

# Seacology

Saving the World, One Island at a Time

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## Seacology Visits Remote Lakshadweep Islands, India



*Above: A traditional knife dance to greet Seacology visitors to Agatti Island in the Lakshadweep Archipelago, India (photo credit: Susan Racanelli). Below right: Seacology expedition members and local NGO representatives explore the fragile coral reefs that population Lakshadweep's waters (photo credit: Vineeta Hoon).*

The palm-covered islands of the Lakshadweep Archipelago make up what is one of India's most remote regions. Located 180 miles off India's western coast, these 36 islands, totaling a mere 18 square miles of land, are both biologically and culturally rich. On a recent expedition to India, Seacology staff and supporters visited the Lakshadweep islands of Agatti and Bangaram, where they explored the area's fascinating culture and diverse marine life.

Arriving on Agatti Island, the group was met by Seacology's newest field representative, Vineeta Hoon, who led them to a performance of a traditional knife dance before escorting them to a boat for the two hour ride to Bangaram Island. Once on Bangaram, Seacology's group spent their time visiting a local school, and exploring the fragile coral reefs that populate Lakshadweep's waters.

Seacology has supported two projects in the Lakshadweeps. In cooperation with local NGO the Lakshadweep Marine Research and Conservation Centre, Seacology is funding the construction of an environmental education center in exchange for a marine protected area on Kavaratti Island. Seacology is funding a project with the local Centre for Action Research on Environment Science and Society to build a museum and guard post in exchange for a marine and mangrove reserve on Minicoy Island.

Representatives from each project joined our group on Bangaram to provide progress updates. Both projects are moving ahead as scheduled. The representatives presented Seacology with beautiful gifts from Kavaratti and Minicoy. For more information on Seacology's Indian Ocean projects, please visit [www.seacology.org/projects/indianocean\\_projects.htm](http://www.seacology.org/projects/indianocean_projects.htm).

### IN THIS ISSUE:

New Island Projects

Letter from the Chairman

Seacology Travels to India

Endangered Species Profile: Green Sea Turtle

Project Updates: Papua New Guinea and The Philippines

Seacology Welcomes New Field Representatives





a pickup truck up a river. The bridge was completed in February, and traditional dedication ceremonies will occur this month.

A skeptic might ask, so what? First, hundreds of villagers will now be able to safely cross the Lai River to reach government health facilities, saving a two to three-day trek through the jungle. Social and cultural interactions between villages in the Baiyer, Jimi, and Lai Valleys will be facilitated. Small children will no longer have to risk their lives crossing a dangerous cane bridge. In return, villagers have set aside for 30 years a 10,000-acre cloud forest preserve in one of the most biologically unique habitats on Earth. The preserve will protect beautiful birds of paradise, porcupine-like echidnas—the only genus of egg-laying mammals on Earth—and enough unique species of plants to keep a team of botanists employed for years just cataloging them.

Seacology has established close to 200 projects in islands throughout the world, saving 160,000 acres of forests and terrestrial habitats, and 1.8 million acres of coral reefs and marine areas. All of these projects come from the heart in a unique intersection between the conservation dreams of indigenous people and generous donors like you. Thank you for joining with us to save the world, one island at a time.

Paul Alan Cox, Ph.D.  
Chairman

With a minimum of hype and hoopla, Seacology quietly makes deals with indigenous islanders throughout the world to protect precious habitats. An example of a Seacology project that will never make the pages of *The Wall Street Journal*, but which is hugely important to local residents, is the Lai River foot bridge in Papua New Guinea.

