

Marine Biodiversity

Training Course for Sabah Parks



E. Wood MCS

One of the objectives of the current SIDP programme is to enhance knowledge and skills within Sabah Parks in relation to biodiversity and its relevance to Park management. As part of this programme, an introductory one-week marine biodiversity training course was organised for 20 field staff from each of the four marine parks in Sabah. The aim was to increase the participant's working knowledge of reef flora and fauna and enhance their understanding of the way that reefs work and how this information helps guide management.

The programme consisted of 3 classroom days in Semporna with talks and interactive sessions, and two field days in the Tun Sakaran Marine Park. On these trips, the participants got engrossed in activities such as seagrass studies, coral identification and fish surveys.



Mini-projects were also carried out, involving investigations at the Semporna fish market and dry produce market, which sells items such as shells and shark fins.



The tutors were Dr Elizabeth Wood and Dr Frances Dipper from the Marine Conservation Society, with assistance and logistical support provided by the other SIDP staff. In particular, Bobita Ahad Golam provided simultaneous translation and Helen Brunt co-ordinated snorkeling and other field activities.



TAWAN WABINTUN SAKARAN
DARWIN INITIATIVE

SIDP News

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Capacity building to enhance Marine Protected Area effectiveness

Semporna Islands Darwin Project Phase 2

Darwin Initiative post-project funding awarded in 2009 is enabling the Marine Conservation Society to continue to work with Sabah Parks on the Semporna Islands Project for a further 2-year period, up until 2011.

This new project, 'Capacity building to enhance Marine Protected Area effectiveness', is continuing to focus on the Tun Sakaran Marine Park and is concentrating on increasing awareness about the Park and its importance, providing information on biodiversity and developing alternative livelihoods.

Re-introducing endangered giant clams to the reef

The Tun Sakaran Marine Park is a well known hot-spot for giant clam diversity. It is one of the few places in Malaysia where all 7 species of giant clam known from South-East Asia occur naturally in the wild. But only one of these species is really common. This is the small crocus clam, *Tridacna crocea*, which is found embedded in coral rock in shallow water. The other species have been intensively collected for their meat and shells and populations have been badly affected.

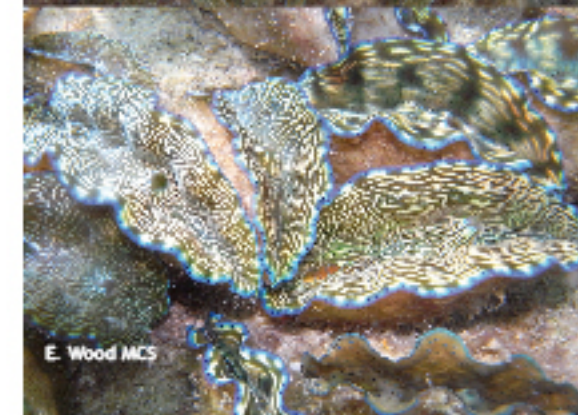
One of SIDP's long term aims has been to breed these endangered clams at the Sabah Parks Hatchery in Boheydulang and re-stock the reefs both inside and outside the Park. Without this helping hand, populations would be extremely unlikely to recover because there are so few mature adults left in the wild.

After a successful spawning in June 2009, thousands of the rare southern giant clams (*Tridacna derasa*), are almost ready to be 'planted out' on the reef. There are also a few baby gigas clams (*Tridacna gigas*), and the hatchery team plan to produce more of this species in the near future.

Mature *Tridacna gigas* clam (right) and juvenile *T. derasa* (far right).



Juvenile giant clams on the shallow reef inside specially made cages to protect them from predators.



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Very many thanks to Scubazoo for supporting SIDP, and for providing office space in KK for the SIDP Sabah coordinator.

SEMPORNA CORAL SEAS ROADSHOW



4,000 children learn to love SHARKS!

Primary school children in the Semporna area have been thrilled by a visit from the unique Semporna Coral Seas Roadshow, and learnt things they never knew about Sabah's amazing marine life. The Roadshow - adapted from the MCS UK 'Cool Seas Roadshow' - ran for 3 weeks in January 2010 and visited 25 primary schools as well as communities in the Tun Sakaran Marine Park, reaching over 4,000 children and around 200 adults.



Life-size models of turtles, dolphin, sharks and humphead wrasse were used to explain how marine species are threatened and what people can do to look after them.



The Semporna CSR engaged, educated and entertained children and raised awareness about marine life and conservation. It helped the audience learn about the Tun Sakaran Marine Park 'on their doorstep' and understand how the Park will bring benefits to local people as well as help protect marine life.



An activity called 'Build Your Own Reef' formed part of the Roadshow and was used to illustrate the diversity of life found on coral reefs and to explain how coral reefs in the Semporna area are being damaged by fish bombing and overfishing.



Other interactive activities encouraged the children to think about the issue of litter and what effect plastic and other waste may have on the marine environment and its wildlife.



Promoting alternative livelihoods

People in the Semporna area have made their living through fishing for many decades, partly because there were few other job opportunities. This heavy pressure has had a significant negative impact on the reefs and marine life, and for the past few years SIDP has been looking into options for switching away from fishing to other, more sustainable livelihoods. Mariculture of marine invertebrates has been identified as a suitable option, and the hatchery team has had its first spawning successes with the donkey's ear abalone. This species is very suitable for community-run sea ranching enterprises and once sufficient numbers of juveniles have been obtained then grow-out trials will begin.

Other alternative livelihood options were discussed during an Alternative Livelihoods Workshop involving the local community on Pulau Selakan (photo above). Guest speakers gave valuable information and insights into community based eco-tourism initiatives running elsewhere in Sabah and the workshop sessions produced lively discussion. Many ideas were aired, and SIDP is following up the request from the community for collaboration and assistance to become engaged in alternative livelihoods schemes - especially 'Homestay' and handicraft projects.

Portable models of the Park help raise awareness

During early preparations for the awareness programme, it became clear that one of the most valuable props would be a realistic 3-dimensional model of the Park. Maps and satellite images have many applications, but local fishermen traditionally use the land and seascape to navigate and so a model showing the shape and contours of the islands and reefs is much more meaningful.

As a way of getting the model made, and at the same time directly involving the public in project activities, we approached one of the local schools to help. To make it more fun and inclusive, the event was turned into a competition. Each competing group was briefed about how to make 'papier mache' models and then supplied with a plywood board, tubes of glue, tins of different coloured paint, paint brushes and a stack of old newspapers. Six excellent models were produced - of which two have been kept by the school for their own display purposes while the others were passed to SIDP for the awareness campaign and for use in the Sabah Parks HQ in Semporna.

