
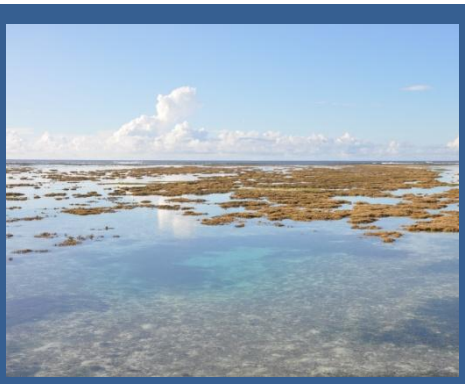


The New Standard

for sustainable business and conservation in Sri Lanka

The official newsletter of the Sri Lanka Business and Biodiversity Platform
(A Member of the Global Partnership on Business and Biodiversity)

Issue 7: July 2014

OCEANS WITH DIVERSITY: OCEANS OF OPPORTUNITY

From the Editors

Greetings to all our members and followers of The New Standard! June and July have been busy and productive months for the SL B&B Platform with the opening up of its membership to the larger business community of Sri Lanka, the appointment of a brand new Advisory Committee to steer our way forward and the growth of the Platform's Secretariat with more staff! July has also marked the completion of two whole years of the Platform in operation and the end of its First Phase of establishment. The Platform is now moving onto its Second Phase of development with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

Our latest issue of The New Standard has moved onto new 'waters' and in this issue, we discuss the marine environment in all its diversity, that provides numerous opportunities for the business community to engage in. Pelagic seabirds link the oceans with land through foraging and flight just as much as the mangrove ecosystems do, acting as the land's entryways to the oceans. We take this opportunity to explore where we may spot these beautifully adapted birds and also look into a unique programme that is working to conserve important mangrove transition zones of the world. Shipwrecks around Sri Lanka have also been identified as important conservation zones for marine flora and fauna. While we take a peek into some such sites in the East coast, we are delighted to highlight Project BLUEPrint of our Patron Member, SriLankan Airlines Ltd., in this issue of The New Standard.

As always, we look forward to your opinions/comments/suggestions, and hope you would enjoy this issue of your newsletter as much as we have, putting it together for you!

Warm regards,
Sri Lanka Business and Biodiversity Platform

Editors:
Shiranee E. Yasaratne
R. M. Harshini de Silva

Expert Q&A

We met up with **Dr. Asha De Vos**, a marine biologist with a strong affinity for marine mammals. Armed with degrees from the Universities of St. Andrews and Oxford and a PhD from the University of Western Australia, Asha is currently a post doctoral scholar at the University of California Santa Cruz. Her research focuses on the blue whale populations around Sri Lanka and forms the first long-term study on this species within the northern Indian Ocean.

1. In your opinion, what is the uniqueness of Sri Lanka's ocean waters?

Sri Lanka is located in the heart of the Indian Ocean, the only ocean basin that is not connected from the North Pole to the south pole. The presence of the Indian subcontinent to the north of this ocean basin results in unequal heating and cooling of the land and sea leading to a monsoonal climate that is unique to the region. The monsoons drive the climate of this region and influence everything from the wind patterns to the circulation patterns. It is also home to the only

non-migratory population of humpback whales that are restricted to the Arabian Sea and of course The Unorthodox Whales, or the blue whales that cruise around feeding, breeding and calving in these waters. It is possibly one of the least studied ocean basins in the world, with so much left to discover.

2. Which marine species do you feel is the most threatened, and hence requires the most urgent attention?

We know very little about the species and diversity within our marine environment, as it is a very understudied part of the world. This is largely due to the fact that the vast majority of the countries bordering the Indian Ocean are developing countries, so the impetus and finances for research of this nature has been missing. That said, there are a number of iconic species within our waters that are under threat that need urgent attention.

