
55 community members trained



TRAINING LAAMU’S VERY OWN REEF CHECK NETWORK

Blue Marine and MRR pride themselves upon facilitating locally led conservation. This June, MRR welcomed back its Coral Reef Citizens, Laamaseelu Farudhun, who were eager to learn how to monitor coral reefs.

Six participants, three from Gan and one each from Maabaidhoo, Dhanbidhoo and Hiithadhoo came together to be trained in coral reef monitoring. All of them completed their PADI open water diving course earlier this year in preparation for this training. With the guidance of our very own Reef Check Instructor Shaha Hashim, the group successfully completed the Eco-Diver Reef Check course, learning how to identify key indicator species on coral reefs, their roles in the ecosystem, and impacts to the reef from human and natural disturbances. These newly certified Reef Check divers will now prepare to survey a reef in Laamu twice a year to monitor changes over time. 🌊



6 reef check divers trained





OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

THE OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

ANGEELA PRESENTS AT WORLD SEA TURTLE DAY WEBINAR

The Olive Ridley Project (ORP), Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology; and the Environment Protection Agency co-hosted the 2nd annual webinar to mark the World Sea Turtle Day. This webinar was hosted in collaboration with Marine Savers and Atoll Marine Center.

The webinar was titled "Sea Turtle Science in the Maldives" and was aimed to celebrate the key milestones of sea turtle protection in the Maldives in 2021, where the NGOs and government organizations highlighted their ongoing research and rehabilitation projects in the Maldives.

Laamu Sea Turtle Biologist & Guest Educator, Angeela, presented at the webinar focusing on Sea Turtle Biology. 🌿



1 collaborative webinar hosted



A SHELL-EBRATION WITH SIX SENSES LAAMU GUESTS AND HOSTS!



To continue the World Sea Turtle Day celebrations, Olive Ridley Project designed activities for both guests and hosts, aimed at both having fun and learning something about sea turtle conservation. The day was started with spe-shell pancakes for breakfast, followed by a special turtle focused dive and turtle snorkel. For kids, a turtle-y fun kids club activities were followed up by a presentation highlighting the turtles in Laamu, that kids might even see around the resort.

The next day was a day to celebrate turtles with our hosts. MUI marked the day by taking Six Senses hosts to a snorkel by boat to one of our turtle hot-spots, accompanied by Olive Ridley Project turtle biologists. 🌿



77 hosts educated



377 guests reached

WELCOME HOME MS GR1045

On 22nd June, the ORP team was informed about a turtle disoriented and stuck in the front garden of a beach villa. It was likely she had come up to lay a nest, but had gotten lost or stuck along the way. Using Olive Ridley Projects' turtle ID database we found out this mother turtle has already been at Six Senses Laamu. She was first seen nesting in 2019 and hadn't been sighted since. This would be expected, as mother turtles migrate long distances from where they live, to return to the same area they hatched to lay their own nests and usually have a few years break between nesting seasons to recover from the exhausting trip. Therefore, we give GR1045 a big welcome back after her journey.



Although she did not lay a nest that night, she returned 1 day later and laid her nest safely before returning to the ocean. We are now eagerly waiting to welcome the hatchlings, which we expect to emerge between 14th August & 3rd September.

We hope to give the best chance of survival to Ms GR1045's hatchlings by protecting the nest and upon hatching, assuring every baby reaches the sea. 🌊



