



SCORES OF MARINE TURTLES ENTANGLED IN INDONESIAN NETS

04/07/2005 – Following the deaths of some 140 marine turtles drowned in nets off Indonesia's Panjang Island, WWF and The Nature Conservancy are calling for the establishment of a marine protected area in the waters north-west of Borneo.

Deliberately targeted for their high-market value, 170 turtles were found entangled and drowned in nets. Of the 144 that died, 141 were green turtles and 3 were hawksbills. Of the seven marine species, six, including green and hawksbills turtles, are critically endangered.

A turtle conservation enforcement team, together with local authorities and WWF staff, managed to untangle 14 green turtles and 2 hawksbill turtles that were still alive and released them back to the sea. Although authorities are still trying to apprehend the fishermen engaged in this illegal fishing practice, the dead turtles and nets were taken to nearby Derawan Island as evidence to be used in the criminal investigation.

"To protect turtles we need a twin-pronged approach that deals with overexploitation and catch in fisheries nets," said Rili Djohani, The Nature Conservancy's Country Director in Indonesia.

"More resources are needed to help law enforcement agencies tackle this illegal trade."

Some of the turtles found in the nets had tracking tags, which were attached in the Philippines and



Malaysia.

"Special zoning procedures to manage boats within protected areas will be needed," said Dr Mubariq Ahmad, Executive Director of WWF-Indonesia.

"Panjang Island is an important feeding ground for turtles, with many travelling from far distances."

Any future protected area will have to include the cooperation of neighbouring countries Malaysia and the Philippines, which together with Indonesia, form the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion.

Covering an area of around 950,000km², the Sulu-Sulawesi Ecoregion ecoregion is of enormous ecological and economical importance, featuring productive ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests. Its marine biodiversity includes more than 400 species of corals, 650 species of reef fish, endangered marine mammals such as the dugong, whales and dolphins, and six of the world's seven species of marine turtles.

Source: WWF – World Wildlife Foundation International (<http://www.wwf.org>)
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