The blue whale population that uses our waters year round is under severe threat from the heavy ship traffic traversing through. The southern coast of Sri Lanka is home to one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, which overlaps with areas of prime blue whale habitat. Whale death by ship-strike is therefore not an uncommon sight. Blue whales are an endangered species and their populations are quite low so they definitely are in a precarious position.

Manta rays are also severely threatened in our waters. The Chinese gill raker trade drives the decimation of populations globally and Sri Lanka has one of the largest fisheries. Manta rays around the world are viewed as a valuable resource for tourism. However, in Sri Lanka your best chances of seeing one is on the floor of a market – a sad ending for a majestic animal.

The Gulf of Mannar was once a hotspot for Dugongs in Sri Lanka. They were reported to be both abundant and widely distributed in coastal waters on the north west coast of the island. This was largely due to the presence of extensive sea grass beds, the primary food of this species. Today, their numbers are low and this species is listed as 'vulnerable to extinction' by the IUCN Red List. They face a number of threats across their range including incidental capture in fishing nets, loss of habitat, boat collision and unsustainable hunting practices.

Many species of shark are also threatened in our waters. A recent survey ranked Sri Lanka 14th out of 20 top countries in the world for shark fishing. As you drive south on the Galle road, it is evident why. Not only do you see shark for sale in the various outlets along the roadside but you also see signs advertising 'shark fins for sale'. Again, shark fins are exported to China where they are used to add texture to shark fin soup.

In my mind, Sri Lanka needs to change her mindset. We need to see these resources as something to be proud of and nurtured and look at the long-term sustainability of the populations to ensure long-term benefits to our country. All these species are more valuable to the country alive than dead. This is key.

3. Does Sri Lanka lack a comprehensive marine ecosystem conservation plan?

Sri Lanka has an extensive legislative framework in place that has the potential to protect a number of important species. However, implementation of many of these laws is lacking. Implementation can only happen if there are conservation action plans in place that detail the issues faced by these populations and steps to address them. The lack of such plans in Sri Lanka is definitely a problem and something that must be considered if we are to protect our natural resources in an effective manner.

4. What are the challenges facing marine conservationists like yourself?

There are a number of us marine conservationists who work very hard to protect marine species and their habitats for future generations. Unfortunately, our work is largely unsupported at the national level. We work through small grants garnered from international agencies for the protection of resources that are economically important to the entire island. Unfortunately, without the support of the government it is very hard for our work to translate into something important on the ground. While many of us try hard to create that conversation, Sri Lanka is still not open to accepting that the ocean is a huge resource that needs urgent protection if we are to continue benefiting from it. Additionally, we also face the problem of sustainable funding or the lack thereof to do important research that is necessary to make management decisions. Sri Lanka needs to understand that marine biology and conservation is a growing field with plenty of scope if we are open to it and truly want to protect our natural environment. It is time that Sri Lanka woke up and stopped focusing on short-term gain but had a vision for the future in terms of its natural resources.

5. What role can Sri Lanka's private sector play in terms of overcoming these challenges and providing leadership to a sustainable marine resource?

There is definitely a role for private sector to get involved in terms of strategic partnerships, fund raising, awareness raising, etc. All this should be done in conjunction with local scientists so that they can be supported in the work they do. A lot of marine conservation is dependent on good quality science and therefore it is absolutely imperative that the private sector works in conjunction with, and not separate from, the research projects that are currently occurring on the ground.

Pelagic Seabirds of Kalpitiya: Tales from the field

Watching rare pelagic seabirds off the Kalpitiya Peninsula.

By Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne
Source: Hi Magazine - April 2012

Key Facts

- The sea off the Kalpitiya Peninsula (between E79 38 and E79 35) is one of the best places in Asia to see rarely seen pelagic seabirds.
- This area is in the top ten sites in the world for seeing Sperm Whales.
- The pelagic seabirds and sperm whales are seen in the same strip of sea around the 400m depth isoclines.
- The best time for rarely seen pelagic seabirds is just before the onset of the South-west Monsoon, from the end of March to the first two weeks of April. When the seas become too rough, shore-based watching may yield pelagic seabirds that are blown in under stormy conditions.

