

Increasing conservation effectiveness of marine turtles through genetic research in Sumatra, Indonesia

**Prepared by Adela Hemelikova
(project ID: 37886-2)**

In the final phase of the project, we have started to conduct mtDNA analyses at the Universitas Syiah Kuala laboratory. So far, samples from three project sites (Pulau Selaut, Pulau Bangkaru, TWP Pieh) have been analysed. As planned, several selected students and staff from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and the Faculty of Marine and Fisheries joined the laboratory work and were trained to perform extraction and PCR. Although there are still some samples to be analysed and all samples to be sequenced, the laboratory work is progressing as planned and all samples are of good quality. Once the sequences have been obtained, the team will start to disseminate the scientific results (publication, submission to the genetic database). The laboratory work is co-ordinated with experts from WWF Australia and the Asia-Pacific Marine Turtle Genetic Working Group, whom we would like to thank.

An important part of the project is also awareness raising, which includes workshops. As part of our collaboration, we organised a two-day workshop on sea turtle conservation together with the Department of Biology (Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Andalas University, Padang). The workshop was held on the 17th and 18th of May at Andalas University in Padang. The format of the workshop was hybrid - 30 participants attended in person and 31 participants attended online. On the first day, there were 10 invited speakers who presented either in person or online. Presentations were divided into three main sections: Sea Turtle Biology and Ecology, Sea Turtle Threats, and Sea Turtle Conservation and Research Techniques. Each section was followed by a 15-20 minute question and answer session. On the second day, a full day field trip was organised to the town of Pariaman where three species of sea turtles (Green, Hawksbill, Olive Ridley) nest on the local beaches. The field trip was open to all face-to-face participants. The aim of the workshop was to familiarise undergraduate and graduate students with sea turtle biology, ecology and threats to turtles in Southeast Asia. It also aimed to introduce sea turtle conservation and research techniques.

The second workshop will be held in Aceh and is currently being prepared in collaboration with Universitas Syiah Kuala. The concept will be similar to the one in Padang.

We are also actively informing the public about the project and sea turtle conservation in Sumatra. In recent months, we have presented our project activities at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Universitas North Sumatera, the 42nd International Sea Turtle Symposium in Thailand and the Faculty of Environmental Sciences of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague.

We would like to thank all the Indonesian institutions and organisations that helped us during the research permit application process and provided us with valuable support, professional and friendly service. We would also like to thank the Rufford Foundation and other partners who support our conservation and research activities. Without this support we would not be able to work for the conservation of sea turtles in Sumatra.