

Countries Coming Together

While the MTPAN focuses on the population of green turtles within the network, all turtle species can be covered in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape initiative, especially under the six-country CTI-CFF cooperation, which has identified marine turtles among the priority threatened species for conservation.

Even separate from the envisioned MTPAN, previous agreements have already brought the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape countries together for the protection of wildlife, and of marine turtles in particular. The Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia are all parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES). They have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on ASEAN Sea Turtle Conservation and Protection with other ASEAN Ministers on



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Philippine Inputs to the Transboundary Marine Turtle Protected Area Network in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape, A Priority Seascape in the Coral Triangle Initiative Regional Plan of Action

A Sea of Safe Havens

Establishing the Marine Turtle Protected Area Network in the Philippines



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olive ridley
(Lepidochelys olivacea)
Vulnerable, IUCN



Size
Adults: length 60-70 cm
Mass: up to 70 kg
Hatchlings: length ± 25 mm
Mass 15-20 g

Reproduction

Reproduce every 1-3 years

Lay 1-3 clutches of eggs/season

Lay 90-130 eggs per clutch

Eggs weigh ± 30 g

Incubation period ± 60 days

20-30 years to reach sexual maturity

loggerhead turtle
(Caretta caretta)
Vulnerable, IUCN



Size
Adults: length 70-100 cm
Mass: up to 200 kg
Hatchlings: length ± 25 mm
Mass 15-20 g

Reproduction

Reproduce every 2-4 years

Lay 2-5 clutches of eggs/season

Lay 80-120 eggs per clutch

Eggs weigh ± 40-50 grams

Incubation period ± 60 days

20-40 years to reach sexual maturity

green turtle
(Chelonia mydas)
Endangered, IUCN



Size
Adults: length 80-120 cm
Mass: up to 300 kg
Hatchlings: length 30-40 mm
Mass approximately 5 g

Reproduction

Reproduce every 2-4 years

Lay 2-5 clutches of eggs/season

Lay 80-120 eggs per clutch

Eggs weigh ± 30-50 g

Incubation period ± 60 days

20-40 years to reach sexual maturity

hawksbill
(Eretmochelys imbricata)
Critically Endangered, IUCN



Size
Adults: length 75-90 cm
Mass: up to 150 kg
Hatchlings: length ± 30 mm
Mass 40-50 g

Reproduction

Reproduce every 2-4 years

Lay 2-5 clutches of eggs/season

Lay 120-200 eggs/clutch

Eggs weigh ± 25-30 g

Incubation period ± 60 days

20-40 years to reach sexual maturity

leatherback turtle
(Dermochelys coriacea)
Critically Endangered, IUCN



Size
Adults: length 140-160 cm
Mass: 300-1000 kg
Hatchling: length ± 50 mm
Mass 40-50 g

Reproduction

Reproduce every 2-4 years

Lay 4-7 clutches of eggs/season

Lay 50-90 eggs/clutch

Eggs weigh ± 80 g

Incubation period ± 60 days long

Size
Adults: length 60-70 cm
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Turtles are among the most charismatic of sea creatures, ancient mariners who live amidst coral reefs and seagrass beds as true indicators of the health of the oceans. Populations of marine turtles worldwide are subjected to various threats, from the continuing harvest of animals and eggs for food and trade, to pollution, impacts of climate change, and the relentless destruction of different critical habitats they rely on for their life's requirements.

Five of the seven existing species of marine turtles are found in the Philippines.

