



NETWORK OF SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR MARINE TURTLES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN - SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION

Green turtle returning to the sea after nesting on Aldabra Atoll © Seychelles Islands Foundation



© J. Bourjea

THE IOSEA SITE NETWORK

The IOSEA Site Network has been established under the IOSEA Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding, which is a legally non-binding instrument concluded under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

It was conceptualized at the Second Meeting of IOSEA Signatory States in 2004, adopted at the Sixth Meeting in 2012 and launched at the Seventh Meeting in 2014, when the first ten sites were accepted.

The Rationale behind the IOSEA Site Network

The overarching goal of the region-wide *Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean – South-East Asia Region* (IOSEA Site Network) is to promote the long-term conservation of sites of regional and global importance to marine turtles and their habitats. The network serves as a mechanism for sites to be managed more cooperatively and synergistically, both from an ecological and administrative point of view. In nominating Sites, proponents have an added incentive to secure extra resources and protection at the Sites.

The expected benefits of the IOSEA Site Network include:

- > Optimal use of limited resources available for governance;
- > Enhanced local-to-global scale recognition of the importance of the Sites in the Network;
- > Mitigation of socio-economic incentives for activities incompatible with marine turtle conservation at the site;
- > Protection of ecological connectivity between habitats;
- > Building better regional resistance and resilience of turtle habitats to environmental stress.



Green turtle swimming in waters of the iSimangaliso Marine Park, South Africa © Allen Walker



Aerial view of waters off the Bu Tinah Shoal © Sh Ahmad Bin Hamdan



Emergence of green hatchlings at Europa Island © Christophe Attrait

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Current activities

> Publication of finalized proposals

The IOSEA Secretariat is now developing publicity materials and certificates to highlight the importance of IOSEA Sites to the international community. The dedicated Site Network page, added to the IOSEA website in March 2013, is to be expanded to include a searchable database containing information derived from all individual Site Information Sheets. In addition, countries may choose to install appropriate signage publicizing the site's inclusion in the IOSEA Site Network.

> Preparation of new proposals

A workshop to be held for Signatory States of the Northern Indian Ocean sub-region in August 2015 should help representatives from the countries concerned to understand the process for identifying potential sites and submitting proposals.

> Support and funding opportunities

The Sixth Meeting of IOSEA Signatory States decided in 2012 to establish a steering committee to seek financial support for the implementation of the Site Network and to consider other operational issues that may arise. The steering committee is currently exploring potential funding opportunities.

At the 11th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in November 2014, the CMS Secretariat launched its "Migratory Species Champion Programme". The Programme commends 'Champions' that support certain projects selected by the CMS Secretariat. To become a 'Champion', representatives from governments, the private sector and the civil society are requested to provide at least €20,000 per year, for a minimum duration of three years for a specific project. The IOSEA Secretariat has requested that the IOSEA Site Network be included in the 'Migratory Species Champion Programme'.



Europa Panorama © Christophe Attrait

Roles and Responsibilities: Who does what?