In the remote highlands of this massive island, Seacology offered to replace a dangerous cane foot bridge over the Lai River, all 262 feet of it. Working in such a difficult and remote environment is not easy. Although funds for the replacement bridge were approved in 2007, the project needed to be redesigned in 2008. Concerned about bridge safety, Seacology hired a new engineer in 2009. Villagers volunteered to carry on their backs the materials for a state-of-the-art aluminum bridge. Bringing a welding machine presented particular difficulties, and required our field representative Sam Moko and his crew to drive



*Above: A pickup truck fords a river to bring supplies for the Seacology-funded aluminum bridge (photo credit: Sam Moko). For more about the Lai River, Papua New Guinea project, see the facing page.*



## Project Update: Cabilao Island, The Philippines

*Left: A woman from the Cabilao Romblon Weavers Network prepares handicrafts to be sold in the future at a Spanish-era lighthouse that is being renovated and converted into a tourism information center. Seacology is funding this renovation in exchange for the expansion of an existing marine protected area. Philippines Field Representative Ferdie Marcelo recently returned from a site visit to Cabilao. Friends of Seacology are encouraged to visit Ferdie's wonderful blog, "Nature Calls," where he chronicles his travels visiting Seacology projects throughout the Philippines: <http://ferdiem.blogspot.com/> (photo credit: Ferdie Marcelo).*



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## Seacology Project Update: Lai River Bridge, Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea's western highlands, one of the nation's most remote areas, the Kopin, Kurup, Epi, Keninc, Enga and other smaller clans inhabit several small valleys. Until recently, their only way of reaching neighbors, including the nearest government services, was with a multi-day trek that included crossing a narrow 262-foot cane bridge over the Lai River. The impermanent cane needed to be replaced every three months, a difficult and dangerous task. Moreover, the local cane populations are running low, and soon will not provide sufficient cane to fully replace the bridge.

Seacology's PNG field representative, Sam Moko, visited the clans in late 2009 to lead the process of replacing the old cane bridge with a permanent metal one, funded by Seacology. In an inspiring display of community engagement, men, women, and children from all valleys came together to complete the construction of the new bridge. Overcoming treacherous driving conditions to transport the materials, as well as several construction delays, the clans have finally completed their bridge, with impressive results.

In exchange for Seacology's support of their bridge, the clan members agreed to set aside 10,329 acres of montane forest, containing a variety of wildlife including endemic birds of paradise, echidna, eagles, and kangaroos, as well as the world's largest mosses. This habitat is now under community protection for a minimum of 30 years.



*Above: Community members of all ages helped transport supplies for the new footbridge. Left: Old and new footbridges across the Lai River. The old cane footbridge, on the left, was dangerous and needed to be repaired every few months. The newly-constructed aluminum footbridge, to the right, helps link the communities surrounding the treacherous river. Seacology funded the construction of the new footbridge in exchange for protection of 10,329 acres of forest (photo credits: Sam Moko).*

## Seacology Joins International Year of Biodiversity



In 2010, Seacology joins the United Nations and many international conservation organizations as a partner of the "International Year of Biodiversity," with the purposes of celebrating and safeguarding the variety of life on earth. Working within this worldwide network, we hope to highlight the importance of preserving biodiversity, and particularly the ecological richness found on islands where Seacology works. Learn more about Seacology's projects to protect island biodiversity around the world by visiting our website, [www.seacology.org](http://www.seacology.org). For more information about the United Nations' International Year of Biodiversity, visit [www.cbd.int/2010/welcome](http://www.cbd.int/2010/welcome).

# Species-ology! Spotlight on: The Green Sea Turtle

By Seacology Development Director Susan Racanelli

Seacology has embraced many projects protecting Green sea turtles over the years – from Indonesia to Mexico to the Maldives to Kenya – and for good reason. These turtles are an ancient species, more than 150 million years old, that have been harvested and depleted over the last five centuries and could disappear in our lifetime. They are one of the few species so ancient that they witnessed the evolution and extinction of dinosaurs. In addition, the lore of these turtles figures greatly in the history and mythology of numerous island cultures the world over. Sea turtles are large, air-breathing reptiles inhabiting tropical and subtropical seas throughout the world; all marine turtle species are endangered with the exception of the Olive Ridley, which is listed as vulnerable. Their shells consist of an upper part, called a carapace, and a lower section known as a plastron. Hard scales, or scutes, cover all but the giant Leatherback, and the number and arrangement of these scutes can determine the species.