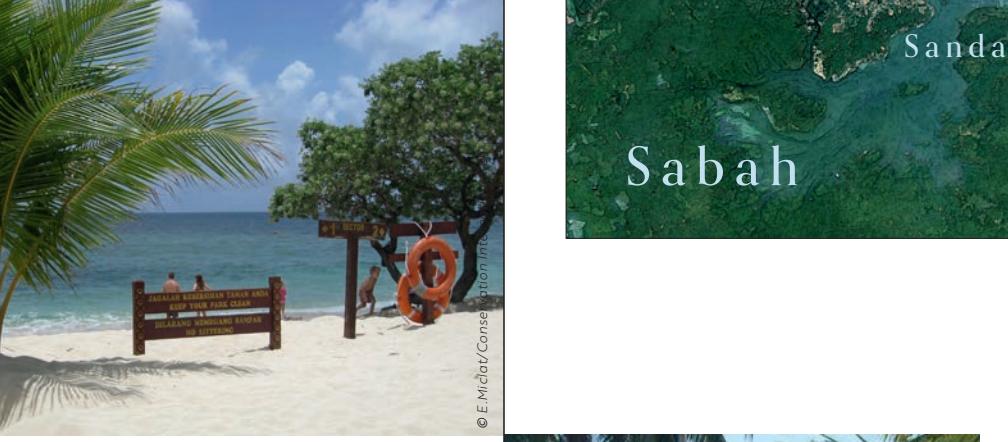
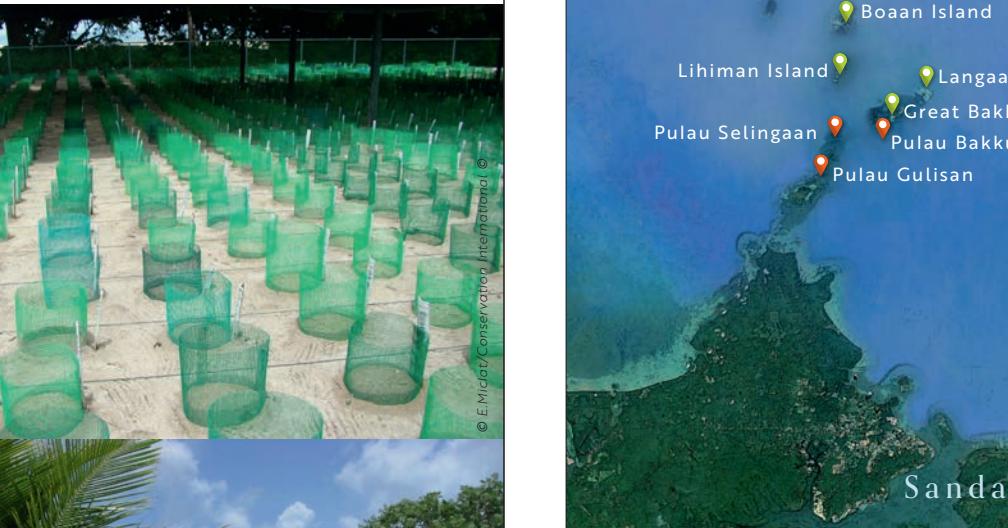
Connect to Protect

With the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion (SSME) scientifically established as a major nesting site and habitat for green turtles under the SSME Program of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (2006-2016), the idea of an expansive Marine Turtle Protected Area Network (MTPAN) has come to the fore. The establishment of networks of protection and management has become a particularly relevant conservation strategy for large areas such as seascapes. Such a network naturally crosses political and geographical borders, necessitating a transboundary approach to conservation and management.

A pioneering network

The Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area (TIHPA) is an example of existing bilateral cooperation for a transboundary approach. Comprised of three islands of the Turtle Islands Park of Sabah and six islands of the Turtle Islands Wildlife Sanctuary of Tawi-Tawi Province, it was the first transfrontier protected area for marine turtles in the world, specifically established to protect green and hawksbill turtles in 1996 with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Governments of Malaysia and the Philippines. The TIHPA is globally important because it harbors one of the few remaining major nesting populations of green turtles in the world.