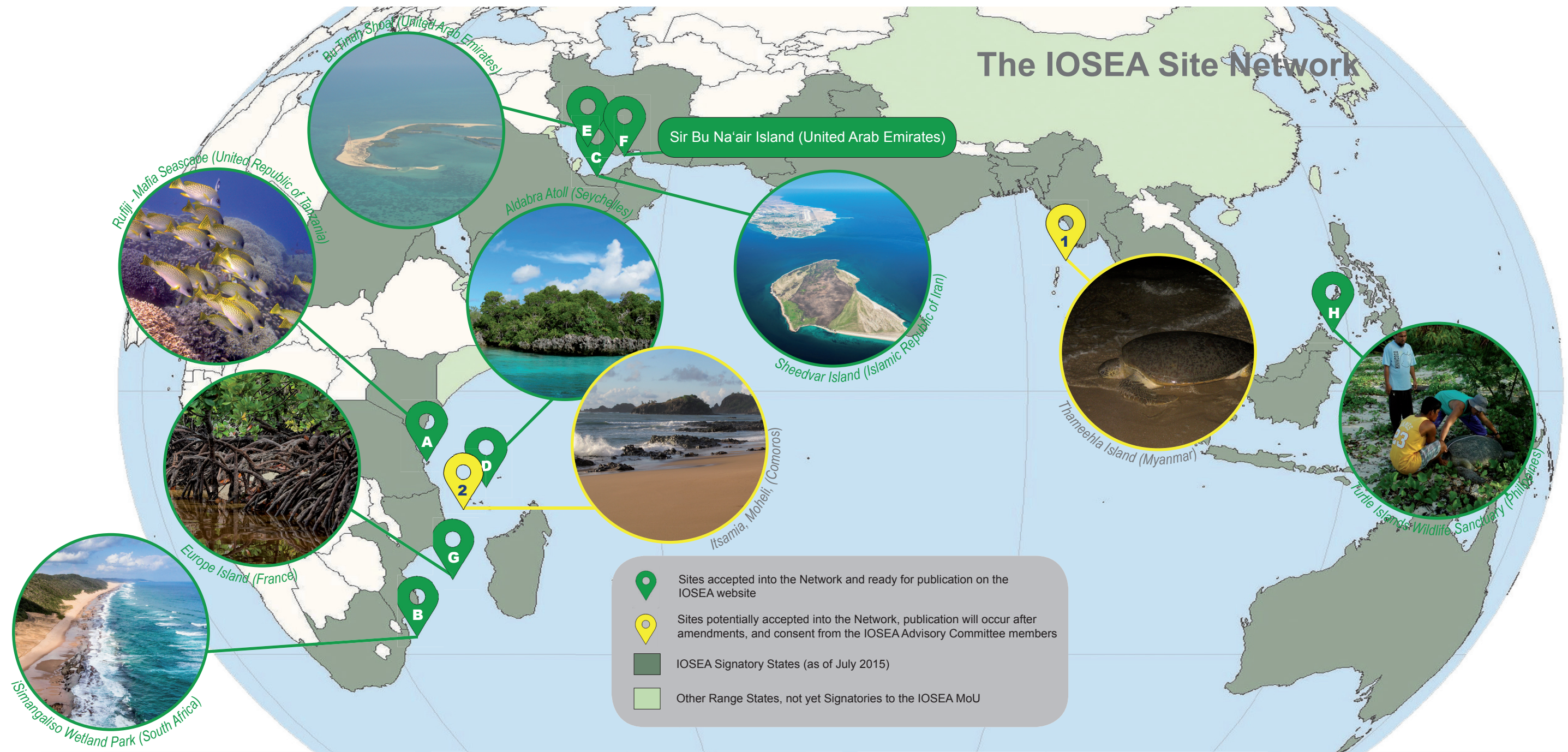
Although all Site Network nominations must be submitted to the Secretariat by the national IOSEA Focal Points, proposals may be developed by a variety of stakeholders interested in promoting a particular site, including NGOs, scientists, etc. Nominations may be submitted to the Secretariat at any time, but in order to be considered by any Meeting of Signatory States, they must be received six months beforehand. The next meeting is scheduled for 2017. The official 'Site Information Sheet' to be filled in can be found at http://ioseaturtles.org/sitenetwork-site_template.php

Following submission of a proposal, the IOSEA Advisory Committee, together with the Secretariat, reviews it and provides feedback to the proponents as to its content. In so doing, the IOSEA Advisory Committee uses the 18 Evaluation Criteria agreed at the Sixth Meeting of Signatory States and divided into four categories: Ecological/Biological; Governance-related; Socio-economic/Political; and Network-wide ecological. Ultimately, it is up to all Signatory States to include Sites in the Network during IOSEA meetings.

Contact



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Rufiji – Mafia Seascape (United Republic of Tanzania)

Surface area included in network: 3,950km²

Location: South of Dar es Salaam. Includes the Rufiji Delta, Mafia Channel and Mafia Island, part of the Rufiji-Mafia-Kilwa Seascape.

Marine turtles: Tanzania's largest Green turtle rookery (100 nests/yr). Small number of nesting Hawksbill turtles. Important foraging site and migratory corridor for Green turtles and possibly Loggerhead, Leatherback and Olive Ridley turtles.

Protection status: Mafia Island: National Marine Protected Area (1995); Rufiji Delta: Ramsar Site (2004); Rufiji-Mafia-Kilwa Seascape selected as a high priority seascape in 2001-2002.

Research/conservation: Local communities are involved in fisheries management and alternative livelihoods to fishing are being promoted.



Sheedvar Island (Islamic Republic of Iran)

Surface area included in network: 0.97km²

Location: Province of Hormozgan, central Arabian Gulf.