I gestured with my hand and Neil Wasantha swung round the boat to give chase. The scream of the outboard engine at full throttle was deafening and waves, that had been gentle until now, were now hitting the boat like hammers. I spied a bird a short distance away which had broken away from a mixed flock; I suspected it was a Persian Shearwater. I wanted a record shot to demonstrate that it had been recorded for a second successive year off Kalpitiya. My suspicion is that it is a regular pelagic off Kalpitiya at this time of year but its absence in ornithological records is due to a lack of trained observers on these seas at the right time. Shearwaters fly gracefully, skimming the waves, lending the impression of no great effort to fly and barely making any speed. In reality, they are travelling at over 30 kilometres per hour. It was getting away, comfortably outpacing us. To the relief of my wife Nirma and daughters Maya and Amali, I called off the bone rattling chase. The Shearwater probably did not even notice our efforts to catch up. As I had hoped, there were more of them and I was able to photograph the species for a second successive year.

For the avoidance of doubt, I should clarify something for my readers. I may ask a boatman to give a short high speed parallel chase to a seabird already flying at great speed, to take a record shot if it is an important ornithological record. But I avoid approaching seabirds resting on the water at speed or in a way that it would cause stress and force them to break their rest. Especially with marine mammals, any boatmen I travel with receive strict instructions not to bear down on them and to stay at a distance which is comfortable to the animals. It is always better to let the animals approach you. I find that both mammals and seabirds will drift in towards a boat if you keep a distance.

In May 2010, based on field work between March and April 2010 and access to data hitherto not in the public domain, I published articles in the Hi Magazine and Sunday Times. In them, I gave the first credible and accurate public exposition that the continental shelf is close to and runs parallel to the Kalpitiya Peninsula. I pointed out that it will take the 16 footer boats equipped with 25 horsepower outboard engines less than 15 minutes to reach the Sperm Whale line, the 300 to 400m depth isoclines along which Sperm Whales are seen feeding and travelling on a North-South orientation. I had written that to see and photograph rare seabirds and whales, one should run a boat along the lines of longitude between East 079 38 and East 079 35. Between these two lines is a distance of 3 nautical miles (38-35 = 3). This is just under 6 kilometres as 1 nautical mile is 1.852km.

This strip I have referred to above is very rich in marine life due to a

Member Focus: SriLankan Airlines' Project BLUEprint with Whale and Dolphin Conservation, UK

SriLankan Airlines has launched Project BLUEprint in partnership with Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), UK. The Airline and wildlife charity is working together to jointly develop a community-based responsible whale and dolphin watching industry off the coast of Sri Lanka and encourage responsible behavior amongst local boat tour operators.

The Airline will raise money for the charity through the on-board sale of plush whales, with all profits going to WDC. The partnership will engage local stakeholders and wildlife tourism industries which will help to fund and promote project BLUEprint.

Sri Lanka is one of the best countries in the world in which to enjoy whale watching, with a variety of blue whales, sperm whales and 25 other cetacean species to be seen. However, these beautiful creatures are increasingly threatened and endangered by a combination of irresponsible, unregulated whale watching and ship strikes.

To combat this, project BLUEprint aims to raise awareness, provide training and scientific support to the burgeoning industry so that whales can continue to inhabit the waters and a responsible industry can benefit local people.

