



OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

The Olive Ridley Project

Annual Report and Financial Statements

Year ending: 31st December 2020

Charity no: 1165905

Legal and Administrative Information

Trustees	Mark MacDonald Mike Sweet Jannicke C Hallum Matt Shoulders, Treasurer Matt Sorum Andy Torbet Dr Martin Stelfox Dr Jillian Hudgins Jannicke C Hallum Susie Gibson Dr Stephanie Köhnk Rushan Bin Abdul Rahman Dr Claire Petros Dr Amelia Liddell (from September 2020)
Ambassadors	
Chief Executive / Founder	
Senior Project Scientist	
Website and Media Manager	
Graphic Designer	
Researcher/Adoption Management	
Researcher - Spatial Ecology	
Lead Veterinarian Surgeon	
Veterinarian	
Sea Turtle Biologists/Guest Educators	
<i>Maldives</i>	Kristina Loosen (until October 2020) Jo Goodfellow Laura Whitely (Until September 2020) Rosie Brown
<i>Kenya</i>	
Project Manager	Dr Joana Hancock
Project Coordinator	Leah Mainye
<i>Oman</i>	
Sea Turtle Biologist	Jane Lloyd
Project/Field Coordinators	
<i>Maldives</i>	Ibrahim Shameel Risha Ali Rasheed (from December 2020)
<i>Pakistan</i>	Usman Iqbal Asif Baloch
Registered Office	28 Stone Moor Bottom, Padiham, Burnley Lancashire, BB12 7BW
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The Olive Ridley Project

Trustees' Report

For the year ending 31st December 2020

Structure, governance and management

This Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) is regulated by its constitution who's only voting members are its trustees. The CIO was established by Dr. Martin Stelfox (CEO and founder) in 2013 and then became the CIO on the 7th March 2016.

New trustees are appointed by the existing trustees and serve for three years after which they may put themselves forward for re-appointment. The Charity provides for a minimum of 3 trustees, to a maximum of 7 trustees.

At the quarterly trustees' meetings, the trustees agree the broad strategy and areas of activity for the charity, including consideration of grant making, investment, reserves and risk management policies and performance. The day to day administration of grants and the processing and handling of applications prior to consideration by the trustee is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer.

The trustees formally approved arrangements complying with the CC30 guide 'The recruitment, appointment and induction process for new charity trustees and how to set a framework for recruitment.' and recruit new trustee(s) for their experience, empathy and knowledge of the charity and to keep the skills and composition of the trustee body and succession planning under review. The trustees have also developed a code of conduct for trustees including formal statements of role and responsibilities and provision for trustee training. New trustees may be sought by open advertisement or through peer to peer dialogue. The ultimate decision on selection is a matter for the trustees.

On appointment, new trustees sign a constitution committing them to giving of their time and expertise. The induction process includes an initial meeting with the trustees, followed by a series of short meetings with the Chief Executive Officer on day to day activities within the charity, current projects and, grant making process and powers and responsibilities of the trustee board. The welcome pack includes a brief history of the charity, copy of the trustee board minutes, a copy of the constitution, 5-year plan and a copy of the Charity Commission's guidance 'The Essential Trustee: What You Need to Know' and 'Charities and Public Benefit'.

All trustees give their time freely and no trustee remuneration was paid in the year. Trustees are required to disclose all relevant interests in accordance with the charity policy and update all policies including, 'Bullying and Harassment', 'Code of Conduct', 'Conflicts of Interest', 'Equal Opportunities', 'Financial Management', 'Health & Safety' and 'Safeguarding Children and Young people'.

Objectives, Mission and Principal Activity

The Olive Ridley Project takes a multidimensional approach to protecting sea turtles and their habitat in the Indian Ocean. We do this through fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation, public education, research and rehabilitation. Our charitable purposes are as follows:

1. To Promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the Indian Ocean in particular but not exclusively by:
 - a) The removal of ghost gear from the marine environment reducing the negative effects on coastal communities and marine animals particularly the Olive Ridley sea turtle and
 - b) By promoting the recycling of end of life fishing nets
2. To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the marine sea turtle but not exclusively the Olive Ridley sea turtle by provisions of talks, workshops, training and research.

3. To promote humane behaviour towards the Olive Ridley sea turtle by providing appropriate care, protection, treatment and security for animals which are in need of care and attention by reason of sickness, maltreatment, poor circumstances or ill usage and to educate the public in matters pertaining to animal welfare in general and the prevention of cruelty and suffering among animals.

* for the purpose of this clause, we define “ghost gear” as either abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear.

Public Benefit

All trustees follow the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. By closely following this guideline we ensure the charity stays true to its purposes and focuses resources in direct relation to the charitable purposes.

We focus on building awareness and education surrounding sea turtle conservation in the Indian Ocean region, and in particular in Maldives, Oman, Kenya and Pakistan. We mainly focus on the negative impacts of marine plastics, such as ghost nets, on sensitive habitats and to coastal communities. We achieve this in the following ways:

1. Conducting workshops, informal meetings and seminars with local communities, governments, schools and the public to remove and report ghost gear and promote sea turtle conservation;
2. Hiring infield project coordinators that can disseminate our research findings and promote awareness to local communities;
3. Teaching local fishing communities how to rework ghost gear into other products to generate an alternative income whilst protecting sensitive turtle habitats;
4. Operating a Marine Turtle Rescue Centre and a Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre that allow Maldivian nationals and local schools to work alongside qualified professionals to increase personal development and awareness;
5. Establishing relationships with research institutes to advance our research capacity and subsequently increase knowledge within the sea turtle scientific community;
6. Building a citizen science project, specific to sea turtle and ghost net science, that allows people from all backgrounds to contribute to scientific research and develop personal skills;
7. Offering paid internships to Maldivian nationals at the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre to build in-country capacity - there is currently no opportunity for veterinary training in Maldives;
8. Providing open access resources such as educational videos and an e-learning platform on our [website](#), with the addition of a Frequently Asked Turtle Questions page and educational blogs. This resource provides information on everything you need to know about sea turtles, including free publications such as our Sea Turtle Code of Conduct and Turtle Entanglement Protocol. Our protocols explain how to behave around foraging, nesting, and hatchling turtles, and what to do when finding an entangled sea turtle and are published in several languages. The aim of the publications is a) to reduce human disturbance, whether it be intentional or accidental, to sea turtles in all of their habitats while still allowing people to have an enjoyable wildlife encounter, and b) to increase the chances of survival for entangled sea turtles;
9. Maintaining very active social media channels and engage with our followers through various messaging platforms;
10. Working with a number of journalists from TV channels/programs, newspapers and magazines to further spread our message about sea turtle conservation; and
11. Contributing to scientific journals to advance the scientific community knowledge on sea turtles and the threats they face.

Risk management

The Trustees have identified the major risks applicable to the charity and believe that appropriate action has been taken to manage and mitigate against these risks. Furthermore, the Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the Charity is exposed, in particular those relating to the operations, reputation and finance of the Olive Ridley Project. The CEO assesses and updates the likelihood and impact of material risks and ensures controls are in place, such as special risk assessments for general fieldwork and working at the rescue centre.

Achievements and Performance 2020

This reporting period is running from April to December 2020 and is a shorter reporting period than previous years. This is for the purpose of aligning our reporting period with the calendar year. All subsequent annual reports will report from January to December of each year. Due to the shorter reporting period, and the reasons described below, our reporting numbers are much lower than previous years for this reporting period.

The reporting period April 2020 - December 2020 was extremely challenging for the Olive Ridley Project (ORP). The Maldives recorded its first Covid-19 case in the first week of March 2020, and within a few days, a state of public health emergency was declared. Border closures were followed by domestic lockdown and inter-island travel restrictions. Then WHO declared a global pandemic on the 11th March 2020 and the Novel Coronavirus took centre stage globally. Oman soon closed its borders too, and Kenya and Pakistan went into lockdown.

As the number of international tourists plummeted, borders were closed, and most countries implemented travel restrictions and lockdowns, many of our partner resorts in the Maldives, Kenya and Oman had to suspend operations. Our rescue centres were forced to operate on a skeleton staff with limited funding, our in-field research activities were suspended everywhere and staff sent home, and our work with the Abdul Rehman Goth fishing community in Pakistan had to be put on hold. Our volunteer programs and expeditions were also suspended.