The Green sea turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, is the largest hard-shelled sea turtle in the world. Ranging in length from two to six feet, males can weigh up to 600 pounds with adult females weighing in around 300 pounds. Hatchlings weigh less than one ounce and are two to four inches in length. Though scientific opinions differ, most sources agree they can live up to 100 years old. The color of their flesh and fatty deposits, rather than their shell, gives them their “green” moniker. Green turtles’ limbs are distinctive from other marine turtles in that they are flat and flipper-like with only one claw. These flippers render them fast, powerful and amazingly graceful swimmers and are invaluable to females for nest-making.

Found in the warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Green sea turtles prefer lingering inside reefs, bays and inlets where sea grasses and algae are plentiful. Once waterborne, male Green turtles never leave the sea, but females swim to the shore throughout their lives to lay eggs, instinctively traveling hundreds and even thousands of miles to their own hatching grounds to mate and nest like their mothers before them. They mate in the waters just off nesting beaches and females deposit their eggs at night in a process that takes two hours. The typical clutch size is 110-115 eggs, and approximately seven clutches are produced every two to four years. The most dangerous time of a Green turtle’s life is when it makes the journey from nest to sea. Multiple predators, including crabs, gulls and other indigenous marauders voraciously prey on hatchlings during this short scamper. Once they reach maturity, sharks and humans are their only predators.

Green sea turtles are listed as an endangered species on the IUCN Red List, with a subpopulation in the Mediterranean listed as critically endangered. In spite of this, they are still harvested commercially for their eggs and meat. An additional insidious challenge currently facing the species is Fibropapillomatosis, a disease characterized by the development of multiple tumors on the skin and internal organs, which has seriously impacted populations in Florida and Hawaii. The tumors interfere with swimming, eating, breathing, vision, and reproduction, and turtles with heavy tumor burdens eventually become debilitated and die. Along with human encroachment, related threats are loss or degradation of nesting habi-



Left: Hatchling Green turtle (photo credit: Pedrin Lopez).



Above: A Green turtle is released into Caribbean waters after being tagged with a satellite transmitter that will help researchers track its movements (photo credit: Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire).

tat from coastal development and beach armoring, disorientation of hatchlings by beachfront lighting, excessive nest predation by native and non-native predators, degradation of foraging habitat, marine pollution and debris, watercraft strikes, and incidental take from channel dredging and commercial fishing operations.

Green turtles were once famously abundant in the waters of the New World. From the time of Christopher Columbus to the late 1800s, vast flotillas of sea turtles played an important part in the exploration and exploitation of the Caribbean by Europeans, including pirates. They were all dependent in some way on turtles: turtle meat and eggs provided a seemingly unending supply of protein; turtles could be kept alive on ships for long voyages by turning them on their backs in a shaded area of the deck; and turtle oil was used for cooking and lamp fuel. Besides feeding the explorers and residents of the Caribbean, the Green turtle was shipped to Europe where it was considered a great delicacy for its meat and turtle soup became a novelty. By 1878, 15,000 turtles a year were being shipped from the Caribbean, which soon depleted their supply, and one by one, the turtles disappeared from nesting beaches throughout the region. By the 1940s and 50s, these populations had been hunted to the brink of extinction. Completely lovable as an icon, they are currently protected around the planet with a concerted groundswell to preserve their habitats and nesting beaches.

Greens are perhaps the most famous sea turtle travelers, known for their ability to swim long distances and locate specific sites with remarkable precision. One of the best-studied migratory populations feeds along the Brazilian coast but nests on Ascension Island, a five mile-wide refuge 1,400 miles to the east of Brazil over open ocean. We can only speculate as to why turtles would make such a long and difficult journey or how they can find this Lilliputian land fragment in the vastness of the mid-Atlantic. If we can preserve the species long enough, we just might be able to find out. With your help, Seacology is doing its part.

