



# ISLAND UPDATE

SPRING/SUMMER 2016 • VOL. 18, NO. 1

Protecting the unique habitats and cultures of islands worldwide



## Sri Lanka's mangroves one year into our historic conservation partnership

**W**hat a year it has been! Last May, Seacology launched our largest-ever project: protecting all of the mangrove forests in the nation of Sri Lanka. In the year since, we've seen stunning progress in this effort to help Sri Lanka meet this historic achievement.

For an organization our size, it was a daunting goal—our first initiative on a national scale and our first multimillion-dollar project. But thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the commitment of our staff and Board of Directors, and the know-how and effectiveness of our partners in Sri Lanka, we're happy to report that this work is now both well under way and almost fully funded!

Since we broke ground on the Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project, members of our staff have made several visits to the island nation, each time observing new milestones in the project. In March, members of the Sri Lankan navy, just a few years ago engaged in a bloody civil war, joined with civilians of the northern provinces and Seacology staff to plant mangrove seedlings in deforested swamps. A new state-of-the-art facility adjacent to the headquarters of our Sri Lankan partner Sudeesa will serve as the nation's first mangrove museum. The building is nearing completion and beginning July 26th—International Mangrove Day—will serve as a hub for education about this vital coastal resource for local schoolchildren and visiting ecotourists alike (see "Your Place in History"). And hundreds of Sri Lankan women have



Sri Lankan women greet Seacology and Sudeesa personnel in March.

already received job training and microloans, building a path to prosperity for these essential partners in the conservation effort.

These milestones have all been made possible by the project's generous supporters—a diverse community including Sri Lankan expatriates, forward-thinking philanthropic foundations, and many Seacology Fellows and other individual donors. Seacology's Board of Directors played a very important role, both through their direct financial contributions and by engaging their personal and professional networks. Board Member Peter Read in particular has been key to this effort, offering

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### Save The Date

On **October 6**, Seacology staff, Board members, and supporters will gather in our hometown of Berkeley, California for the 25<sup>th</sup> Seacology Prize Ceremony, where we will honor an indigenous islander for outstanding environmental leadership. The 2016 winner will be revealed in July, so check [seacology.org/prize](http://seacology.org/prize) for the announcement and to RSVP for the free event.



### Your Place in History

We're extending a special offer to supporters of the Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project. Everyone who contributes US\$500 or more to the effort by June 30 will be recognized on a plaque to be unveiled at the opening of the Seacology-Sudeesa Mangrove Museum on July 26!

To direct your gift to the Sri Lanka project, simply write "mangroves" on the enclosed envelope with your donation, or visit [seacology.org/srilankamangroves](http://seacology.org/srilankamangroves).



*From the Chair***Dear friends,**

This has been an exciting year for Seacology, beginning with the receipt of the Prince's Prize for Innovative Philanthropy, presented by Prince Albert of Monaco, and ending with stunning progress on our most ambitious project ever, working with Sri Lanka as it becomes the first country in the world to protect all of its mangrove forests.

Prince Albert's foundation annually selects a not-for-profit organization from anywhere in the world whose practices and achievements it considers innovative and extraordinary. An organization cannot apply for this recognition; it is based on recommendations from an anonymous group of nominators and granted only after careful review. Last January, Seacology Executive Director Duane Silverstein and I were stunned to receive an invitation from Prince Albert to travel to Monaco to receive this important recognition. We found Prince Albert to be highly engaging and fascinated with Seacology's model of partnering with indigenous people to protect precious coral reefs and rainforests throughout the world.



Seacology now has established over 260 schools, medical clinics, water supplies, and other community projects on islands in 55 countries around the world. In return, communities have covenanted to protect their rainforests, coral reefs, and other precious resources; approaching 1.4 million acres in total. This innovative model, based on a win-win strategy, has been wildly successful throughout the world.

Last May, Seacology entered a new phase by making a major agreement with the government of the island nation of Sri Lanka to provide microloans for 15,000 impoverished women—small amounts of money to assist them in establishing their own businesses and becoming economically self-sufficient—in return for Sri Lanka protecting all of its coastal mangrove forests. Through this historic agreement, Sri Lanka became the first country in the world to commit to protect all of its mangrove forests. Mangroves play a critical role as nurseries for reef fish and other marine invertebrates, for sequestration of atmospheric carbon, and for protecting coastal residents from destruction wrought by cyclonic storms and tsunamis.

All this has been accomplished with a small, highly competent staff, and a group of donors, fellows, and Directors who passionately believe that we can make a difference in the world.

I believe that as individuals and as communities, we are more limited by our dreams than by our resources. As a small not-for-profit charity, Seacology has limited resources but has achieved very large conservation outcomes. I invite you, whether you represent a corporation, a foundation, or simply a new friend, to join us in this collective dream of helping to protect the world's most precious islands.