10 false crawls was recorded at Six Senses Laamu



5 green sea turtle nests were laid at Six Senses Laamu

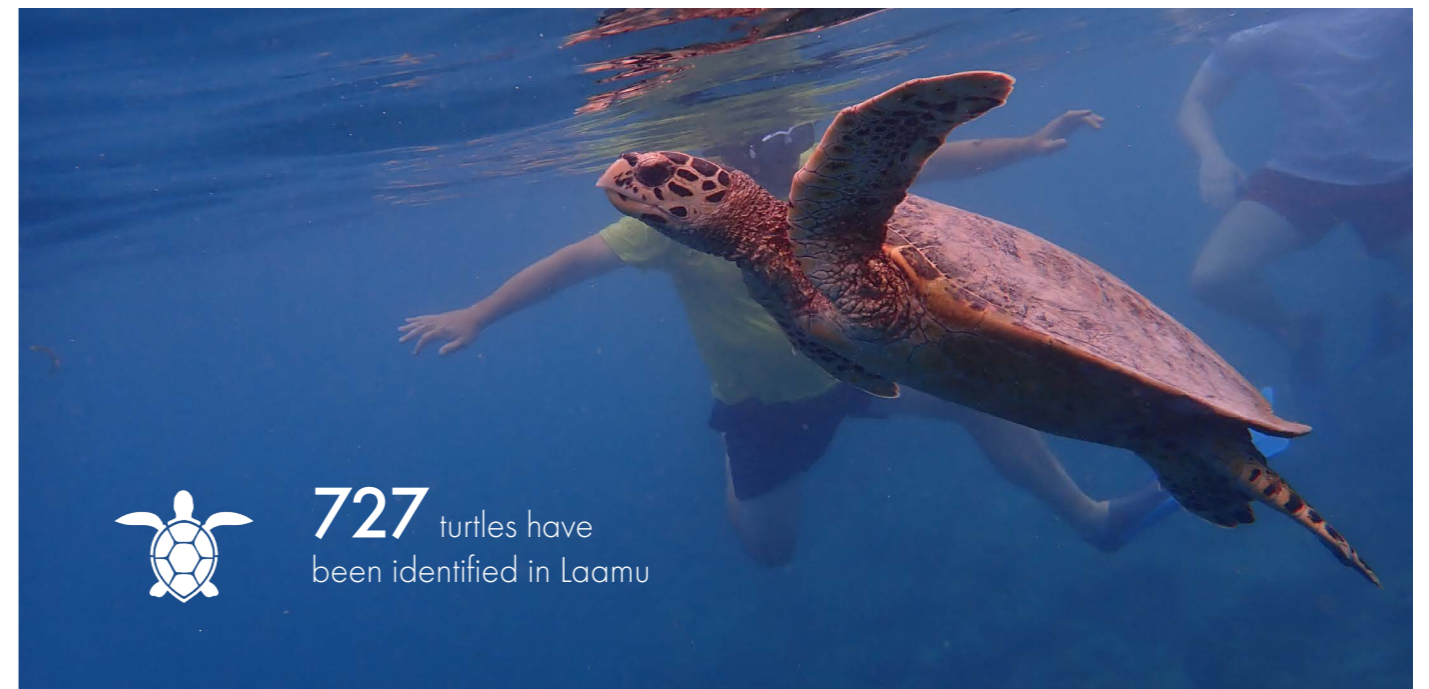
TURTLE OF THE MONTH

Gallimaufry

Meet Gallimaufry H13 HK3611, the beautiful juvenile Hawksbill turtle who lives in one of our dive sites called Hithadhoo West. It was first sighted in 2016 and has been frequently encountered by our divers.

For some people who aren't familiar with how devotedly turtles will forage may think they are 'stuck' in small crevices. But, rest assured, these hawksbill turtles are completely fine and do not need to be rescued. When encountering a situation like this, it is essential to follow the code of conduct. Remember to keep the 3m distance, don't swim over the turtle and most importantly if you want to take photos, do not violate their personal space.

We only know the sex of the turtles when they reach sexual maturity, by looking at the tail we could tell them apart as male turtles have a longer tail compared to females. We can't wait to find out if Gallimaufry will be a girl or a boy, we will only know the gender when it reaches sexual maturity between the age of 20 to 25. 🌊



727 turtles have been identified in Laamu



8 new Green turtles



21 new Hawksbill turtles

OUR COMMUNITY

WOMEN LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST SINGLE-USE PLASTIC



28 items received as donation

Earlier this year, Six Senses Laamu partnered with the Laamu Fonadhoo Women Development Committee (WDC) to launch a project to spread awareness and phase out the use of single-use plastic bags in Laamu Fonadhoo, the administrative capital of Laamu atoll. Plastic bags are one of the most widely used types of single-use plastic on the islands.

In the project's first phase, Fonadhoo WDC held a skill-building workshop for women in the community, training how to stitch and make reusable clothes bags that can be used for everyday use. This successful workshop was attended by 16 participants from Fonadhoo. The Fonadhoo WDC then commissioned a local tailor to make 750 reusable bags to distribute to all households, supporting this small scale business on the island.

By June, phase one of the project had been completed and the reusable bags and flyers were ready for distribution. The flyers detailed the harm that single-use plastic bags impose on our fragile environment and animals, the need to eliminate the use of plastic bags, and a call to action on an individual level.

On 5th June, to celebrate World Environment Day, Fonadhoo WDC started to distribute the bags and conducted door-to-door education sessions to promote donated reusable bags and



eliminate single-use plastic bags. "This is just the start of a bigger campaign to fight against single-use plastic bags. We plan on running more activities targeting different community groups in the future," explained the Fonadhoo WDC president, Aishath Rishma.

This project was made possible thanks to Six Senses Laamu's Sustainability Fund proposal form. The Sustainability Fund form is designed so anyone from the community can easily apply for funding for projects that focus on environmental and cultural preservation, waste management, reducing plastic pollution, education, health care, and sanitation in Laamu's community.



750 reusable bags donated

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Every year, the 5th June marks World Environment Day, and the theme for this year is "Only One Earth," focusing on living sustainably in harmony with nature.