The initial focus of the project is Mirissa, in the South-west of the island, currently the most popular whale watching destination in Sri Lanka. Once established, responsible whale watching will be rolled into two less-developed whale watching sites, Trincomalee in the North-east and Kalpitiya in the North-west, to safeguard the industry before there is any rapid increase of untrained vessel operators or a lack of community leadership which can manage the growing whale watching industry as a result of an expected influx of tourists wanting to see the whales.

combination of factors. The sea floor dips sharply here; as with many eco-systems, the 'edge effect' results in species richness. But there is more to it. This area where shallow water meets deep water results in a churning of nutrients from the depths below which rise to the top creating a food chain. The area off the Kalpitiya Peninsula may also benefit from the nutrients discharged into the sea from the Puttalam Lagoon, one of the largest lagoons in the island. It may also benefit from nutrients brought in from the Indian mainland by currents. There are clearly vast amounts of organic nutrients along this coastline which support a large food chain. The closeness of the deep water to the shore also means deep water species are more likely to be seen; this includes the Spinner Dolphins which come inshore of the reef to sleep during the day.

In April 2011, once again I found this zone to be the right strike zone for whales and pelagics. As I had hoped, I once again managed to see and get very close to rarely seen pelagic birds. I came away with some of the best photographs taken of rare pelagics in Sri Lankan waters. I am sure that in the future, others who read my articles and follow the E 79 35 to E 79 38 zone at sea will also come away with images which are just as good if not better.

Seabirds

Pomarine Skua

Pomarine Skuas are seen as the South-west Monsoon approaches. On sailings from Mirissa with Dr. Charles Anderson, I have seen as many as twenty in a flock. However, single individuals are more likely to be seen. One of such birds observed was a juvenile which was floating on a block of rigifoam. I looked on as it interacted with two adults, possibly its parents; this was the closest I have ever gotten to a Pomarine Skua. Quite often from both Mirissa and Kalpitiya, I have found floating debris to have seabirds resting on them. If a series of floating buoys are placed on the E 79 38 line, it would make it very easy to observe scarce pelagics as they would use the buoys to rest.

Brown Noddy

A friend of mine who had been studying seabirds told me that after several years he had only managed a distant view of a Noddy. From Mirissa, I have had a few sightings of Noddies but because flocks of Terns move much faster than the larger whale watching boats, I have never been able to get a good photograph. In contrast, in Kalpitiya, I have found them floating on the water or perched on debris. In April 2010, Riaz Cader and I even had a Lesser Noddy attempting to land on the canopy of our boat. On 21st April 2011, I came across sea bird flocks with Bridled Terns and Little Terns having a few Brown Noddies amongst them. At one time, I photographed three Brown Noddies floating together on the water. I also came across singles floating on the water and another on a piece of rigifoam.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater

Shearwaters are symbolic of the open oceans. They skim the surface of the water with a grace which gives no hint at the speed at which they are travelling. They fly at over 30kmph and I have found it hard to keep pace with them even with the powerful 16 footer speed boats operated by Barr Reef Resort (a.k.a. Alankuda) and Dolphin Beach. The Shearwaters arrive just ahead of the South-west Monsoon. Unless bad weather forces them close to shore, they are hardly ever seen by land based birdwatchers. In April 2011, I came across a few mixed flocks of seabirds which held one or more dark Shearwaters. They seemed to be mainly Wedge-tailed Shearwaters although it is possible I may have missed a Flesh-footed Shearwater with my focus on photographing rather than identifying the birds.

Persian Shearwater

On two occasions in April 2011, I came across Persian Shearwaters in mixed flocks where there seemed to be only one or two at the most. In contrast, in April 2010 I found one flock which held 35 Persian Shearwaters. My photographs taken in April 2010 were probably the first high quality photographs taken of them in Sri Lankan waters as these birds have been rarely seen. But I am sure when more and more birdwatchers hire boats to run North-South transects between the E 79 35 and E 79 38 lines of longitude, many hitherto scarcely seen pelagics will be seen and photographed.