Cordially,

Paul Alan Cox, Ph.D.  
Chair, Seacology Board of Directors

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## SAVE AN ACRE: INDONESIA

A Seacology project on Borneo is helping promote a sustainable alternative to large-scale agriculture, logging, and other threats to one of the world's great rainforests.

The lush jungles of Borneo are home to a dazzling array of plant and animal species. The iconic Bornean orangutan, Diard's clouded leopard, and Sunda slow loris can be found here, the world's third-largest island. Unfortunately, this natural paradise faces unprecedented challenges as pressure mounts from large-scale industrial agriculture and logging interests. The encroachment of monoculture palm plantations in particular has decimated much of the island's native habitat. In recent months, fires lit to clear the land for these operations have burned out of control and made for dangerously low air quality across Indonesia and beyond. The situation has become so dire in parts of Indonesia that the nation's president recently imposed a temporary ban on new palm oil leases in the country to curb the destruction.

A recent Seacology project on Borneo, however, stands as an example of a better alternative, one that can both stave off environmental degradation and empower indigenous communities. In short, the Seacology model.

The endemic tengkawang tree grows naturally in many with parts of Borneo's rainforest and has long been a vital component of small-scale agriculture for the island's rural population. Tenkawang or illipe nuts are the source of a rich oil, similar in consistency to butter at room temperature and with a rich, nutty flavor. This versatile lipid is used locally as an ingredient in traditional recipes, and can also be sold for use in the production of everything from ice cream to cosmetic products.

The traditional process for extracting illipe fat is time-consuming and labor-intensive, which limits its potential as a commercial product. With this in mind, Seacology partnered with Borneo's Sahang village, funding a modern oil-processing machine that makes the process more efficient and gives the villagers the resources and opportunity to say no



Above, members of the Sahang community learn to use their new oil-extraction equipment.

Left, processed illipe fat.

to concessions to large agriculture firms with an eye on their land. With this new technology at their disposal, the villagers are able to extract 50% of an illipe nut's weight in oil, where the manual process only yielded about 15%; it also does so much faster. By January, the machine was up and running, and the finished product was being offered for sale. In the agreement signed last year, the village agreed to actively protect 247 acres of the neighboring Pangajid Forest for at least a decade.

The Pangajid Forest project was supported in part by many donations through our Save an Acre program. With the completion of Seacology's role in Sahang, we'll be announcing a new Save an Acre site soon.

## Momentum in Sri Lanka continued from page 1

earlier this year to match donations to help us meet the project's \$3.4 million funding target and rallying a number of large contributions.

"What I find most inspiring is the human element of this project," said Peter. "It was an unforgettable experience to visit Sri Lanka and meet women who, with the help of microloans, were working hard to take care of their families and restore their beautiful, ravaged homeland."

There's much work left to do. Thousands of

women still await job training and microloans to start business ventures. Hundreds of thousands of mangroves still must be planted to reverse the legacy of war and unsustainable development. And in a setback we can hardly complain about, there has been a greater interest in the museum from local school groups than we anticipated, leading us to revise the plan for the facility and build additional restrooms to accommodate them. Some of this will require additional funding, so we continue to welcome donations to the project so we can

fulfill our obligations over the next four years.

However, we don't think it's too early to report that our ambitious undertaking in Sri Lanka has been a great success. Those members of Seacology's staff who've seen it up close—the greener shorelines, the entrepreneurship of new businesswomen setting up shop for the first time, the spirit of national reconciliation as naval officers and the president of Sri Lanka himself planted new trees—have come away deeply moved by the progress they witnessed.



# PROJECT UPDATES

With dozens of active projects around the world, things are happening all the time. Here are just a few highlights of the past several months.