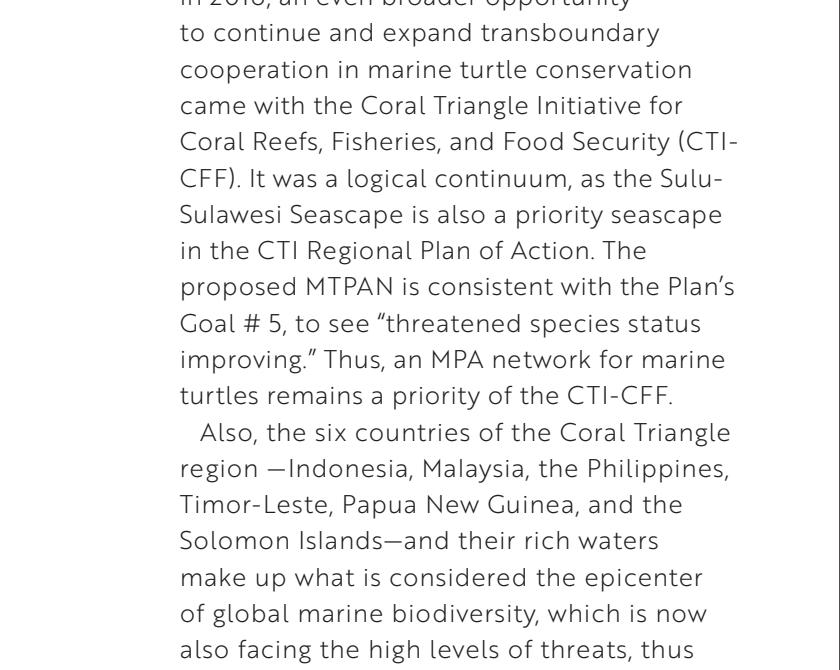
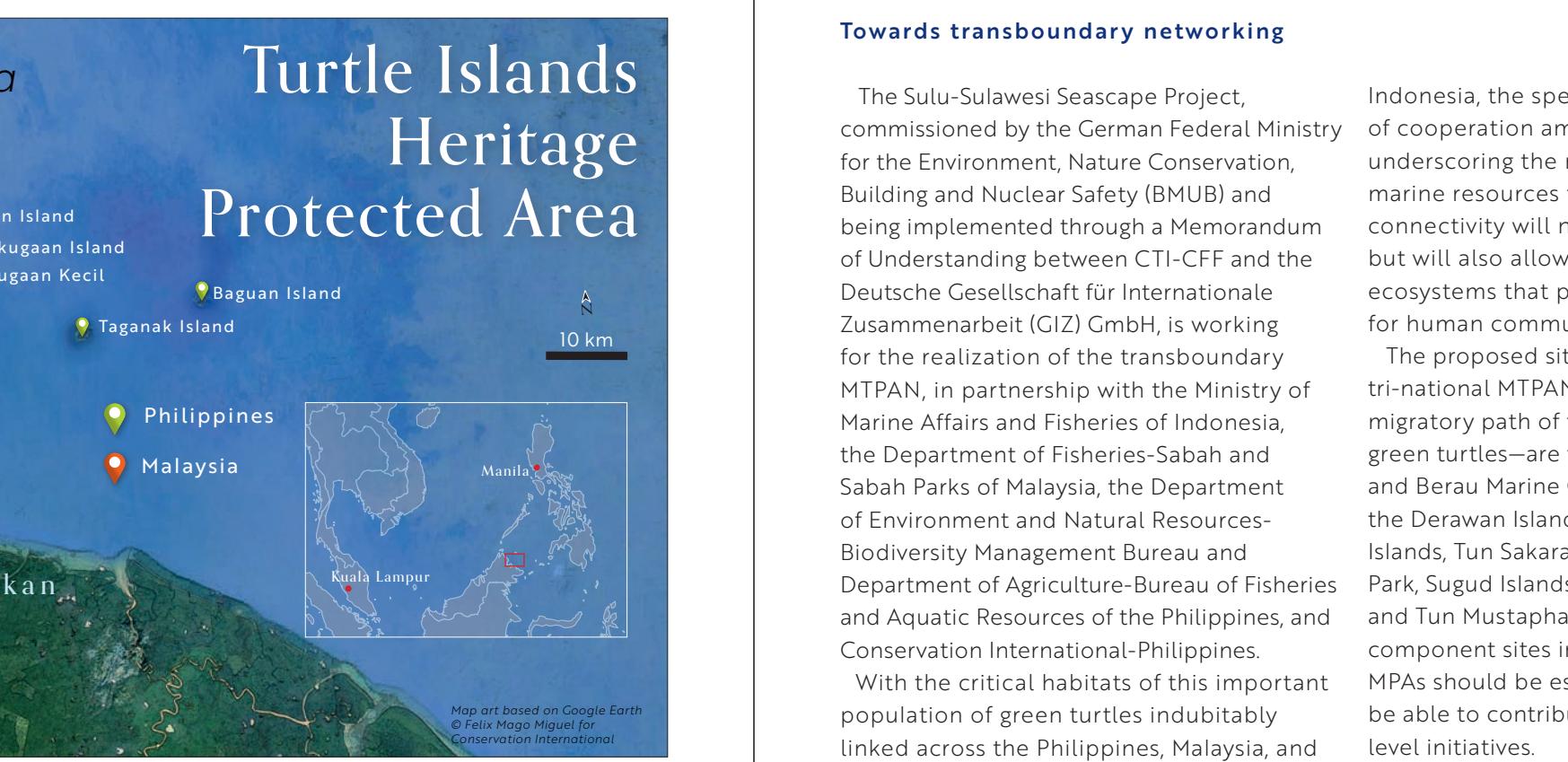
Scientific studies have confirmed the connectivity of TIHPA with other turtle habitats in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines through the known migration of green turtles from this transfrontier protected area. Such studies provided the basis for the SSME Regional Action Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles, which included a proposed tri-national network of marine protected areas for green turtles.