With most of our staff working from home rather than in the field, we had to go back to the drawing board to come up with new ideas to protect sea turtles and their habitats. Our team's ability to stay connected was critical for ORP to stay on mission during this time. Regular video team meetings and WhatsApp messaging kept (and continues to keep) everyone in touch and up to date. We focused our work on data analyses and scientific writing, developing and planning new projects in Kenya, Maldives, Pakistan, and further developing our educational and outreach programmes. We also explored new avenues to diversify our funding and increased our activity on social media and on our website to reach a wider audience. One project that we are particularly proud of is our new e-learning platform. Our entire team dedicated many hours creating a comprehensive online learning tool dedicated to sea turtles. This free resource quickly became a big hit amongst turtle enthusiasts and allowed us to reach new audiences, as well as continue our education mission - even though we could not meet anyone in person.

Though 2020 has been very difficult in many ways for ORP, as it has for so many other charities, we were lucky to have had an exceptionally successful year ahead of the pandemic outbreak, which resulted in healthy cash and reserve funds. Still, as donations from corporate partners, volunteers and private individuals came to an abrupt halt in April, the Board of Trustees and the CEO immediately implemented strict cost saving measures and made contingency plans to keep the charity running through the crisis and beyond. This included diversifying our income stream, finding new ways to reach individual donors, introducing a new monthly giving program and making plans to bring onboard a fundraising officer.

The whole team has worked exceptionally hard to come up with innovative ideas to keep our projects funded and going - and our message loud - during the reporting period. The support from our corporate sponsors, adopting parents and individual donations were exceptional this year after an initial dip. This valuable support enabled us to continue our work - even through the darkest of times.

Towards the end of the reporting period, our Resident Veterinarian and several of our researchers were back in the field in the Maldives and plans were being made for our return to Kenya. Our partner resort in Oman remains closed and our work there suspended.

Research

Our in-field research efforts were temporarily suspended from March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of our researchers were forced to return home until travel restrictions were lifted. However, this allowed us to focus on analysis of our data sets, and on planning new research projects for the future. The good news is that, by the end of the year, most of our team was back in the field and able to continue our research projects.

We continue to raise additional funding for our satellite tagging project, led by ORP researcher, Rushan Bin Abdul Rahman. This research aims to explore movement ecology statistics to determine which points along the tracks of olive ridleys suggest possible foraging behaviour. This can then be correlated with characteristics that are important for sea turtle development (e.g., sea surface temperature, productivity). With this information we will be able to identify what environmental characteristics make habitats suitable for juvenile olive ridley sea turtles in the region. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to Mr. Thorsten Albrecht for providing the initial resources for this tagging project and we are thankful to our corporate sponsors Legend Bracelets for helping raise additional funding for this project.

We are excited to embark on a new project in collaboration with the Centre D'Etude et de Decouverte des Tortues Marines (CEDTM) and Kelonia, L'observatoire des Tortues Marines de La Réunion (KELONIA-RMR). It is hoped that the results will improve our knowledge on the spatial distribution and connectivity of hawksbill sea turtles in the Western Indian Ocean. ORP will provide tissue samples of injured and sick resident hawksbill sea turtles in the Maldives for genetic analyses. We are excited to continue to collect samples in preparation for analyses at the end of 2021.

We submitted two papers for review and published a book chapter, and had two additional papers accepted this year. The first paper, led by ORP researcher [Dr. Stephanie Köhnk](#), documents the presence of *Sangivorous* ectoparasites found on entangled sea turtles in the Maldives. Stephanie hopes to expand this research into the wider Indian Ocean in 2021.

The second paper submission was led by [Dr. Martin Stelfox](#) and Dr. M Martin-Cereceda, exploring a successful example on how to engage researchers and society.

The book chapter, entitled Applications of Photo Identification in Sea Turtle Studies, was published in the book Sea turtle Research and Conservation: Lessons From Working in the Field, edited by Brad Nahill. [Dr Jillian Hudgins'](#) contribution to this chapter firmly cements the use of non-invasive Photo ID as a useful and promising tool in sea turtle research.

This year we had two papers accepted for publication and published, both form part of Dr. Martin Stelfox (CEO and Founder) PhD thesis. This means the PhD is now complete and his entire thesis can be found here:

https://derby.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10545/625352/thesis_final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

We also assisted the Maldivian government in preparing the Maldivian chapter contribution to the MTSG Annual Regional Report. A Report of the IUCN-SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group.

Published work:

S.G. Dunbar, J. Hudgins, and C. Jean, Applications of Photo Identification in Sea Turtle Studies, in: B. Nahill (Ed.), Sea Turtle Research and Conservation: Lessons From Working In The Field, *Elsevier, Academic Press*, 2021, pp. 45–55.

Hancock, J.H., Choma, J., Mainye, L., Stelfox, M. & Hudgins, J. (2020) [Photo Identification as a Tool to Study Sea Turtle Populations in Kenyan Marine Protected Areas](#). *African Conservation Telegraph*, Vol. 15 No 3.

Lomas, C. (2020) British Chelonia Group "[Conservation and rehabilitation of sea turtles in the Maldives](#)". *Testudo* Vol. 9 No. 2

Stelfox, M., Lett, C., Reid, G., Souch, G. and Sweet, M., 2020. Minimum drift times infer trajectories of ghost nets found in the Maldives. *Marine pollution bulletin*, 154, p.111037.

Stelfox, M., Burian, A., Shanker, K., Rees, A.F., Jean, C., Willson, M.S., Manik, N.A. and Sweet, M., 2020. Tracing the

origin of olive ridley turtles entangled in ghost nets in the Maldives: A phylogeographic assessment of populations at risk. *Biological Conservation*, 245, p.108499.

Umaira Ahmed, Enas Riyaz, Jillian Hudgins, and Martin Stelfox in: Phillott, A.D., and Rees, A.F. (Eds.) (2020). [Sea Turtles in the Middle East and South Asia Region: MTSG Annual Regional Report 2020](#). Report of the IUCN-SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group, 2019.

Submitted papers:

Title: Exploring a successful example on how to engage researchers and society. - Submitted to Research for All.

Title: Stowaways: marine leeches infecting Olive Ridley Sea Turtles washed into Maldivian waters entangled in ghost nets - "comparative parasitology"

Impact of Ghost Gear in the Indian Ocean

Our ghost gear related research is spearheaded by our CEO Martin Stelfox as part of his PhD. His PhD was fully funded through the University of Derby. However, ORP trustees signed an agreement with the University of Derby to provide the resources to collect DNA samples at the rehabilitation centre and allow access to our connections in the Indian Ocean. ORP's resources are at Martin's disposal provided they meet with our charitable objectives.

This year saw the final submission of Martin's PhD thesis and all thesis chapters were published (see above and previous annual reviews). His entire thesis, entitled 'The Cryptic and Transboundary Nature of Ghost gear in the Maldivian Archipelago' can be found here:

https://derby.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10545/625352/thesis_final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

We would like to thank the University of Derby for providing lab support and materials required to carry out laboratory research and experiments.

Applying Research to Practice

Ghost gear has been widely recognised as a major source of entanglement for sea turtles around the world, which is why we continue to collect data on ghost gear and sea turtle entanglement events. Through Dr Stepfox's research, we are now able to make informed decisions about how best to tackle the issue to reduce the amount of ghost gear and minimise its impact on sea turtles. Dr Stepfox continues to represent ORP at the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) and has expanded ORP's involvement by joining the Define Best Practice and Inform Policy working group in addition to the Build Evidence working group. ORP has also become members of the NGO Tuna Forum and currently sit on three working groups: Bycatch Mitigation, Data and Transparency and Well-Managed FAD Guidance. The aim of this involvement is to ensure ghost gear and ghost fishing are brought into the conversation of global tuna fisheries at the policy level. We hope our experience and expertise will help guide stakeholders to make informed decisions on the issue and ensure it remains firmly on the agenda.

New Project Plans

This year we are excited to have signed an MoU with the International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF). Through this collaboration we hope to build upon ORPs existing network of citizen scientists and biologists, and IPNLF relationship with Maldivian Pole and Line fishers, to develop a large scale ghost gear recovery project that incentivises fishers and other stakeholders. This project has been funded through the Joanna Toole Foundation and Satlink and started its first pilot project in Gemanafushi in Gaafu Alifu Atoll. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, this project is advancing slower than we had hoped. However, we are aiming to continue this work once the travel restrictions are lifted in 2021. We also aim to educate the fishers on best practices for when they encounter entangled sea turtles when out fishing within the EEZ of the Maldives.

Sea Turtle Population & Habitats in the Indian Ocean

The need to conserve sea turtles in the Indian Ocean region has been recognized by the signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the

Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU) and by policies implemented by individual countries in the region. However, to inform conservation policy, robust assessments of population abundance, distribution, and trends over time are necessary.