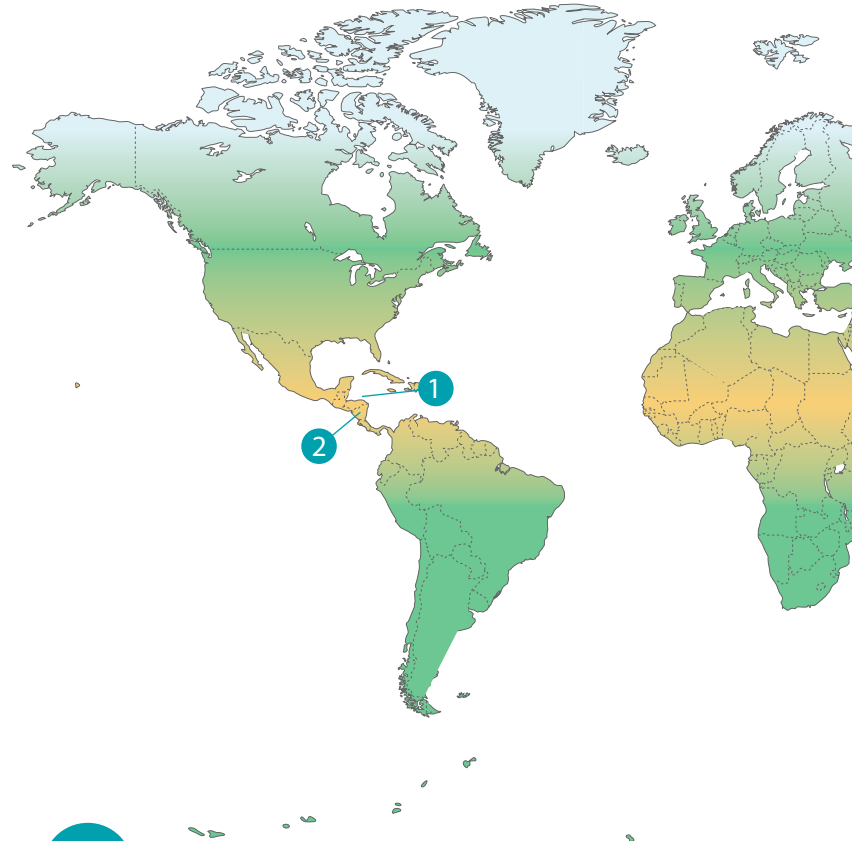
1



## ROATÁN, HONDURAS

*“Junior Park Rangers of Roatán” program to foster youth involvement in conservation at Roatán Marine Park*

A group of teenagers began the program’s diving certification course in November. In addition to diving instruction, the youths have participated in beach clean-ups and have identified fish and coral while snorkeling.



2



## OMETEPE ISLAND, NICARAGUA

*Improvements to Finca Magdalena’s visitor center and park ranger station*

Seacology’s Executive Director Duane Silverstein and Central America Field Representative Ian Drysdale report that the building improvements and the large interpretive signs had both been done very well. During their recent visit, a member of the local coffee-growers cooperative gave a moving talk, stressing the importance of conservation not just for the current residents of the area, but for all of the people of Ometepe and for future generations.

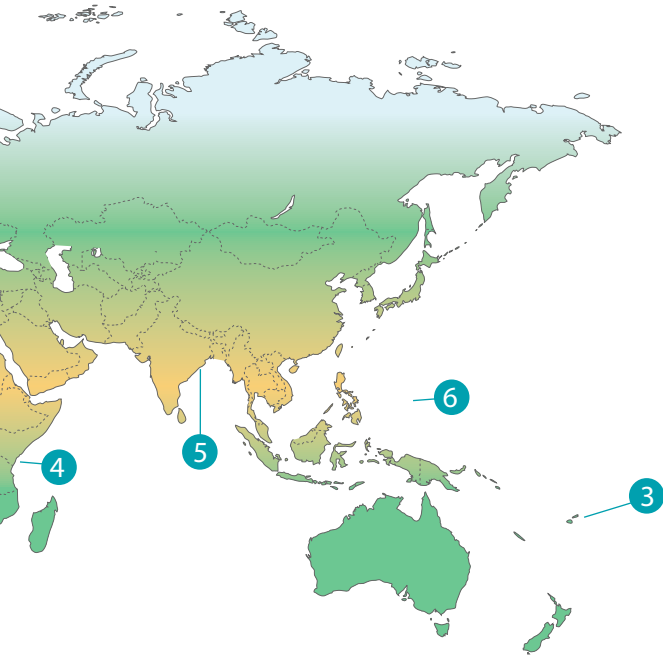
3



## NANUCA VILLAGE, VANUA LEVU, FIJI

*Community hall, in exchange for protection of 1,134 acres of marine reserve and 208 acres of mangroves for 15 years*

We were thrilled to hear from Fiji Field Representative Pet-tine Simpson that the new building withstood category-5 Cyclone Winston with no damage. In fact, more than half of the village’s residents were able to use the building as a shelter during the storm.



5



#### **CHILIKA LAKE, BERHAMPUR ISLAND, INDIA**

*Construction of a solar-powered multipurpose community center, in exchange for planting 10,000 mangrove and other trees, protecting 20 acres of Chilika lagoon, and conducting environmental education for 10 years*

After receiving the first installment of Seacology funding, this well-organized community quickly bought building materials and began construction of the community center. They have also planted 10,000 mangroves and 12,000 other tree seedlings in and around Berhampur Island village. An ecology club has been formed in the village school, and 50 youth have participated in the "Save Chilika Lake" campaign, teaching tourists and boat operators not to throw plastic bags in the lake to attract Irrawaddy dolphins.