Selingan Island, Turtle Islands, Sabah (top)
Selingan Island turtle hatchery, Turtle Islands, Sabah (above)



Taganak Island, Turtle Islands, Tawi-Tawi



Baguan Island, Turtle Islands, Tawi-Tawi

A continuing opportunity

With the completion of the SSME Program in 2016, an even broader opportunity to continue and expand transboundary cooperation in marine turtle conservation came with the Coral Triangle Initiative for Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF). It was a logical continuum, as the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape is also a priority seascape in the CTI Regional Plan of Action. The proposed MTPAN is consistent with the Plan's Goal # 5, to see "threatened species status improving." Thus, an MPA network for marine turtles remains a priority of the CTI-CFF.

Also,

the six countries of the Coral Triangle

—Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines,

Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and the

Solomon Islands—and their rich waters

make up what is considered the epicenter

of global marine biodiversity, which is now

also facing the high levels of threats, thus

justifying immediate attention.

Towards transboundary networking

The Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape Project, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and being implemented through the MTPAN. This connectivity will not just benefit the species, but will also allow for the conservation of ecosystems that provide goods and services for human communities.

• The El Nido-Taytay Managed Resource Protected Area (ENTMRPA)

is located in the northwestern portion of mainland Palawan, and covers an area of 903.21 km².

Four species of marine turtles have been reported within the PA: hawksbill, green, olive ridley, and leatherback. It is a nesting habitat for green and olive ridley turtles, and a foraging site for green, hawksbill, and leatherback turtles. The PA started out as a

Marine Turtle Sanctuary in 1984.

• The Balabac Strait

in Palawan has yet to be declared an MPA before it can become part of the Philippine network for marine turtles. Work has begun to protect this critical route for marine

turtles. The strait is a

worthy addition to the

network, providing

The Philippine Initiative

Indonesia, the species has become a focus of cooperation among the three countries, underscoring the need to jointly manage marine resources through the MTPAN. This connectivity will not just benefit the species, but will also allow for the conservation of ecosystems that provide goods and services for human communities.

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The proposed sites for inclusion in the tri-national MTPAN—all of which are in the migratory path of this important population of green turtles—are the Bunaken National Park and Sabah Parks of Malaysia, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau and Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Philippines, and Conservation International-Philippines.

With the critical habitats of this important population of green turtles indubitably linked across the Philippines, Malaysia, and

Documented Species in the Area



olive ridley



hawksbill



loggerhead turtle



leatherback turtle



green turtle

