

Project Update: February 2013

Taking over the reins of management

At the end of 2012, General Mohamed Kamel, Governor of the Red Sea, issued a new decree handing over the management of Samadai to HEPCA, the NGO that is supporting our project. The decree has come into action on the 1st March 2013 but the work behind the scenes started months ago and has seen the involvement of HEPCA staff and marketing consultants for the design of a comprehensive, convincing, catchy and sustainable new vision for the site.

In occasion of the official opening of the Samadai new experience, a dedicated website and profiles on social networks were launched. The website <http://www.dolphinhouse.org/> draws from the manual we have produced with RSGF last May. This booklet, which is available for download on the website, is also being used as the course book for a guide's certification programme that is running from mid-March 2013. Besides that, new activities and facilities will enhance the site experience, with new opportunities, services and facilities for the users.

The research project together with the educational approach carried out so far contributed to clear the ground for the opportunity given to HEPCA. It is a dream come true: we now have the chance to put in practice all recommendations we have brought to administrators so far. This is the chance to demonstrate the real value of Samadai and replicate the model in other sites. A gigantic responsibility.

The bases of our vision haven't changed.

We still believe in science for conservation: new monitoring and research programmes will kick off from the summer and will provide a deeper understanding of Samadai dolphin's residency, social structure, reproductive rates and conservation status.

We also still believe that science for conservation is not enough: educational and interpretation components, on ground, make the difference between a park "on paper" and an actual one. In fact, the sustainable management of a protected area is a hard job that requires a high level of coordination and collaboration between the various components involved: tourist operators, visitors, local community, scientists, managers, and governmental agencies. Their actions, expertises, needs, goals and ideas are the ingredients to merge and compromise, with a great deal of communication, negotiation and forward-looking vision. Combining community needs and an objective-focused management will create a harmonic reality that can take Samadai to its real full expression.

We have now the chance to turn our beliefs into actions for the effective protection of spinner dolphins. Wish us good luck!