

Project Update: July 2014

ReefDoctor is honoured to be awarded a third year of assistance from the Rufford Foundation in the form of the Booster Grant for 2014-2015. This funding will provide the support and resources urgently required to protect and conserve marine turtle populations and their associated habitat in the Bay of Ranobe, Southwest Madagascar.



Since receiving the Booster Grant from Rufford Foundation we have been coordinating community meetings and focus groups to promote the indigenous turtle protection association FI.MPA.MI.FA, in the 13 communities of the Bay of Ranobe. The turtle tagging and release programme, the first community directed tagging programme in Madagascar, has had great success with five juvenile turtles captured in the fishery last month being tagged and released under the indigenous 'dina' law. This is a pivotal development for the project and contributes to achieving one of our main objectives, to tag and release 30% of juveniles protected by the indigenous law by 2015.

MADAGASCAR AND MARINE TURTLES – Communities of the southwest coast of Madagascar are dependent on the productivity of the marine environment. Within the last four/five decades these people have experienced resource overexploitation-degradation, frequent extreme weather events and political instability with an ensuing rise in hunger and extreme poverty. When ReefDoctor first started the marine turtle fishery monitoring programme in 2008, coastal communities mindful of international disdain to hunting marine turtles for commercial and subsistence use, were reluctant to discuss the fishery. ReefDoctor's Fano Project (RD.FP) has stripped away the layers of secrecy to expose the extent of this illegal trade. Research highlighted not just a significant demand for turtle meat but a cultural shift, with people abandoning traditions that controlled hunting of marine turtles in preference of non-restrictive consumption of turtle meat. Adapting to survive, and out of necessity, communities have embraced cultural-change/dilution and the consequential increased rates of habitat and resource loss.

RD.FP has provided transparency in the marine turtle fishery and implemented management strategies with high-level community compliance. Community-based marine turtle conservation organisation FI.MPA.MI.FA has implemented indigenous laws restricting consumption and the size of turtles targeted. The RD.FP team has had great success over the past five years and we intend to reach our goal of a 30% decline in marine turtle mortality associated with the targeted fishery by 2015.