Obtaining such information can be both expensive and logistically challenging, particularly for nations with limited capacity and resources. The evaluation of the conservation status of nesting and foraging sea turtle populations in the Republic of Maldives and the Indian Ocean has been hindered by lack of data for all species. Our photographic identification project aims to start to fill the gap in scientific knowledge by providing detailed information on the abundance, population growth rate, and apparent survival of hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) in the Maldives, Oman Musandam Region and Diani Chale Marine National Park and Reserve (DCMNPR) on Kenya's south eastern coast.

Research Methods

The lack of baseline abundance data may prevent the detection of either a growth in population numbers due to protection or a decline due to anthropogenic impacts. It is therefore important to collect information that can now form a new baseline in order to monitor their status and abundance to propose management actions at a local scale. Here we contribute robust estimates of abundance, population growth, and apparent survival of hawksbill turtles that can be used to inform conservation action in the Maldives, Oman Musandam Region and Eastern Kenya.

To do so, we use Capture-Mark-Recapture (CMR) methods that have previously been used on other taxa. Sea turtles can be individually identified based on the arrangement of scutes on the sides of their faces. These natural markings are stable over the long term, allowing us to use non-invasive CMR methods.

Photographic identification (Photo ID) is a non-invasive technique used to identify individual animals in a population and track them over time from natural marks on the body. For sea turtles, it relies on capturing photographs of the unique patterns of scales on the animal's face. Photo ID can be used as a non-invasive alternative to tagging and data may be analysed through Capture-Mark-Recapture (CMR) methods. This technique allows researchers to conduct longitudinal studies of individuals, yielding information about home range, survival rate, migration patterns, and life cycle. It also provides the opportunity to gather information on populations that are less studied, such as juveniles and males. Data collection involves no handling or harassment of animals and causes no harm to animals.

We collect sightings data for both nesting and foraging green (*Chelonia mydas*) and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) sea turtles in Kenya, Maldives, and Oman. Olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), and leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) sea turtles are present in these countries; however, greens and hawksbills are the most abundant in the regions where our teams operate.

We use the Internet of Turtles (IoT) platform to analyse all turtle sightings from Maldives, Kenya, and Oman. This new conservation tool has the potential to greatly improve and facilitate data collection for sea turtles by using photo identification data. The IoT platform combines data analytics with individual animal tracking. IoT uses computer vision to compare new IDs to the existing database and Wildbook to store metadata.

ORP began collecting new and historical photographs of foraging and nesting turtles from the Maldives in 2014. We have a seven-year data set for some atolls. We started collecting Photo ID data from Kenya in 2018 and Oman in 2019, and, though it is too soon to analyse these data using CMR, we hope to replicate our Maldivian population studies in these countries as well. This project aims to help fill the gaps in scientific knowledge by providing detailed information on the abundance, distribution, population growth rate, apparent survival, and nesting frequency of hawksbill and green sea turtles.

External Parasites & Epibionts of Sea Turtles in the Maldives

We continued the investigation of external parasites and epibionts of sea turtles found in the Maldives to improve our understanding of the health of the population. Parasite and epibiont loads can be a good indicator for the general health of the population and therefore its resilience to external stressors such as climate change or other

alterations of the habitat. A publication discussing the findings of blood-sucking leeches on olive ridley turtles entangled in ghost nets was submitted for publication and is currently under review.

To continue data collection on parasites in the Maldives, a partnership discussion with the EPA was initiated and a Memorandum of Understanding is currently being prepared to be signed by both parties. The EPA will support our sample collection when possible, while I will identify a specific number of marine invertebrates from present samples for them.

Sea Turtle Behaviour – Lhaviyani Atoll, Maldives

Data on sea turtle behaviour in Lhaviyani Atoll collected in 2018 was presented as an oral presentation under the title "Swimming with turtles - The behaviour of sea turtles in proximity to tourist resorts in the Maldives" at the International Marine Conservation Congress 6 held online in August 2020 and at the Third Maldives Marine Science Symposium held online in December 2020. The accompanying paper is currently in preparation.

ORP's current Sea Turtle Biologist in Lhaviyani Atoll, Emily Mundy, has been trained to continue the behaviour data collection. We will use the unique and unexpected case of the Covid-19 pandemic and the following closure of many tourist resorts in the atoll to compare the behaviour of the same individuals under very different circumstances (very variable number of human interactions).

Maldives

Sea Turtle Rescue & Rehabilitation

As a result of restrictions on boat travel and hugely reduced tourism due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were far fewer opportunities to find and rescue entangled turtles in the reporting period than in previous years. Hence, the number of stranded turtles, as well as our patient intake during this (shorter) period has been substantially reduced.

In the reporting period we recorded a total of 38 stranded sea turtles in the Maldives: 29 olive ridleys, 7 hawksbills and 2 green turtles. 89.5% of these were found entangled in ghost gear and other marine debris and 10.5% were found floating. 60.5% were unharmed and could be released immediately, 31.6% were found injured and transferred to rescue centres around the country, and 7.9% were found dead.

We treat injured sea turtles rescued from across the Maldives at our two facilities in Baa and North Malé atolls. Most of our turtle patients have been found entangled in ghost gear or other marine debris. However, we also have patients who have been found floating, sick, injured from boat strikes or fishing hooks, and some that we suspect have been kept as pets.

Marine Turtle Rescue Centre

In the fourth year of operations, the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre at Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu has gone from strength to strength with a fully functioning veterinary clinic that houses an X-ray machine, an ultrasound machine and full surgical facilities. All patients undergo basic laboratory testing on arrival. This involves a blood test for cytology and, when required, a bacterial culture so that any antibiotic treatment can be sensitive to, and directly target, the underlying infection. We continually improve our facilities through fundraising for new equipment in order to meet our aim of gold standard veterinary care of sea turtles.

Unfortunately, we were in the middle of transitioning resident veterinarians at the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre in Maldives when the Covid-19 pandemic hit and were unable to get our new vet on site before the borders closed. This, in combination with resort closures and inter-island travel restrictions, meant that we were unable to fully operate our rescue centre in the Maldives - or have volunteers help with daily operations. However, thanks to the hard work of Sea Turtle Biologist Rosie Brown and intern Eman Shareef, under the close guidance of our vets Dr. Claire Petros and Dr. Amelia Liddell, we were able to continue to treat existing patients at our Marine Turtle Rescue

Centre in Baa Atoll, and we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to our partners Coco Collection Dhuni Kolhu for making this possible. Dr Amalie Liddell was finally able to join the Rescue Centre in September.

Since opening we have treated a total of 131 injured turtles, out of which 76 were successfully released back into the ocean by us or other rescue centres. 44 individuals died or were dead on arrival. The rest remains in residence at the Olive Ridley Project Rescue and Rehabilitation Centres and other facilities. 77% of the patients have been olive ridley turtles and 80% of these were ghost net and marine debris entanglement victims.

Between April 2020 and December 2020, we admitted 6 new patients and treated 15 individuals. The majority of the turtle patients (67%) were admitted due to ghost net (abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear) entanglement injuries. We treated two of the five species of sea turtle found in the Maldives, (4 olive ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) and 2 hawksbills (*Eretmochelys imbricata*).

Of the 15 turtles treated, two underwent surgery to remove badly damaged flippers and three had exploratory and wound repair surgeries. Other injuries included one ingestion of a fishing hook and one was found floating for unknown reasons.

Most of the turtle patients (67%) were juveniles, 33% were adults. 17% of the turtle patients were female, 17% male and the rest were too young to determine their sex.

2 of the 6 turtles were successfully released, 2 unfortunately succumbed to their injuries, and 2 remained current patients at the ORP rescue centre.

The average time spent at the rescue centre for the turtles was 124 days, not including current patients. Our longest resident patient is a male adult olive ridley turtle called Heidi. He arrived with severely damaged right and left front flippers after being entangled in a ghost net in April 2018. His left flipper had to be amputated and the right flipper has limited movement as his elbow is fused. He is not releasable. He is taken on regular sea swims to keep him active and give him some mental stimulation. He has been with us more than 2.5 years whilst we look for a forever home for him in an aquarium.

In previous years, the turtles have arrived quite consistently throughout the year, with peak admissions during the North-East monsoon season in the Maldives (December - March), when the wind and currents flow in from the north east. This period coincides with the nesting season for olive ridley turtles on India's eastern shore, which may explain why we are seeing so many entangled olive ridleys during this time. This year we admitted no new patients between March and June and only one patient in July. This does not mean that there were no entangled turtles; it is rather a result of restrictions on boat travel due to the Covid-19 pandemic and far fewer opportunities to find and rescue entangled turtles than in previous years. Maldives began welcoming tourists again in July and resorts gradually started opening in the autumn and we started seeing a steady increase in turtle patient admissions through November and December.

