

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011

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Biosphere Foundation (BF) returned to the Anambas Islands in February 2010 to continue its sea turtle protection programme. This visit had a lot of momentum as we were again joined by sea turtle biologist, Dr J. Nichols, and were once more hosted by Ibu Nina Marliana and her amazing team. Our first international volunteer team (a group of eight called Beyond Boundaries) also joined us to help with the project.

This was the first time that we had returned to Anambas since successfully convincing the majority of the owners of Durai Island to protect the sea turtle nests instead of harvesting the eggs. The latter has been the practice for over 40 years on Durai. The long term programme will ensure that this island remains a protected nesting habitat for the thousands of endangered Green and Hawksbill Turtles that visit it each year to lay their eggs.

The sole resident of Durai Island is a man named Pak Lahanie. He has lived there for 40 years and makes his living by



Anambas Islanders Protect Sea Turtles

Biosphere Foundation returns to Anambas to ensure that sea turtles have an undisturbed beach for nesting.

By Sam Scott, crew member

diligently and meticulously harvesting sea turtle eggs each night as they are laid. He has been more enthusiastic and cooperative than anyone to change his lifestyle and help protect the nests instead of destroying them. Thus, in December 2009, Pak Lahanie began leaving the nests alone. While we were visiting Durai in February last year, we had the rare pleasure of watching a wild turtle nest hatch. 75 or so baby turtles made a dash down the beach into the breaking surf in moonlight. Dr Nichols commented that this very sighting could have been the first in 40 years that a turtle nest was allowed to hatch on Durai Island.

While in Anambas, our large team also visited a local school and made presentations about the importance of protecting the sea turtles. We then hosted a large trash clean-up in the capital city of Terempah with hundreds of people from the community attending. BF believes that this type

of conservation, based on community outreach and education, is the most effective. This is because after the initial work has started, the local community can continue to protect the turtles themselves instead of relying on endless external management. For years to come, we are empowering the people of Anambas to see the importance of protecting their own turtle populations — essentially by just leaving them and their eggs alone. The rest... nature can handle by herself. ☺