# Seacology Welcomes New Field Representatives in Three Regions

Seacology's success in identifying and monitoring island projects that both protect precious environments and benefit local communities lies with our wonderful field representatives. Our field representatives act as our eyes and ears in their respective regions, and understand environmental and cultural issues on their home islands in a way that enables Seacology to operate so effectively. We are actively expanding our field representative program to allow us to launch even more projects in the world's bountiful and diverse island regions. We are excited to introduce three new field representatives for the islands of India, Panama and Tonga.

**India - Vineeta Hoon:** Vineeta has a Ph.D in cultural geography and has done research on traditional lifestyles of indigenous people in remote areas. She is the recipient of the Asia Pacific Post doctoral fellowship from the East West Centre, Hawaii, the Freda Bage Fellowship of the Australian Federation of university women and a Norwegian Research Council Research Fellowship. Her quest to understand traditional knowledge in sustainable utilization of ecological resources has led her to live amongst the Trans-Himalayan nomads, Lakshadweep Islanders, and the Sámi reindeer herders in the Arctic. She is the author of the book *Living on the Move, the Bhotiyas of the Kumaon Himalayas*, (Sage:1996). She is a founder trustee of the Centre for Action Research on Environment, Science and Society (CARESS). This was set up out to help stem the rapid loss of cultural and natural biodiversity and focuses on the revival of traditional values amongst island and mountain people through awareness and integration of community based livelihoods with conservation. To integrate marine examples in environment education, she has co-authored *The Children's Perception of the Environment*, a teachers' toolkit for coastal and marine areas in Asia, published in 2009, by IUCN. Vineeta has been at the heart of coral reef affairs involving the island communities in the South Asia region. since 1997. She has worked as consultant for the GCRMN, CORDIO, ICRAN, IUCN and is the lead author of the SOCMON SA guidelines and Regional Coordinator for SOCMON South Asia.



**Panama - Lenin Riquelme:** Lenin has a Political Science Degree from the University of Iowa and a Master's in Latin American Studies/Conservation & Development from the University of Florida. During his 15-year long career he has worked in several posts relevant to environmental conservation and rural development in Panama. He worked for USAID/Panama office as environmental specialist for the Panama Canal Watershed and was Director for Environmental Policy/Planning at the Government's National Environmental Authority (ANAM). He also worked as an environmental advisor for The Nature Conservancy/Panama Program and as Institutional



Development Officer at Panama's National Association for the Conservation of Nature. In 2005 he decided to work more independently and founded Fundación Conservación, Naturaleza y Vida (CONAVI), an NGO that focuses its activities in coastal conservation and indigenous peoples' rights. In recent years he has conducted research on sea turtles and the Antillean Manatee, an activity that together with his advocacy work has led to the reinforcement of conservation laws protecting these species as well as to the creation of protected sanctuaries such as the La Marinera Special Management Zone. Through CONAVI, he assisted indigenous Embera Indigenous Peoples Congress on achieving legal recognition of their traditional land rights in 2009. Most of his time off work is dedicated to traveling to

little-known nature spots and communities with his wife Dayana and daughters Lia and Mileny. Lenin is our first field representative for the islands of Panama.

**Tonga - Sione Faka'osi:** Since March 2007, Sione has been the Executive Director for the Tonga Community Development Trust, a nonprofit organization working with disadvantaged communities to foster self reliance. Tonga Trust is implementing a number of community-based projects, ranging from health, water, and sanitation to disaster preparedness, environmental protection, climate change adaptation, good governance, democracy and voter education. Prior to joining Tonga Trust, Sione was a National Project Coordinator in Tonga's Department of Environment for two consecutive regional projects: the Ha'apai Conservation Area Project under the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Program (SPBCP) from 1995-2001, and the Nukuhetulu Waste Reduction Pilot Project under the Strategic Program for the International Waters of the South Pacific (IWP) from 2002 to 2007. Both programs (SPBCP and IWP) used a community-based participatory approach to conservation and were funded by GEF, implemented by UNDP and executed by SPREP. In 1994 Sione obtained a Master of Arts in Sociology from the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.