Other Seabirds

In the accounts above, I have focussed on rarely seen seabirds that I encountered on one trip in April 2011. However many other seabirds can be seen off the Kalpitiya Peninsula. Hunting along the coastlines are Gull-billed Terns. Lesser Crested and Large Crested Terns are often seen in mixed tern flocks which have Gull-billed as well as Little Terns and less frequently Common Terns. I often see flocks of Little Terns in the food rich areas between E 79 35 and E 79 38. On the beach you may see Whiskered and White-winged Black Terns. Both species are migrant marsh terns and are rarely seen over the sea. However, White-winged Black Terns form flocks which feed at sea off Mirissa at the tail end of the migration. There are a few records of exhausted Sooty Terns landing on the beach. I photographed one on 20th May 2010 at Kandakuliya. Bridled Terns are pelagic birds seasonally seen in good numbers. Unless there is bad weather, they rarely venture close to shore. The area between E 79 35 and E 79 38 also seems to be one of the best places for seeing Lesser and Brown Noddies, two more species of dark terns. Most observers have found them hard to find whereas I have even had a Lesser Noddy attempting to land on my boat.

A Long-tailed Skua was photographed by me and Riaz Cader on 11th April 2010. This could in time be confirmed as the

second record of this species in Sri Lanka. In April 2010 I also had a flock of over 35 Persian Shearwaters. The Persian Shearwaters I recorded on this trip may be the third record from Sri Lanka although this is yet to be confirmed. Wedge-tailed and Flesh-footed Shearwaters also join some of the mixed species seabird feeding flocks. I have had glimpses of Petrels but not been able to identify them. On 15th January 2012, Riaz Cader who has accompanied me on my research trips off Kalpitiya, went out to sea and photographed a rarely recorded Brown Booby. This adds further confirmation to my claim that one of the easiest places in Asia in which to see rare pelagic seabirds are the seas off the Kalpitiya Peninsula.

Sperm Whales and Other Marine Mammals

The seas off Kalpitiya Peninsula are probably amongst the top ten locations in the world for seeing Sperm Whales. Kalpitiya has an advantage that the pelagic seabirds and Sperm Whales are both seen in the same location. This is in a band which is approximately the E 79 35 to E 79 38. In sites such as Kaikoura off New Zealand, bird watchers will often not see Sperm Whales as whale watching is carried out further off shore in deeper water. In Kalpitiya, the birds and the whales are both seen roughly following a North-south axis along the 400m depth isocline which is rich in food. I have seen a Blue Whale only once off Kalpitiya. At present it is not clear as to why Blue Whales are rarely seen off Kalpitiya. Spinner Dolphins are the most common cetacean off the peninsula; they are usually seen inshore of the reef on the Dolphin Line (closer to shore than the Sperm Whale Line) where they are resting during the day. In the early days, the few scattered observations of whales came from people dolphin watching who had unwittingly crossed over the reef to the Sperm Whale Line. Other cetaceans seen off the Kalpitiya Peninsula include Bryde's Whale, Minke Whale, Dwarf Sperm Whale, Melon-headed Whale, Orca, Short-finned Pilot Whale, Risso's Dolphin, Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin, Bottlenose Dolphin and Pantropical Spotted Dolphin. This list is based on my observations and that of others, which have either been published or where I have had photographs made available to me. More species will be recorded as more skilled observers start watching cetaceans off Kalpitiya. This area also seems to be the best site in Sri Lanka for Orca with at least one or two records each year. It would be interesting to photo ID these Orcas to establish whether it is the same individual or individuals which are visiting.

Logistics

In this article, I have written short accounts of some of these rarely seen seabirds. My field research on this trip was supported by Dallas Martenstyn and his co-investors at Kalpitiya. As usual, I headed out to sea with three tanks of fuel and two GPS units. During my field work in April 2011, with my family, I occupied a tented room at Dolphin Beach (www.dolphinbeach.lk). Jetwing Eco holidays (www.jetwingeco.com) provided transport with naturalist chauffeur guide Lakshman Senanayake who was expert at picking out rare seabirds floating on the water. Going out to sea is expensive as even 14 footer boats are expensive to run. On my trips I may run a boat for 7 hours a day and my hosts incur a significant expense in fuel for the boats. My efforts to publicise whale watching and pelagic bird watching off Kalpitiya would not have been possible without the support of Dolphin Beach and on my earlier trips the support of Bar Reef Resort (www.barreefresort.com, previously Alankuda Beach).

