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FW: Marine Conservation in Mozambique-January

CITES shark and ray workshop in Maputo, Environmentalists welcome the new EU Fisheries reform policy and Researcher: Daan Van Duinkerken

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EYES ON THE HORIZON

Marine Conservation in Mozambique

Welcome to the first 2013 edition of Marine Conservation in Mozambique. If you are not already on our mailing list please subscribe [here](#). You can also help by forwarding this newsletter to anyone who might be interested in helping us with the conservation of marine life in Mozambique. If you have any stories you'd like featured in February's newsletter then please [email us!](#)



CITES Shark and Ray Workshop in Maputo

Early in December a workshop was held in Maputo for representatives from a number of South and East African countries and NGO's to discuss the upcoming Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild

Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting in Bangkok. The workshop had a specific focus on sharks and rays and proposals for the two species of manta ray, oceanic whitetip sharks, porbeagle sharks, freshwater sawfish and 3 species of hammerhead sharks were talked over by the attendees. During the CITES meeting in March representatives from countries around the world will vote on whether the proposals are passed, and, if passed, inclusion of the species on one of the appendices will put trade controls or restrictions in place. It became evident during the workshop that the status of shark and ray fisheries in Mozambique is largely unknown as the current fisheries data does not distinguish between different species of sharks and rays, rendering it difficult to assess how much biomass of each species is being landed and whether stocks of certain species are in decline. However, we do know that sightings of reef manta rays in Mozambique have fallen by 86% during an eight year study period, and we hope the addition of both manta ray species and the other elasmobranch species to the CITES appendices will be a step towards helping to conserve the animals that populate our coastline.



A Meeting of Minds in Barra

Last month a meeting took place between representatives from fishing communities in Tofo, Barra and Chicuque, fisheries, maritime & police authorities, the tourism industry and diving operators regarding the illegal use of nets on reefs in the aforementioned areas. The nets were said to be indiscriminately catching species and damaging the reefs leading to bycatch and a decline in local fish stocks. Both the fishermen and the tourist operators seemed keen for a change, with many of the fishermen commenting on how their catch size is dwindling. A lively and interesting debate ensued and the outcome was that all parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding not to trawl or place nets on the reefs, but to instead draw nets away from the reefs. Line fishing and spear fishing were not discussed. There was a real sense of collaboration between those present, which we hope will aid the creation of a more sustainable future. In a follow up conversation with Barra Dive School, EOTH was told that there has been a clear decrease in the sightings of illegal fishing in the area since the meeting, although this is also a time of year when Maritime are patrolling the beach, so we will continue to monitor whether the sightings of illegal fishing on the reefs increase after the holiday period is over.



Researcher's Corner: Daan Van Duinkerken

The coastline of southern Mozambique is a world hot spot for reef manta rays (*Manta alfredi*), with many aggregation sites identified along a 150-200 km stretch of coast in the Inhambane province, but unfortunately sightings of these animals has declined by 86% over the last eight years. Considering the burgeoning ecotourism industry to dive with manta rays and unregulated harvesting of these animals in Mozambique, it is imperative to gain more knowledge on their home range, movement patterns and environmental predictors and critical habitats to better protect them.

Daan van Duinkerken, a PhD candidate at the Marine Megafauna Foundation, has designed a project to more accurately develop and implement management strategies for the conservation of this enigmatic species of ray by studying how *M. alfredi* use their habitat. Using several methods including photo-identification, and acoustic and satellite telemetry, Daan is

assessing several aspects of the rays habitat such as the size of their home range, residency and movement patterns and possible areas of high site fidelity in order to identify critical habitats, important corridors and the overall area this population occupies. Ultimately, by combining this information with the knowledge of both fisheries along the southern coast of Mozambique and areas that are heavily used by tourism, Daan aims to identify priority areas for conservation.

If you would like further information on Daan's work you can contact him on Daniel@marinemegafauna.org.



Environmentalists Welcome the EU Fisheries Policy Reform

The end of 2012 saw the European Parliament's fisheries committee endorsing a reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which could help regenerate fish stocks and put an end to discards – news which was met with enthusiasm by a number of environmental NGOs including ClientEarth, Greenpeace, WWF, the Pew Foundation and OCEAN 2012.

According to several sources, about two thirds of fish stocks in the continent's waters are currently overexploited, which means they are exploited above levels deemed safe by scientists. Meanwhile, around a million tonnes of edible fish are thrown back overboard dead every year – known as 'discards' or 'bycatch' – thanks to the combined effect of fishing quotas, fishermen's attempts to maximise profits by focusing on lucrative species, and the use of non-selective fishing gears.