OceanCare kindly funded another year of Dr Claire Petros as Lead Veterinarian for ORP. She oversees the rescue centre and veterinarians, making sure we follow best veterinarian practices and provide the best possible veterinary care. In addition, she focuses on public relations, increasing awareness of the project both in the UK and internationally, and helping raise funds for the charity. She was unable to visit the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre in the Maldives during the reporting period due to travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 outbreak.

We would like to thank Coco Collection for hosting the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre and our team, even through the closure of the resort for 4 months. We would also like to thank OceanCare for providing funding for medical equipment and a lead veterinarian, as well as extra funding for veterinary services in this challenging year.

Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre

The Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre at One & Only Reethi Rah in North Malé Atoll opened in October 2019. This facility has one large tank and can accommodate up to two patients, depending on size, and provides non-medical long-term rehabilitation without veterinary care, freeing up tank space for critically injured patients at the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre.

When Covid-19 broke out and Maldives shut down, we had two patients in residence: Azura and Eve, both olive ridley ghost net victims. Even though the resort closed down temporarily, our Sea Turtle Biologist, Laura Whitely, stayed on site to look after the patients until we could release Eve and transfer Azura to the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre in Baa Atoll in August. Azura remains in our care.

The Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre at One & Only was closed from August until late December, but is now operational again.

We would like to thank One & Only Reethi Rah for hosting the Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre and our team.

Sea Turtle Population & Habitat Studies - Maldives

Little historical data exist on marine turtle populations in the Maldives, which makes it difficult to study trends or evaluate the effectiveness of conservation measures put in place by the government. Surveys carried out by the Ministry of Fishery and Agriculture between 1988 and 2008, although incomplete, revealed that the number of nests (for both hawksbill and green turtles) was declining, while the harvest of eggs remained high (Ali and Shimal, 2016). Two government programs, run by the Marine Research Centre, came into effect in 2015: The National Marine Turtle Nesting Survey Programme and TurtleWatch Maldives.

The only compiled reports about the sea turtles of Maldives are the *Marine Research Bulletin* published from Marine Research Center in 2000 (Frazier et al. 1984, Zahir 2000) and an update to this report by Ali and Shimal in 2016. Frazier et al. (1984) estimated that hundreds of hawksbills nested annually and that foraging hawksbills were present in “large numbers”, particularly in the northern atolls, South Male’ atoll, and Ari atoll. For the 2008 IUCN assessment, a nesting population of 460-767 females per year was calculated based on data collected from 1983-1995, (Frazier et al., 1984; Zahir & Hafiz, 1997), which represents a ~96% decline from historic (1870) numbers (MTSG, 2007). They also reported that adult and immature green turtles were found throughout the archipelago in the early 1980s and that “several thousand” green turtles nested every year, which was thought to be a catastrophic decline from historic number. However, the authors noted that data were inadequate to do more than guess about population size.

Ali and Shimal (2016) calculated a 70-80% decrease in nest numbers from Frazier et al.’s 1984 estimate, indicating additional declines in the last 30 years. Frazier et al. (1984) commented, “Some people believe that each island in the Maldives has its own population; this would be consistent with what is known of other island populations, and several distinct feeding populations could be breeding in Maldives.” They also suggested “well organised tagging studies are needed to investigate the dispersal and migratory habits” (of marine turtles in the region). Global hawksbill populations are classified as “Critically Endangered” with a decreasing population trend by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN, 2008). There is no assessment for the Indo-Pacific subpopulation but many populations in the region are depleted, declining or remnants of larger assemblages (MTSG, 2007). The Maldives population is listed as declining though the Maldives is considered one of the most important areas for hawksbills in the Indian Ocean (MTSG, 2007).

The Olive Ridley Project now has four regional database coordinators in Maldives (in Baa, Lhaviyani, Laamu and North Malé atolls) and a main database coordinator. The regional database coordinators collect and process data from their designated areas and feed this into the main database.

Maldives Sea Turtle Photo-ID Research Results

Our research was suspended for most of the reporting period due to the Covid-19 pandemic; the reported numbers are therefore much lower than in previous years. In addition, the total number of turtles reported in the Maldives (n = 26,090) was lower than last year (n = 26,313) due to our data being uploaded to IoT. Several hundred historical files between 2012-2015 were either missing or corrupt, resulting in them not being uploaded into the IoT.

As of the end of December 2020 the database currently stands at 26,090 sightings including 18,315 hawksbill turtles, and 7,775 green turtles.

The total number of identified turtles in the National Database stands at 4,810 individual turtles (1,055 green turtles and 3,755 hawksbill turtles).

We have collected photos from ~50% of the country (photos from over 690 reefs) and involved over 360 individual submitters. Most submitters were marine biologists stationed at resorts, guests, dive guides, and guest house operators. We now have staff stationed in four atolls (Baa, Lhaviyani, North Male, and Laamu), which has greatly increased the amount of data coming from these four atolls.

As with previous years, the majority of sighted turtles were juvenile hawksbills in the 45-50 straight carapace length size. Hawksbills are more common in all atolls for which we have data except Lhaviyani, where green turtles are much more common. Both hawksbill and green turtles show extremely high site fidelity (they stay on their home reefs for long periods of time).

Turtle Nesting – Maldives

ORP is continuing to collect data on sea turtle nesting mainly from Baa, Laamu and Lhaviyani atolls, where ORP's Sea Turtle Biologists monitor the nests. We are encouraging other biologists in the country to report any nesting incidences, for example from South Malé, Noonu, Raa or Haa Daalhu Atoll.

In total we recorded 46 true nests and 33 false crawls during the reporting period. We counted 1,398 hatchlings to date, with 86 % hatching success in all nests that have hatched and could be examined post-hatching (N = 18). The average time of incubation was 59 days. A manuscript describing the finding of a hatchling with polycephaly and other congenital malformations during nest content analysis has been prepared for publication.

In Laamu Atoll, ORP continued to monitor nesting on Gaadhoo, an uninhabited island thought to be one of the most significant green turtle nesting sites in the Maldives. Unfortunately, the nesting beach is subject to illegal poaching. This year we were only able to visit twice, once in September and once in November) due to access restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of ten nests and four false crawls were recorded; 20% of these nests showed signs of poaching activity.

We plan to use the data we collect to justify government protection for Gaadhoo, and to help prevent proposed development which could have detrimental impacts on the turtle nesting beach. Long-term, we hope to establish a ranger programme to consistently monitor the nesting turtle population and deter poachers. Various funding options have been sought out to kickstart the ranger programme (e.g., Hans-Schiemenz-Fonds from the *German Society for Herpetology and Reptile Care*). ORP is also working closely with Blue Marine Foundation to help create a network of protected areas (including Gaadhoo) in Laamu.

Internship Program

ORP's Internship Program for Maldivian nationals is critical in achieving our goal to build local capacity in the Maldives; there are currently no other veterinarian training facilities available in the country. The interns work at the Rescue Centre for a three-month period and play an integral part in the daily running of the Rescue Centre. They receive a stipend, food, and accommodations during the internship.

The interns are taught basic turtle medical care and husbandry and help educate both guests and the school groups that visit the Rescue Centre. Once their internship is complete, they become turtle ambassadors for the project and continue to spread awareness of the project's work and goals in the Maldives.

This year we hosted 2 interns, who both extended their internship to help us continue running the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre during the Covid-19 outbreak. Eman Shareef was a great help to Sea Turtle Biologist Rosie Brown during the closure of the resort; she stayed for a total of 6 months. She was followed by Ali Jinaad, who stayed for 4 months.

Volunteer Programs

We run three volunteer programs in Maldives, however, all three were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic for the duration of the reporting period.

Volunteering at the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre

The Rescue Centre welcomes anyone who is interested in sea turtle conservation and husbandry to volunteer. The volunteers help us care for the turtle patients and run the Rescue Centre. We launched The Rescue Centre Volunteer Program in 2017 and it has been very successful, running at near 100% capacity. The program was fully booked for all of 2020, but, due to the pandemic, the program was suspended and all volunteers offered to rebook in 2021. Most volunteers did so and we hope to restart the program early next year.