Support from others include Tara Wikramanayake who assists with copy editing of many of my articles which arise from my marine and other trips. Georgina Gemmell copy edited the first draft of this article followed by Tara.

Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching

The same common sense rules apply to almost all animals if you wish to enjoy an extended and possibly close sighting. Never bear down rapidly on any animal at any angle. Even an animal used to people and vehicles will take fright. Don't approach marine mammals head on or from behind. Dolphins may choose to bow ride but are unlikely to do so if you chase them.

Don't chase whales from behind for a rear view 'tail shot'. You are not so special for a boat crew to make an exception for bad behaviour. It's best to approach whales and dolphins in parallel and keeping at a distance comfortable to them (around 100m or more). If you cut the engine off and observe them, whales may at times swim up to the boat for a closer look. Many animals are curious and will approach you. They may then dive away from you giving the rear view 'tail shot' popular in books. Whales and dolphins in Sri Lanka's three key whale watching sites are very used to fishing boats and ships. The author has observed Blue Whales surfacing a few meters away from a fishing boat and had Sperm Whales swimming up to his boat. The decision to get close has to be theirs. Do not follow them for an extended period as they are not used to being followed. Furthermore, boat noise will stress them as they rely on sensitive hearing for communication and with some species for hunting.

Upcoming Events

August 6 - 8: GRI 4 Reporting – Process of Materiality Determination and Stakeholder Engagement
For more details email info@ungcnc.com

August 22: ISO 14067 – Carbon Footprint of Products for the Corporate Sector of Sri Lanka
For more details email nilan@chamber.lk

September 10: SL B&B Platform's 1st Annual Member Networking Forum and Workshop
For more details email businessandbiodiversity@chamber.lk

September 29 – October 17: 12th Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity
For more details log onto http://www.cbdcop12.kr/eng

November 24 – 27: World Biodiversity Congress 2014
For more details log onto www.wbc2014.in

Dilmah Conservation: Conserving Sri Lanka's Vibrant Shipwreck Habitats

The island of Sri Lanka is home to an astounding variety of marine life. While coastal ecosystems are typically associated with coral reefs, shipwrecks which have been unintentionally scattered in the sea, also transform into unique habitats for many species of ocean flora and fauna that find refuge in the various nooks and crevices.

Wreck sites also lend distinctive historical significance to these locations, resulting in an extraordinary confluence of socio-cultural and natural heritage with noteworthy archaeological and educational value. Due to the combination of organic and inorganic materials that make up shipwreck habitats and the corrosive salts in the ocean environment, the conservation of these sites require particular attention.

Dilmah Conservation initiated its foray into marine conservation with the documentation of the Kayankerni Reef in the East Coast of Sri Lanka, which is host to a diverse array of corals and other vibrant plant and animal life. Located off Kalkudah in the Batticaloa District, Kayankerni is home to a high diversity and abundance of marine life including 207 species of fish observed up to date. However, having been a popular source for ornamental aquarium industry collectors for many years, the rapidly diminishing number of anemones, clownfish, butterflyfish, lionfish, batfish, morays, hawkfish and damsels highlight the urgent need for remedial measures to protect Kayankerni. Dilmah Conservation is seeking to have this location declared as a protected site so that the reef will be able to thrive once more.

Kayankerni is also of particular importance due to the historic shipwreck sites located adjacent to the reef. The British Sergeant, a merchant vessel that sank after coming under fire when it altered its course to help a carrier in 1942, and SS Lady McCallum, a cargo ship which ran aground in 1926, are located off the Kayankerni Reef. Dilmah Conservation is in the process of assessing these sites towards protecting the distinct and diverse ecosystems they host.