The plan approved by European MPs on the fisheries committee aims to tackle all three issues. It sets an objective to bring fish stocks back to sustainable levels by 2020, with an intermediate goal to reduce exploitation by 2015. It also recognises the excessive fishing capacity of the European fleet in relation to the state of stocks, and puts forward measures to cut it down. Furthermore, MEPs backed a timetable for the reduction of discards with different deadlines for each species. We hope to see more of this kind of legislation across the globe in 2013!

SOURCE: [Greenpeace](#)

After reading this article consider brushing up on "[13 wrong things about sharks that conservation advocates should stop saying in 2013 \(and what they should say instead\)](#)"



[Advocates Seek Endangered Species Act Listing for the Ocean's "Gentle Giants"](#)

WildEarth Guardians submitted a petition to the National Marine Fisheries Service this week seeking to list the whale shark

(*Rhincodon typus*) as “threatened” or “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). “Encounters with whale sharks are prized by divers because of their incredible beauty and size and their docile nature,” said Taylor Jones, Endangered Species Advocate for WildEarth Guardians. “We are driving the largest, and perhaps the gentlest, fish in the ocean to extinction, and that is a tragedy.” The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists the whale shark species as “vulnerable” on its Red List, but the designation offers no regulatory protection. Listing species under the Endangered Species Act has proven an effective safety net for imperiled species: more than 99 percent of plants and animals listed under the Act persist today. The law is especially important as a bulwark against the current extinction crisis; plants and animals are disappearing at a rate much higher than the natural rate of extinction due to human activities. Scientists estimate that 227 species would have gone extinct if not for ESA listing. Listing species with a global distribution can both protect the species domestically, and help focus U.S. resources toward enforcement of international regulation and recovery of the species.

SOURCE: [WildEarth Guardians](#)



Footage from a rooftop in Hong Kong where around 18,000 shark fins were found drying out, away from public view and ahead of an anticipated surge in demand over Lunar New Year in February this year. Trade in shark fins is not regulated in Hong Kong except for three species - basking shark, great white shark and whale shark - where the trade is restricted under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

SOURCE: [The Guardian](#)

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Eyes on the Horizon: Pomene

In December EOTH received reports of an illegal large-scale commercial fishing operation in Pomene. A number of operators were apparently filling five large deep freezers with fish, which were being powered by a huge diesel generator in an area known as camp 3 or 4, while at a different camp individuals were apparently targeting sharks for their fins.

According to people from the area this once pristine and unique but sensitive ecosystem of mangroves and coastal dune forest, is being destroyed by indiscriminate fishing practices by locals and visitors alike, employing gill nets, long lines, row boats, trawlers and any other means. People from the area say that the once beautiful Pomene beach and indigenous dune forest suffers noise, smoke and smell pollution from shark carcasses, scraps from an impromptu fish processing plant, diesel generators for batteries of deep freezers and all forms of plastic, metal and other debris. Eyes on the Horizon are going to investigate this matter and will keep you posted with further developments.

Eyes on the Horizon: Tofo

The start of the new year saw a local upwelling along the Tofo coastline, bringing an abundance of life to the area. Local divers were treated to multiple sightings of manta rays, marlins, tiger sharks and whale sharks in the area.

Meanwhile, several lodges in the area have sponsored a fishing contest amongst local fishermen who have been seen with catches of large yellowfin tuna, barracudas and marlin all caught by line from their rowing boats.

Sadly earlier in December, a sharkray was seen dragged up onto Tofo beach and cut up for both meat and fins, while more recently a group of researchers found a guitarfish caught in a ghost net, which they were fortunately able to release.

Eyes on the Horizon: Ponta D'Ouro

Dolphin-Care Africa has launched a petition "Save the Dolphins of Ponta", which is aimed at creating awareness within government regarding the plight of the dolphins of Ponta. It request's that the Government of Mozambique support the management plan set out for the Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve in 2009 and enforce the components of the plan more effectively, including taking appropriate action against those who violate rules stipulated in the plan in order to help protect resident dolphin populations in the area. We would encourage our subscribers to [sign the petition](#) and help DCA push their objectives

forward with the Government.

Ponta do Ouro was extremely busy over the new year holiday period, and with the influx of people visiting the coastal town DolphinCare Africa had to employ additional beach cleaners to remove the bottles and rubbish that was discarded along the coastline. Sightings of dolphins continued throughout the month although there were a lot of boats working within the animals home range. There was a drop in jet ski activity over the period and less recreational harassment of the animals was observed. The DolphinCare code of conduct was posted within the area and DolphinCare Africa feel that this helped curb unregulated interactions with the dolphins in the area.

Eyes on the Horizon: Northern Mozambique

We would like to encourage more Eyes on the Horizon in the northern provinces Sofala, Zambezia, Nampula and Cabo Delgado so we can continue to monitor and spread information about what is happening along the entire Mozambican coastline. Please do pass on information from these areas to us [here](#) or forward this newsletter to those who may like to contribute to our work in the future.



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