Volunteer Research Assistant Sea Turtle Expedition

Haa Alif Atoll is situated in the far north of Maldives where very little scientific work has been done. The lack of data in this region is what scientists call a “black hole”. We aim to fill this gap so that we can accurately interpret sea turtle population and movements in the Maldives. Due to its remote location, Haa Alif Atoll has very few resources to conduct dedicated sea turtle research or run marine conservation projects. In addition to our research, we drive community projects, working with the local schools, our local partner Island Development and Environmental Awareness Society (IDEAS), and with members of the community to help tackle common issues affecting marine habitats for turtles.

This project is sustained through the generous contributions of our expedition volunteers and brings economic benefits to the island of Kelaa in the form of ecotourism.

We cancelled all planned research expeditions in the reporting period.

Visiting Veterinarian Program at the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre

The ORP Visiting Veterinarian Program, launched in 2019, provides a unique opportunity for qualified veterinarians specialising in exotic medicine from around the world to obtain hands on experience working with wild sea turtles. The program was suspended for 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Confirmed visiting vets have been offered to rebook for next year.

Kenya

Sea Turtle Population & Habitat Studies – Diani Chale Marine National Park & Reserve

The main aim of the project here is to build a monitoring program to identify sea turtle foraging and aggregation hotspots in the Diani Chale Marine National Park and Reserve (DCMNPR), which will inform a site management plan currently being developed.

Olive Ridley Project has been running a sea turtle ID Program in Kenya since December 2018, focusing its work in the Diani-Chale Marine National Park and Reserve. The reserve is located approximately 25 km south of Mombasa, and includes a linear fringing reef that extends 25 Km between Tiwi (4°12'36"S; 39°37.06"E) in the north, to Chale Island off Gazi Bay (04°27'807"S; 39°32.158E) in the south.

Based at Diani Marine Education Centre (MEC), the ORP Kenya team, led by a marine biologist, conducts regular scuba diving surveys along the reef, collecting data on sea turtle abundance, distribution and behavior, to identify sea turtle foraging and aggregation hotspots in the reserve. Diving surveys are conducted through the dive centre Diving the Crab, in collaboration with members of the MEC, volunteers, while independent divers are encouraged to submit their photos.

With research activities suspended from April, and our Kenya Project Manager forced to return to and remain in her home country for the rest of the year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we found several opportunities to develop fun and interesting activities to promote our work and project visibility abroad, namely in Europe. This included meetings and collaborations with Portuguese conservation organizations or initiatives, such as Plasticus Maritimus, with whom we collaborated on an educational program about ghost gear and plastic pollution, and Sea Shepherd - Portugal, promoting awareness about the impact of ghost gear in turtles in the Iberian Peninsula. We also teamed up with Pico Sport Diving and Whale-Watching Centre in the Azores islands to assist filming crews making documentaries about marine biodiversity and conservation. Other outreach efforts resulted in a small article published on [SCB's African Conservation Telegraph](#), a successful blog post, and regular social media presence.

Kenya Sea Turtle Photo-ID Research Results

ORP has established the first facial ID database for Kenya along with MEC, featuring turtles identified by the team in DCMNRPR. Our field work in Kenya was suspended in April 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak. In-water activities were allowed again in June, but since our Project Manager had to remain in Europe and Diving the Crab was shut down until October, the sea turtle photo ID program relied on photo submissions from local divers and the Diani Turtle Watch's by-catch Program for the remainder of the year. A total of 103 photos were submitted, representing 68 individual greens (19 new) and 14 hawksbills (6 new).

To date, ORP in Kenya has recorded 2,303 sea turtle sightings at the reserve, with 2,028 being green turtles and 478 being hawksbill turtles, corresponding to 478 individual green turtles and 62 individual hawksbill turtles.

We have now uploaded most of our photos to the Internet of Turtles, the global online database for sea turtle sightings. In total, 1521 encounters with nearly 300 individual turtles were added to this platform. As of December 2020, all photos have started to be directly uploaded onto the Internet of Turtles as they are submitted.

We would like to thank MEC and CES for hosting us and for organisational support, and Diving the Crab for logistical support.

Oman

Sea Turtle Population & Habitat Studies – Musandam, Oman

ORP's Musandam, Oman project began in January 2019. It is a multi-faceted project and one part is collecting Turtle ID photos to understand the populations of the turtles in this area. So far, most of the turtles sighted are green turtles (82%). Hawksbills are present but less common: Loggerheads have also been sighted.

Oman Sea Turtle Photo-ID Research Results

No research activity took place in Oman during the reporting period due to the closure of our partner resort.

The total number of identified turtles in the Musandam Oman Database stands at 40 individual turtles, including 34 green turtles and 6 hawksbill turtles.

Community Outreach - Oman

The other main focus of our project in the Musandam region of Oman is to work alongside local fishing communities to combat the ghost gear issue in the region.

We now work with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA) to promote our goals to reduce ghost gear in the region and support their reef clean efforts and participate with regional beach cleans and school visits

with a specific focus on marine environmental education and sea turtles. We are also working with BEAH - the company responsible for managing waste and recycling in Oman.

They have made plans to provide a skip in Dibba Marina for fishermen to dispose of their broken, old or otherwise unusable fishing equipment in a responsible manner. This is to be accompanied with suitable education about ghost gear and its impacts to encourage a positive dialogue with the fishing community. In February 2020 we received permission from MECA to remove ghost gear from coral reefs this will enable independent clean up efforts of divers for the surrounding dive sites.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic we were forced to temporarily suspend our project in Oman in the middle of March 2020, a result governed by financial constraints of our project partners. We hope to restart this project in the next financial year once tourism returns to normality.

Pakistan

Our Pakistan pilot project in Abdul Rehman Goth continues to progress. The project aims to remove ghost gear from the ocean environment and to create value out of waste through the power of community and creative thinking in a circular economy project. Finding new ways to reuse ghost gear depends on the experience and innovative thinking of people from different sectors of economy and so we have explored various initiatives in the past year.

Abdul Rehman Goth (ARG) is a centuries-old fishing village with a population of around 5,000 people and 300 fishing boats. Like so many traditional fishing communities, climate change, industrial fishing and overfishing strongly affect this community. ORP is working on ways to reuse ghost gear recovered in the area to provide an alternative income for the community. So far, volunteers have recovered more than 4.7 tons of ghost gear from the sea and beaches near the village.

Whilst the men of the village may travel for work, the women are more restricted in terms of mobility due to the lack of public transport. The design and sale of ghost net bracelets and dog leashes provide local work; work that can provide a significant addition to the household income of a fisher family.

The many restrictions implemented in Pakistan to contain the spread of Covid-19 virus forced us to temporarily place our circular economy initiatives on hold for several months. In these testing times, the fishing community of Abdul Rehman Goth suffered greatly. The ORP Pakistan team managed to raise PKR 300,000 to provide two-weeks' worth of ration packs for the 150 families from Abdul Rehman Goth who were hit the hardest.

Once restrictions were lifted, the team got back to work immediately with the aim to improve the dog leash design from 2019. The new design incorporates a 100% recycled material (excluding the clip) and uses more robust clips in its design. This change in design improves the user experience and quality of the leash.

As import and export restrictions eased, the first batch of new dog leashes were exported to the UK to be sold via the ORP website. The launch was successful and we have already placed our second batch order with the community.

All leashes are strength tested to 60 kg to ensure safety. Each leash uses 880 sq feet / 82 sq metres of ghost net, that would otherwise be polluting local beaches, and waste materials that would otherwise be sent to a landfill. We are currently selling the Ghost Leash online and continue to expand our product range in 2021.

All profits from the sales of Ghost Leashes and ghost net bracelets go back to the community and we hope to provide a valuable and additional income to the fishing community of ARG (1000 PKR / £5 per ghost leash and 500 PKR / £2.50 per bracelet). We are looking forward to replicating this initiative into more villages as we move into 2021. This reporting year a total of 42 dog leashes and 140 ghost net bracelets have been sold generating a total alternative income of PKR 119,000 (Approx. £540) for the community.

In December 2020, the ORP team made a visit to Astola Island, Pakistan's first Marine Protected Area, located off the coast of Balochistan. Astola is a nesting beach and the ORP team discovered over 800 green turtle nests on the

north-eastern beach of Astola Island. However, the large number of ghost nets found on the nesting site was a cause for the concern and the team is planning a cleanup visit to the island.

Education & Outreach

Education is a big part of ORP's mission and an important aspect of our multifaceted approach to protecting sea turtles and their habitats. We believe education is a powerful tool to increase awareness, engage people and stimulate action. We usually educate school children, local communities, boat crews, divers, fishermen, tourists, resort staff, and biologists, face to face and in-person, but all that had to change this year.