Photos on right: Courtesy of Dilmah Conservation

2nd Advisory Committee of the Sri Lanka Business and Biodiversity Platform

The SL B&B Platform recently appointed its 2nd Advisory Committee for its new term of operation. The overall mandate of the Platform is to encourage dialogue amongst stakeholders, and to help raise awareness on biodiversity and sustainability issues amongst the Sri Lankan business community. The Platform will focus on enhancing information flow, mainstreaming biodiversity and raising awareness, strengthening SMEs as well as public-private partnerships, enhancing outreach to business and creating a solutions marketplace, as the key areas in its second phase of development.

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Dr. Ananda Mallawatantri
Country Representative
IUCN

Mr. Sumal Perera
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Access Group

Mr. Samantha Ranatunga
Vice Chairman
Ceylon Chamber of Commerce

Where the Oceans Begin - Mangroves for the Future (MFF)

Contributed by Ms. Kumudini Ekaratna - Senior Programme Officer, IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), Sri Lanka

MFF is a unique partner-led initiative promoting investment in conservation of coastal ecosystems through integrated approaches. The thinking behind MFF was that "healthy coastal ecosystems provides for a more prosperous and secure future for all coastal communities". MFF was launched in Phuket, Thailand in December 2006 by President Clinton and is presently at its third stage (2014 to 2017).

MFF promotes knowledge management and empowerment of communities and agencies to work together to addresses the 'drivers' of coastal ecosystem degradation and promote best practices for sustainable coastal development. MFF priorities include, among others: climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, promotion of ecosystem health, development of sustainable livelihoods, and active engagement of the private sector in developing sustainable business practices.

Co-chaired by IUCN and UNDP, MFF provides a platform for collaboration among many agencies, sectors and countries. MFF is presently being implemented in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Pakistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Each country manages its own MFF programme through a National Coordinating Body/National Steering Committee (NSC) which includes representation from government, NGOs and the private sector. In Sri Lanka the NSC is chaired by the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energy and in this committee the private sector is represented by the Sri Lanka Hoteliers' Association.

MFF has three types of grant facilities; small, medium and regional grants to support initiatives that provide practical, hands-on demonstrations of effective coastal management. In addition, the MFF initiative funds studies to better understand the ecosystems and issues; knowledge products that are helpful in improving knowledge on natural processes in the coastal areas, identifying best practices and support advocacy forums to promote integrated coastal ecosystem management.

MFF promotes private sector engagement. In Sri Lanka, through a small grant awarded to a NGO, MFF generated alternative livelihoods, easing pressure on the Puttalam Lagoon by encouraging homesteads in the Kalpitiya area to grow Aloe vera. Supplementing family income, over 1,000kg of Aloe vera per month is now sold to the Janet Group of Companies to be used in spa preparations. Another small grant, awarded to Arifa Enterprise, a SME in Batticaloa, helped to establish two green belts of 2,000m^2 each as wind barriers in Kattankudy helping to increase coastal resilience.

In the Kokkilai lagoon, through reviving the usage of traditional crab traps which minimize damage to crab claws, MFF supports lagoon fishermen to sell their daily catch to a private export company.

In terms of capacity building, MFF conducted a workshop titled 'Barrier-built Estuaries and Lagoons and Implications from Tourism Development in Sri Lanka' coupled with a field visit to the Negombo Lagoon especially for coastal hoteliers. MFF is currently preparing a documentary (infotainment) and a special feature for the Sri Lankan Airlines in-flight magazine, highlighting the importance of marine ecosystems and the threats they face in the promotion of ecotourism in Sri Lanka.

MFF is funded by SIDA, NORAD and Danida.

A lagoon fisherman with his day's catch

A home-based aloe vera plantation

Sri Lanka Business and Biodiversity Platform's

FIRST ANNUAL MEMBER NETWORKING FORUM AND WORKSHOP 2014

10th September 2014, The Kingsbury Hotel

Registrations now open!

Call 011.558.8833. or 077.762.3991 or email businessandbiodiversity@chamber.lk for more details.

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