Six Senses Laamu celebrated the day by organizing a micro-green harvesting and sugarcane planting workshop at the Leaf Garden. Hosts from all departments participated and learned about sustainable farming, ways to reduce carbon emissions, and how we can make a positive impact through responsible consumption. Since 2020, Six Senses Laamu has been growing its own



microgreens on-site, thus reducing the carbon footprint through eliminating the need for transportation and packaging waste and raising awareness among hosts and guests on simple ways we could all make a difference. Micro-green and sugarcane harvested from the garden are used in dishes served at all restaurants on the island.



MAAMENDHOO SCHOOL SNORKEL SESSION

June is the last month of the academic calendar for schools in the Maldives. The month is packed with final exams, skill-building camps, other extracurricular activities, and graduation.

The team was delighted when Maamendhoo School, the school on the neighboring island to Six Senses Laamu, invited the MUI team to conduct a snorkeling session for students completing the two-day literacy camp held at the school.

Using the 30 sets of snorkeling gear donated to schools by Manta Trust in partnership with Blue You and Six Senses Laamu back in 2019 and 2020, the team managed to take 42 students snorkeling.



42 students
taken snorkeling



For some students, it was the first time seeing beautiful diverse coral reefs in their backyard.

Any opportunity to take students into the water, show them the amazing underwater life, and get them fascinated about the ocean is one thing the team enjoys the most. Fostering the next generation of marine stewards is integral to effective conservation. 🌊



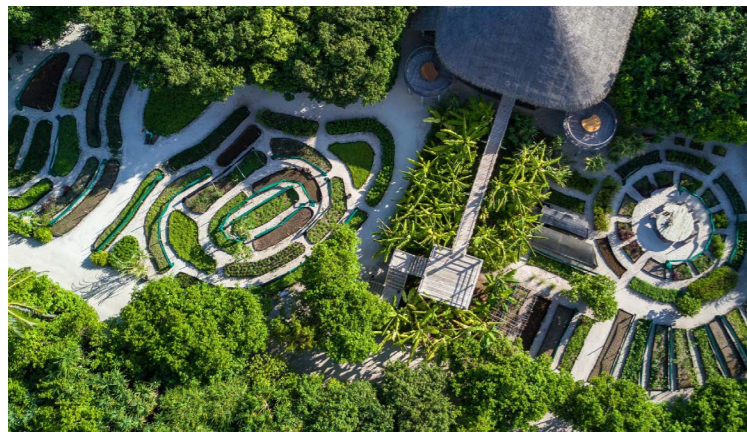
OUR HOME

LAUNCHING ZERO WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022

In the month of June, Earth Lab with A&G team launched the revised Zero Waste Management Plan for 2022. The launch was introduced to the respective department heads during the monthly Energy Conservation Committee meeting.

The revised management plan is focused on three goals; 1) securing a clean, safe, segregated solid waste storage, 2) enhancing, and developing organic composting and 3) to conduct more and better host training.

In order to action these goals, various activities have been outlined including kick starting the departmental waste auditing, continuing the Plastic Free 2022 pledge and forming a waste donation scheme with local islands. Patrick Hoffman, Resort Manager, urged the department heads to take the ownership of their waste and to rephrase the term 'waste to wealth'. The month of July would be focusing on waste auditing in major departments in the operation led by the Department Heads. 🌿



3 new Zero Waste goals



13 Heads of Departments participated



3,066 kg of compost produced

SIX SENSES LAAMU LEGACY CONTINUES

“When I first visited Six Senses Laamu, in 2018, with my classmates in Bachelor of Technology (B-Tech) hospitality from Hamadh School, whilst snorkeling with the Head Marine Biologist at the resort, Tash Prokop, I still remember promising myself that one day I will work here in Six Senses Laamu. Four years later, today, I am proud to have the opportunity to work as a Dive Master at the Deep Blue Divers, Six Senses Laamu.”

Anoof, now a newly trained Dive Master shared how he found his career from his love for the ocean at a very young age. He would use almost all of his free time exploring the Mukurimagu House Reef with his underwater camera which was gifted by his Mom when he was 16 years old. After a couple of months with the camera, his Mom let him join the Open Water Diver course conducted by former Six Senses Laamu Diver Centre Manager, Hassan Hameez. This would

prove to be the start of Anoofs' diving career. In June 2022, Anoof was offered the position of permanent Dive Master at the Deep Blue Divers at Six Senses Laamu after completing his 6-month Dive Master Internship program.

“I wasn't as good as I wanted to be at the School, but the field trip to Six Senses Laamu gave me a hope for my future as Tash explained the beauty and the importance of the coral reef and the career opportunities at her briefing before the House Reef snorkel.” Anoof shared his memory while proudly holding his Dive Master card on his hand. “Now I want to show my underwater world to others, I am proud to share the importance of preserving the marine ecosystems with my community and I am proud to be raised in a Mission Blue Hope Spot”. 🌊



To learn more about marine conservation and sustainability initiatives at Six Senses Laamu please contact:

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