Instead, we created an [e-learning platform](#) on our website with free courses and resources, for both sea turtle lovers in general and the more science minded, about everything sea turtles. We hope this free knowledge sharing hub will be an important environmental education resource to help guide aspiring young scientists and supplement existing educational tools for remote learning and school projects.

In the reporting period, 249 students enrolled in our free courses and 33 graduated.

Conferences And Talks

World wide travel restrictions did not stop the global scientific community from exchanging ideas and discussing results and findings in 2020 - using the world wide web. We presented our findings at various events, including the International Marine Conservation Congress 6 and the Third Maldives Marine Science Symposium. ORP Researcher Dr Stephanie Köhnk presented her findings on sea turtle behaviour in proximity to tourist resorts in one of the more northern atolls of the Maldives, and ORP Sea Turtle Biologist Jo Goodfellow discussed nesting beach monitoring on Gaadhoo island in Laamu Atoll. The online format might have been new for every attendee, but great questions and comments after each presentation still highlighted the importance of interaction with the scientific community.

In October 2020, ORP took part in Scuba.Digital, an online dive show. We gave a total of five different talks in the session "Ocean's Drop", covering topics such as sea turtle biology, conservation and rehabilitation, as well as presenting ORP's work. Presentations were made in both English and Spanish to reach a wider audience.

Scuba.Digital had 800 attendees from all parts around the world and 200 exhibitors including 30 dive resorts, 27 liveaboard operators, 22 dive centres & liveaboards, 23 travel agents and consultants, 7 manufacturers, 6 magazines, 5 diving agencies, 5 conservation organisations, and loads more. 150 stage and session presentations covered a huge variation of topics.

Educational Festivals

Laamafaru Festival, Maldives

Laamafaru Festival is a joint venture between our partner resort, Six Senses Laamu, and the Laamu community. Launched as Laamu Turtle Festival in 2016, the festival was rebranded as Laamafaru Festival in 2019 with a broader scope to focus on the entire marine ecosystem.

This year Six Senses Laamu launched the #LaamafaruFestival2020 social media campaign. Throughout December, educational photos and videos - created by the Laamu community, for the Laamu community - were shared on social media. The community shared knowledge about Laamu's marine ecosystems and ideas to help better protect them. ORP created a short video about ghost nets in the Maldives and encouraged the community to report incidences of entangled turtles.

Collaborations

Coco Collection

Our partnership with Coco Collection Resorts continues. Our Marine Turtle Rescue Centre is located on Coco Dhuni Kolhu in Baa Atoll. We would like to thank Coco Collection for all their support and for hosting the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre, our staff, volunteers and interns.

Prodivers, Kuredu, Lhaviyani Atoll, Maldives

We continued our partnership with Prodivers, a German dive centre operator in Maldives, to work together to advance the research of sea turtles in the Maldives and provide educational outreach to international guests and Maldivian nationals. We would like to thank Prodivers for their support.

Six Senses Laamu, Laamu Atoll, Maldives

We continue our partnership with Six Senses Laamu, a resort in Laamu Atoll, Maldives, to work together to advance the research of sea turtles in Laamu Atoll and provide educational outreach to international guests and Maldivian nationals. Here we work closely with 2 other not-for-profit organisations and resort staff under the umbrella Maldives Underwater Initiative, with the ultimate goal of creating a network of locally managed marine protected areas, in consultation with the community. We would like to thank Six Senses Laamu for their support.

One & Only Reethi Rah, North Male Atoll, Maldives

One & Only Reethi Rah, North Malé Atoll, is our third resort partnership in Maldives. In addition to advancing research of sea turtles in North Malé Atoll, we have also opened a Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre here for turtle patients in need of long-term rehabilitation without veterinary care. This frees up tank space at the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre to allow admittance of more injured turtles that require veterinary attention. Additionally, neighbouring resorts in a resort-dense atoll have a local point to send injured turtles. If required, ORP will arrange for injured turtles to be sent to our turtle veterinarian for further care.

The Sands At Nomad, Diani Beach, Kenya

Our base in Kenya, The Sands at Nomad, is located on Diani Beach, Eastern Kenya. Here we work closely with the Conservation Education Society, being based out of their Marine Education Centre on Diani Beach, and Diving the Crab dive centre. In addition, we collaborate with Diani Turtle Watch (Diani), Jumba Turtle Patrol (Mtwapa, Mombasa), Reefvolution (Shimoni/ Kisite Marine Park) and Local Ocean Conservation (Watamu). Our partnership with the Sands at Nomad was temporarily suspended in April 2020 due the Covid-19 pandemic.

Six Senses Zighy Bay, Oman

Our partner resort in Oman is Six Senses Zighy Bay in the Musandam area. Together we work on making the region less of a ghost gear hotspot and advancing the knowledge of the local sea turtle population using the Turtle Photo-ID method. We would like to thank Six Senses Zighy Bay for their support and for hosting us. Our partnership with the Six Senses Zighy Bay was temporarily suspended in April 2020 due the Covid-19 pandemic.

GGGI

We continue to be an integral part of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI). The GGGI is a cross-sectoral alliance committed to driving solutions to the problem of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear worldwide. ORP sits on two working groups: The first is Define Best Practice and Inform Policy, which allows us to bring valuable information through working with coastal communities in Pakistan and the Maldives. The second working group is Build Evidence, which helps guide the development of the global dataportal on ghost gear and identify research gaps in ghost gear.

NGO Tuna Forum

The NGO Tuna Forum brings together NGOs and other individuals and organizations that work comprehensively on global tuna sustainability issues. ORP currently sits on three working groups: Bycatch Mitigation, Data and Transparency and Well-Managed FAD Guidance. The aim of this involvement is to ensure ghost gear and ghost fishing are brought into the conversation of global tuna fisheries at the policy level. We hope our experience and expertise will help guide stakeholders to make informed decisions on the issue and ensure it remains firmly on the agenda.

International Pole & Line Foundation

IPNLF works to develop, support and promote socially and environmentally responsible pole-and-line and handline tuna fisheries around the world. Our collaboration aims to develop a large scale ghost gear recovery project in the Maldives that incentivises fishers and other stakeholders.

International Sea Turtle Symposium

We regularly attend international symposiums including the ISTS. We also co-organised the sea turtle photo-ID workshop to develop standard protocols and new methods of analyses. However, this year the conference was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The conference has been rescheduled for 2021.

IDEAS

We hope to continue our partnership with IDEAS (Island Development and Environmental Awareness Society) of Kela'a to conduct sea turtle research expeditions in Haa Alif Atoll once the Covid-19 pandemic is over. IDEAS works for the development of Ha. Kela'a in all aspects and areas such as Education & Training, Healthcare, Social Development, Environmental Awareness and Conservation, Sports & Recreation, Youth Development, Women Empowerment and Human Rights.

MUI

MUI (Maldives Underwater Initiative) is a marine conservation initiative from Six Senses Laamu, Maldives, which unites the resort and its 3 NGO partners under one central banner, with the aim to consolidate shared research, science communication, community education and outreach goals. The NGO's are Olive Ridley Project, Manta Trust and Blue Marine Foundation.

Indus Scuba

Indus Scuba is a dive centre based in Karachi, Pakistan. They provide invaluable logistical and equipment support for ghost gear recovery dives in the region and also sponsored the PADI Open Water Certification of 3 ORP team members, adapting the training to Urdu no less.

Conservation Education Society

The Conservation Education Society believes that, through education, empowerment and collaboration, everyone, big or small, can play a role in preserving our natural world. CES was officially established in March 2019 and operates out of the Marine Education Centre in Diani, Kenya. CES regularly organizes educational events which ORP participates in and contributes to, as well as provide administrative and logistical support.

Marine Education Centre

MEC is located within Sands at Nomad and opened its doors in September 2018 as a free, public resource for marine education, and a base for marine organisations working in the area. We collaborate in joint activities related to field work, such as marine biodiversity inventorying, habitat mapping, sea turtle ID, training and guest education. Since 2018 it has also served as ORP's physical headquarters, providing a working space and environment where ORP interact with other organisations and individuals on a daily basis.

Diving The Crab

Widely recognised as the best dive centre in both Diani and in Kenya, Diving the Crab (DTC) is one of the main sponsors of the Marine Education Centre. DTC is also very supportive of marine biodiversity related activities in Diani, including ORP's in-water work. Since ORP first arrived in Kenya, DTC has been instrumental in providing logistical support allowing ORP to conduct in-water surveys and explore Diani's reefs, as well as actively participated in guest education, in-water surveys, ghost nest reporting and removal, and staff training.