4



#### **MASINGINI INDIGENOUS FOREST, ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA**

*Village water pump and culverts, reforestation, and sustainable livelihood training, in exchange for conservation of the 1,374-acre Masingini indigenous forest for 10 years*

Reforestation and alternative livelihood activities have been ongoing, and the remaining activities were completed recently.

6



#### **QOKAAW AND KADAAY, YAP, FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA**

*Watershed rehabilitation, surveillance equipment, and project operation center, in exchange for a 46-acre no-take pristine mangrove sanctuary in perpetuity*

Seacology approved a small maintenance grant to fund repairs to the floating surveillance platform in the Nimpal Channel. The repairs were completed in January.

# New Projects

In February, Seacology's Board of Directors approved six new projects on islands around the world. For details on all of our work, past and present, visit [seacology.org/projects](http://seacology.org/projects).

Country	Community, Island	Community Benefit	Environmental Benefit
CHILE	Koldita, Chiloe Island	Development of a management plan for 12,630-acre marine protected area and purchase of surveillance equipment such as marine radios and binoculars	
HONDURAS	Sandy Bay, Roatán	Construction of one floor of an environmental and children's center, comprising two classrooms and a kitchen	Environmental education programs, support of alternative livelihoods
FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA	Balebat Village, Yap	Restoration of damaged women's meeting place	Protection of 300 acres of mangroves for 15 years
MARSHALL ISLANDS	Buoj Island, Ailinglaplap Atoll	Basketball court and solar lighting	121-acre marine protected area for 10 years
PHILIPPINES	San Carlos, Cuyo Island	Multipurpose building that will, among other uses, be a venue for an alternative learning system for children	Protection of 287-acre no-take fish sanctuary for 25 years
PHILIPPINES	Abatan River, Bohol Island	Funds to rebuild tourist docks and an amphitheater	Protection of Abatan River and the mangroves along Maribojoc Bay for 10 years

## IN MEMORY

In December the conservation world lost an inspiring champion, our friend and colleague, 'Professor' Ali Shaibu Shekue

With great sadness, we learned in December of the unexpected passing of Ali Shaibu Shekue, our 2014 Seacology Prize winner. Shekue, widely known as "the Professor," was instrumental in developing Kenya's marine reserves and promoting sustainable practices among that nation's artisanal fishing community. He was a beloved and respected community leader, colleague, grandfather, and friend. We are honored to have met him and proud to have shared in his work.

"Professor Shaibu will be greatly missed not only by his friends, but also communities that he tirelessly worked to empower, colleagues that greatly benefited from his vast knowledge and wisdom on conservation and working with communities," said Dishon Murage, Seacology's field representative for Kenya, and a friend and associate of the Professor for

more than 15 years.

Shekue was awarded the Seacology Prize in 2014 in recognition of more than a decade of work with countless fishermen along Kenya's coasts. His efforts led to the creation of the country's first community-managed marine reserve and many others following that. He was also active in the successful implementation of several Seacology projects, most recently on Pate and Wasini islands.

Those of us who had the privilege of meeting and working with the Professor will miss him greatly and will always remember his dedication, kindness, and humility. Our condolences to all of those whose lives he touched in Kenya and beyond.



# Seacology Fellows\*

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(\$25,000 or more)

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\* Seacology would also like to thank the members of our Board of Directors for their ongoing generous contributions to the organization.

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Marsha Garces Williams

\* Deceased



## Seacology welcomes...

New field representative for Mexico brings a wealth of experience to our team

Marisol Rueda Flores was born in Cuernavaca, Morelos and moved to La Paz in 2005 to do her Masters in Science on Marine Resources Management with blue whales. Since then she has been working in environmental education and conservation programs in La Paz, Costa Rica, and the Galápagos Islands with cetaceans, marine invertebrates, sea turtles, and tortoises, among others. In 2010, she moved to

Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, and became Mexico's Coordinator for the Healthy Reefs Initiative, focusing on the conservation of the Mesoamerican Reef. Whenever she has free time, you can find her exploring the bottom of the ocean—her passions are scuba diving and traveling around the world to get to know new places and cultures.



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## We've made history together.

With your help, Sri Lanka is becoming the first country in the world to fully protect its mangrove habitats.

Learn more inside and at [seacology.org/srilankamangroves](https://seacology.org/srilankamangroves).



Seacology helps protect island habitats and local communities by offering villages a unique deal: if they agree to create or enforce a forest or marine reserve, we'll provide funds for something the village needs, like a schoolhouse or health clinic.