## Travel to the Philippines with Seacology!

Seacology is pleased to announce its upcoming dive trip to the gorgeous Philippine Islands, coordinated by Reef and Rainforest, international leaders in dive and adventure travel. The trip will include a 10-day expedition aboard the region's most luxurious liveaboard, the Philippine Siren, as well as four days at the beautiful Lagen Island Resort, located in the region of El Nido. While at El Nido, we will visit two nearby Seacology project sites, witnessing first-hand the transformative power of Seacology's work. Join Seacology in January 2011 for this trip of a lifetime, and witness for yourself the vibrant beauty and rich biodiversity of the Philippines' marine life, all while enjoying world-class comforts aboard the Siren and at the Lagen Island Resort. Full package prices are \$6,600 double occupancy (per person) and \$10,500 single occupancy. For Lagen Island only, prices are \$2,000 double occupancy per person and \$3,300 single occupancy. To make your reservations, contact Jenny Collister at Reef and Rainforest: [jenny@reefrainforest.com](mailto:jenny@reefrainforest.com) or 415-289-1760 ext. 302.



# Seacology Board of Directors Approves New Island Projects

The following projects were approved by Seacology's Board of Directors at their January 23, 2010 meeting. For more information about these projects, please visit <http://www.seacology.org/projects/index.htm>:

**COOK ISLANDS, Muri Lagoon, Rarotonga** - Renovation and upgrading of the village meeting house and re-roofing of the health clinic in Muri Village in exchange for the establishment of a 413-acre conservation area for a duration of 10 years. \*

**KENYA, Funzi Island** - Construction of a display facility/office for conservation and ecotourism programs in exchange for sea turtle conservation activities for a minimum duration of 10 years. *Funded by Seacology UK.*

**MADAGASCAR** - Reintroduction and monitoring of 3,000 critically endangered palms; environmental education in two village schools; and construction of a permanent research monitoring station, kitchen and guard house in support of the protection of 1,038 acres of rare littoral (coastal) forest. *Funded by Seacology Germany.*

**MEXICO, Guadalupe Island, Baja California Pacific** - Sea water desalination system in exchange for a 1,235-acre marine reserve for a duration of 10 years.

**PHILIPPINES, Cabilao Island, Bohol** - Renovation and conversion of a Spanish-era lighthouse into a Tourism Information Center, in exchange for the creation of an additional 50 acres of Marine Protected Area. *Funded by Seacology Japan.*

**YAP, Qokaaw and Kadaay** - Watershed rehabilitation, surveillance equipment and a project operation center in exchange for a 46-acre no-take pristine mangrove sanctuary in perpetuity. *Funded by Seacology UK.*

\* Support for asterisked projects is provided fully or in part by the Nu Skin Enterprises Force for Good Foundation.



Above: A tagged turtle is released by a member of the Kenya Sea Turtle Conservation Committee, a local NGO coordinating the Seacology-funded sea turtle conservation project on Funzi Island, Kenya (photo credit: Dishon Murage).

## Seacology Fellows Program

The Seacology Fellows program was created to honor committed donors who contribute \$2,000 or more per year. Along with our board members, contributions from fellows fund the ongoing operations of Seacology. Admission to the Fellows Program is by invitation only and includes several benefits including invitations to events, advance notice of trips and more. For complete information, please visit [www.seacology.org/donations/fellows.htm](http://www.seacology.org/donations/fellows.htm), email [islands@seacology.org](mailto:islands@seacology.org) or call our office at 510-559-3505.

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terrestrial habitat

**1,814,314** acres of  
coral reef and other marine  
habitat

#### Seacology Has Built or Funded:

**87** schools, community centers,  
water systems and other  
critically needed facilities

**36** scholarship programs, vital  
medical services and supplies,  
and other crucial support for  
island communities.

Seacology is the world's premier nonprofit environmental organization with the sole and unique purpose of preserving the environments and cultures of islands throughout the globe. From Fiji in the South Pacific to Madagascar off the coast of Africa, from islands in the Arctic Circle to tropical islands of Southeast Asia, from Bali to Micronesia and from Polynesia to Iceland, Seacology launches projects to help preserve island environments and cultures.