D.M. Tours.

D.M.Tours is Diani's leading tour agency, tailoring high quality traveling experiences for the most demanding adventurers. D.M. Tours has become one of ORP's most helpful supporters, by facilitating logistics to conduct in-water surveys during Covid-19 times, and by submitting regular sea turtle sightings along Diani Beach.

Local Ocean Conservation

Local Ocean Conservation (LOC) is a private, not-for-profit organisation committed to the protection of Kenya's marine environment. LOC's flagship programme is Watamu Turtle Watch; started by local residents in 1997 to protect nesting sea turtles, it now sits under LOC along with Diani Turtle Watch, Bycatch Release, Beach Profiling and a specialist Rehabilitation Centre for sick and injured sea turtles. ORP's team of veterinarians regularly advises the team at the Rehabilitation Centre.

Diani Turtle Watch

DTW, a turtle conservation monitoring group, surveys the beach to spot any turtle nesting activities, mortality and turtle stranding cases throughout the day. DTW collaborates with ORP by sharing photos of by-caught turtles and stranded turtles for ID purposes, enriching our database and assisting with information about the threats that affect the turtles feeding off Diani's reef.

Global Online Community

A major part of our strategy to increase awareness about the plight of sea turtles and the deadly consequences of ghost gear is digital/social media presence. We continue to grow our web and social media channels to keep the public engaged with new content and regular updates. Our website now includes an online learning platform with free courses and resources about all things sea turtle and sea turtle conservation. Our sea turtle protocols have been translated into multiple languages, and our Sea Turtle FAQ pages are extremely popular, with thousands of visitors every month.

Our digital community of supporters and followers span the globe, the biggest audiences being in the US, the UK, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Australia, Canada, Singapore, Philippines, and Malaysia, in the age range 18-34. Our website has slightly more male than female visitors, but our social media channels have more female than male followers.

Website:

Our website traffic increased tremendously in the reporting period. On average we had 18,00 visitors per month, up from 2,847 in the same period the previous year (an increase of 532%) and 34,375 page views per month (an increase of 415% on the same period the previous year). Most of the traffic increase was driven by our Sea Turtle FAQ pages, and in particular by our articles about barnacles on sea turtles and sea turtle diets.

Facebook:

Facebook is our main social media channel, but is fast losing ground to Instagram when it comes to reach and engagement. In the reporting period we saw 5.5% growth (+ 1,023) in followers to a total of 19.8K. We also have a lot of interactions with the public through Facebook Messenger. Our largest audience is 25-34 year olds in the US, Maldives, UK, India and Australia.

Instagram:

We have been very active on Instagram this year, and it has become an important channel for interacting with the public. The number of followers has grown from 9,500 to 11,202 during the reporting period (+18%). Our largest audience is 25-35 year olds in the UK, US, Maldives, India and Australia. The reach and engagement on Instagram is outpacing that of Facebook.

Twitter:

Our use of Twitter has been less active than Facebook and Instagram, but we increased our followers to a total of around 1,400.

YouTube:

We do not actively use YouTube other than to host videos for publishing in other channels. Yet our YouTube Channel grew from approximately 900 to 1,100 subscribers and we had 88.3K views in the reporting period (+70% compared to the previous year). The largest audience is males aged 55+ in the US, India, Indonesia, Brazil, and Japan.

Fundraising

ORP is funded mainly through donations and grants.

Private Donations

Private donations are largely generated online, through our symbolic turtle adoption programs, monthly giving program and one-time gifts, and by volunteers at the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre. Our online donations increased by 24% compared to the same period in the previous year, however, our volunteer income was zero due to the volunteer programs being suspended for the whole reporting period.

We would like to thank everyone who adopted and donated for supporting our work during this difficult time - their generosity has been incredible and they are the reason we can continue to do what we do. We had an exceptional year for sea turtle adoptions and a phenomenal response to our Giving Tuesday campaign. Many supporters did birthday fundraisers for us and we received several generous gifts. We would also like to thank our commercial partner, Legend Bracelets, for helping us promote the turtle adoption program - it has made a big difference.

OceanCare

OceanCare is a Swiss charity committed to marine wildlife protection. Since 2011 they have had a Special Consultative Status on marine issues with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. OceanCare provides critical funding for medical equipment at the Marine Turtle Rescue Centre and our lead veterinarian. They also donated extra this year to help with the running of the Rescue Centre during the lockdown. We would like to thank OceanCare for their generous and continued support.

Special Thanks

We would also like to extend a special thank you to our long time supporter, Thorsten Albrecht, and our resort partners Six Senses Laamu and Coco Collection, for their unwavering support. We are truly grateful.

Commercial Participators

In order to diversify our fundraising income, the Charity formed several new partnerships with carefully selected Commercial Participators in the financial year. In addition to our existing relationships, we partnered with:

- Redhan Limited, a trademark of White Cowrie Pvt Ltd, Maldives. The overriding mission of the company is to combat the environmental crisis through products that are good for the people and the planet. ORP receives 5% of the sale of each Biodegradable Turtle in Turquoise Phone case;
- Excelsior Maldives Private Limited, a company that creates, designs and manufacture jewellery and art objects in a responsible way. Excelsior Maldives is the sole owner of the Brand Gonzague Zurstrassenr. ORP receives 20% of the sale of each product;
- Fewcher Ltd, registered in Hong Kong SAR, owns YOKKA, which is a registered UK and USA brand of premium and Eco friendly yoga and wellness mats and accessories. ORP receives 1% per product sold.
- Silver Goat Media, a privately owned media company in the US. ORP received 100% of net proceeds per sale of the book “The Adventures of Olive The Sea Turtle”, estimated at an average of \$2.30, depending on the sales price and shipping costs. The book is co-written by ORP CEO and Founder Dr Martin Stelfox.

Plans & Objectives for 2021

Our plans and objectives for 2021 remain pretty much the same as our plans for 2020, as much could not be achieved due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In line with our charitable objectives, we will continue to protect sea turtles and their habitats through a multi-faceted approach of scientific research, rehabilitation and rescue, and educational and community outreach, and ghost gear recovery and repurposing. We will focus on extending our reach in the Indian Ocean and beyond, by establishing new partnerships which will allow us to expand our research areas. Furthermore, we will aim to open new turtle rehabilitation centres.

Our priority for 2021 will be to keep the charity afloat through the continuous Covid-19 pandemic. We plan to continue initiating new partnerships and collaborations and diversifying our funding to rely less on the tourism industry. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for a diversified income stream and expanding our supporter base. Commercial partnerships with suitable organisations will ensure the sustainability of the charity and we will continue to explore new options.

As soon as we are able to, we will resume our existing partnerships that were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and we will continuously monitor the global pandemic and its impact with our project partners. Once we can restart our regular infield activities, we will continue to identify research gaps in the Indian Ocean in sea turtle conservation and biology and strive to fill these gaps. We also aim to increase our data collection on ghost gear and turtle entanglements in the wider Indian Ocean through collaboration with other organisations and individuals, and by attending regional workshops. We are also working on our 5 year strategy which we are hoping will be published in 2021. This strategy will build on our previous 5 year plan (2015-2020) and will set out a roadmap for us to achieve our goals.

In addition to resuming our ghost gear and sea turtle population analyses in the Maldives, we hope to glean information about what makes habitat suitable for juvenile olive ridleys so that we can determine juvenile foraging sites in the Indian Ocean. This project, led by ORP researcher, Rushan Bin Abdul Rahman, will use satellite tags attached to rescued juvenile olive ridleys. Movement ecology statistics will then be used to determine which points along their track suggest possible foraging behaviour, this can then be correlated with characteristics that are important for sea turtle development (e.g., sea surface temperature, productivity). With this information we will be able to identify what environmental characteristics make habitats suitable for juvenile olive ridley sea turtles in the region. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to Mr. Thorsten Albrecht for providing the resources for this tagging project to start and to our corporate sponsors Legend Bracelets for additional funding.

Following the success of the Turtle Photo ID program in Kenya, established and maintained since 2018, 2020 was mostly a dormant time with only ad hoc turtle reports coming in from citizen scientists. However, in 2021 we have received additional funding to keep this project operational for 6 months into 2021. During these 6 months we have hired a Kenyan marine biologist to lead the project locally, aiming to ensure ongoing efforts to monitor and characterise the sea turtle aggregations at Diani-Chale Management Area using photo ID, and extend our survey areas to Tiwi reef in collaboration with Coconut Beach Lodge and the Tiwi Turtle Police, as well as Kisite-Mpunguti National Marine Park and Reserve with the help of the NGO Reefolution.

Other extensions to our project include a planned partnership with the new conservation group Tiwi Turtle Police and the KWS to lead the efforts to document and assess the causes of sea turtle strandings in the Diani area. If funding is secured, this collaboration will have ORP overseeing a small rescue centre in Coconut Beach Lodge, and work alongside a veterinarian that will conduct necropsies on stranded individuals. Also, ORP is establishing partnerships with Kenyan research institutions such as Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) and Pwani University (Kilifi), to assist in the supervision of Kenyan students recruited from national universities to study threats such as drowning from incidental captures in artisanal fisheries, boat/jet ski strikes, ingestion of microplastics, parasite infestations, and/or internal and external tumours.

In terms of project sustainability, there are plans underway to develop partnerships with at least two resorts to support the project through the Corporate Social Responsibility.

Unfortunately our plans to work with the BBC in October 2020 were cancelled and the documentary has been put on hold until further notice. However we have plans to assist with short documentaries in 2021 and we are excited to report on them next year.

2020 saw the launch of our Ghost Leash project developed by the Abdul Rehman Goth (ARG) community in Pakistan. We will be working towards providing a stable alternative income for the community by marketing our leashes and connecting with wholesalers. Focusing on local issues specific to a community is a more effective way to create lasting change than initiatives taking a more general or wider approach. This philosophy has been a great success in ARG and we intend to expand our fisher community and circular economy projects to other fishing communities in the Pakistan.

Finally we will continue to enrich our online learning platform with new and exciting content through 2021 and beyond and continue to stay at the forefront of online resources in sea turtle biology and conservation.

Financial Review

The Olive Ridley Project is committed to minimising administrative costs and increasing revenue to maximise the reach of its conservation and research programmes.

Income this financial year reached £51,847 and was predominantly achieved through donations and grants.

To achieve our objectives, we rely on senior staff, veterinarians, researchers and project coordinators to work as consultants within the charity. Consultants are solely funded through donations and grants.

We have an end of year deficit of £12,028.

Reserves Policy

The Charity trustees are responsible for ensuring the organisation has enough unrestricted reserves to safeguard the charity's core activities in periods of fluctuating income and operate on a skeleton staff for 3 months. Skeleton staff includes the CEO, senior staff and veterinarian scientists. Due to the age of the charity this was not possible for the first two years of operation, but by the end of the third year, the trustees implemented a reserve plan into the financial planning for the year 2019/20 of operational costs of £10,800

Free reserves as of 31st December 2020 were £39,264

The trustees are satisfied with the current level of free reserves; however, the trustees will aim to increase this level in the financial year 2021, in line with an increase in charitable expenditure. The reserve plan established by the

trustees aims to increase the unrestricted reserves to cover 6 months of operational costs in the next 3 years. Due to the reduction in income as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic and the shorter financial year, the charity has not been able to increase the reserve plan funds in the reporting period.

Restricted reserves are £58,180. These are in relation to grants received from other organisations or private donations for specific projects and purposes.

Statement of Trustee's Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Charity law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable Law). The financial statements are required by law to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the surplus or deficit of the charity for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of the financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Approved by the trustees on 19 April 2021 and signed on their behalf by:



Jannicke C Hallum
Trustee



Matthew Shoulders
Trustee/Treasurer

REGISTERED NUMBER: 1165905

THE OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

PERIOD ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

**SEGRAVE & PARTNERS LLP
TURNPIKE HOUSE
1208/1210 LONDON ROAD
LEIGH ON SEA
ESSEX
SS9 2UA**

THE OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNT PERIOD ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	TOTAL DECEMBER 2020	TOTAL MARCH 2020
<u>RECEIPTS</u>					
Donations	24,684	20,350	-	45,033	145,665
Grants	-	1,616	-	1,616	
Sales	337	-	-	337	-
Volunteers Rescue Centre	4,861	-	-	4,861	45,279
<u>TOTAL RECEIPTS</u>	29,881	21,966	-	51,847	190,944
<u>PAYMENTS</u>					
Expedition Costs	-	-	-	-	13,544
Bank Charges	952	-	-	952	1,447
Wages and Consultants	21,316	4,555	-	25,871	31,859
Research	8,789	11,280	-	20,069	41,899
Veterinary Services	-	12,130	-	12,130	6,263
Expenses	1,118	-	-	1,118	1,503
Equipment	1,171	7	-	1,178	1,393
Travel Costs	500	-	-	500	12,134
Medical Supplies	89	-	-	89	852
Independent Examination	952	-	-	952	-
Insurance	-	-	-	-	1,382
Marketing	973	-	-	973	900
Sundries	-	-	-	-	296
Tee-Shirts	43	-	-	43	3,499
<u>TOTAL PAYMENTS</u>	35,904	27,972	-	63,876	116,971
<u>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) OF RECEIPTS</u>					
<u>OVER PAYMENTS</u>	(6,022)	(6,006)	-	(12,028)	73,973
<u>TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS</u>	(6,300)	6,300	-	-	-
<u>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) AFTER TRANSFERS</u>	(12,322)	294	-	(12,028)	73,973
<u>CASH FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD</u>	51,586	57,886	-	109,472	35,499
<u>CASH FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</u>	39,264	58,180	-	97,444	109,472

THE OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT
STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES
PERIOD ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

	TOTAL	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds
<u>CASH FUNDS</u>				
Current Account	97,444	39,264	58,180	-
<u>TOTAL CASH FUNDS</u>	97,444	39,264	58,180	-

<u>ASSETS RETAINED FOR CHARITY'S OWN USE</u>	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost	Current Value
Rescue Centre	Unrestricted	32,428	20,997

<u>LIABILITIES</u>		Fund to which asset belongs	Amount Due
Independent Examiner Fees	- 2021	Unrestricted	400
			<u>400</u>

Signed by two Trustees on behalf of all the Trustees



.....
Jannicke C Hallum

Date: 6th April 2021



M shoulders (Apr 8, 2021 10:04 GMT+1)

.....
Matthew Shoulders CGMA

Date: 6th April 2021

THE OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS
PERIOD ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Independent examiners report to the trustees of The Olive Ridley Project in respect of the period ended 31st December 2020.

This is a report in respect of an examination carried out on the financial statements set out on pages one and two under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 and in accordance with the directions given by the Charity Commissioners under sub-section 5(b) of that section.

Responsibilities of trustees and independent examiners

As described in the annual report, the charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements. It is our responsibility to carry out procedures designed to enable us to report our opinion.

It is our responsibility to:

- 1) examine account under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011
- 2) follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011
- 3) state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of opinion

Our examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination include a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Opinion

No matter has come to our attention in connection with our examination which gives us reasonable cause not to believe that in any material respect:

- 1) proper accounting records have been kept in accordance with Section 137 of the Charities Act 2011, and;
- 2) the financial statements accord with those records.

Segrave & Partners LLP
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor
Turnpike House
1208/1210 London Road
Leigh on Sea
Essex
SS9 2UA


Carly Spencer (Apr 8, 2021 09:30 GMT+1)

Date: 6th April 2021










Updated December 2020 Accts & IRE

Final Audit Report

2021-04-08

Created:	2021-04-08
By:	Carly Spencer (carly.spencer@segrave.co.uk)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAACnovRmEPA-qg208ujvr2bKDMb-0Wdnq6

"Updated December 2020 Accts & IRE" History

-  Document created by Carly Spencer (carly.spencer@segrave.co.uk)
2021-04-08 - 08:29:26 GMT - IP address: 157.231.47.150
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Signature Date: 2021-04-08 - 08:30:38 GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 157.231.47.150
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-  Document e-signed by Jannicke C Hallum (jannicke@oliveridleyproject.org)
Signature Date: 2021-04-08 - 09:18:46 GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 94.204.213.6
-  Agreement completed.
2021-04-08 - 09:18:46 GMT

THE OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS
PERIOD ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Independent examiners report to the trustees of The Olive Ridley Project in respect of the period ended 31st December 2020.

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It is our responsibility to:

- 1) examine account under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011
- 2) follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011
- 3) state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of opinion

Our examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination include a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Opinion

No matter has come to our attention in connection with our examination which gives us reasonable cause not to believe that in any material respect:

- 1) proper accounting records have been kept in accordance with Section 137 of the Charities Act 2011, and;
- 2) the financial statements accord with those records.

Segrave & Partners LLP
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SS9 2UA


Carly Spencer (Apr 8, 2021 09:30 GMT+1)

Date: 6th April 2021