Marine turtles: Nesting site for Hawksbill and Green turtles (50 nests/yr). Foraging habitat (0.7km²) for Green turtles.

Protection status: Wildlife Refuge (1972); Ramsar Site (1999).

Research/conservation: IOSEA tagging program since 2005. Data collection of clutch sizes, egg and nesting turtle measurements, and numbers of normal and yolkless eggs.



Bu Tinah Shoal (United Arab Emirates)

Surface area included in network: 400km²

Location: Western Region of Abu Dhabi. Within the Marawah Marine Biosphere Reserve.

Marine turtles: High density of foraging Green and Hawksbill turtles. Nesting Hawksbill turtles (11 nests/yr). Loggerhead, Olive Ridley and Leatherback turtles sighted occasionally.

Protection status: Within the UNESCO Marawah Marine Biosphere Reserve.

Research/conservation: 13 year monitoring programme of foraging turtles and their habitats. This involves aerial and field surveys. Nesting Hawksbill turtles assessed using beach monitoring.



Europa Island (France)

Surface area included in network: 2,060km²

Location: Southern Mozambique Channel, part of the 'Îles Éparses'.

Marine turtles: Important site for Green turtle nesting (2,000-11,000 nests/yr); and immature Hawksbill turtle development (20-40 individuals/yr).

Protection status: National Natural Reserve (1975); Ramsar Site (2011), potential UNESCO World Heritage Site (2013).

Research/conservation: Monitoring of nesting activity since 1983. Growth rate and spatial dynamics of juvenile Green and Hawksbill turtles studied since 2005, including through satellite tracking programmes.



iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage Site (South Africa)

Surface area included in network: 1,200km² (St. Lucia + Maputaland Marine Protected Areas).

Location: North-eastern coast of KwaZulu-Natal.

Marine turtles: Only nesting beaches of South Africa. Main nesting sites for Leatherback (70 nests/yr) and Loggerhead turtles (700 nests/yr) in the South-West Indian Ocean. Foraging Green, Hawksbill and possibly Olive Ridley turtles.

Protection status: Nesting beaches protected by national law; UNESCO World Heritage Site (1999); Ramsar Site (1986).

Research/conservation: Conservation programme started in 1963, including collection of nesting data by "turtle monitors" from the KwaDapha community, satellite tracking, genetic sampling, educational and outreach activities.



Aldabra Atoll (Seychelles)

Surface area included in network: 439km²

Location: Western Indian Ocean, off the east coast of Africa.

Marine turtles: Largest population of nesting Green turtles in the Seychelles (9,000-15,000 nests/yr, increase of 500-800% from 1968 to 2008). Smaller Hawksbill nesting population.

Protection status: Nature Reserve (1968), 'Special Reserve' (1981).

Research/conservation: As of 2012, 3350 female Green turtles had been tagged on Aldabra.



Sir Bu Na'air Island (United Arab Emirates)

Surface area included in network: 13.2km²

Location: Southern Arabian Gulf, 110km west of Sharjah and 85km from the north coast of Abu Dhabi.

Marine turtles: Foraging habitat for Green and Hawksbill turtles. Nesting Hawksbill turtles (300 nests/yr). Largest turtle nesting habitat for the Sharjah Emirate in the Arabian Gulf. Recent records of nesting Green turtles.

Protection status: Protected Area (2000); Ramsar Site (2013); potential UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Research/conservation: Nest counts, turtle and nest monitoring and inventories conducted since 2010. Satellite tagging of Hawksbill turtles revealed migration related to ocean temperature.



Turtle Islands Wildlife Sanctuary (Philippines)

Surface area included in network: 2,430 km²

Location: South-Western tip of the Philippines, includes Taganak, Baguan, Langaan, Boan, Lihiman, and Great Bakkungan Islands.

Marine turtles: Major nesting site for Green and Hawksbill turtles (13817 nests/yr)

Protection status: Part of the Turtle Island Heritage Protected Area - first trans-boundary marine turtle protected area created in 1996 (Philippines and Malaysia); Protected Area (1999); Key Biodiversity Area (2006).

Research/conservation: Satellite telemetry project on feeding areas of Hawksbill and Green turtles. 75,000 records of tagging, nest monitoring and hatchery data, collected since 1984, is being encoded into the "Turtle Database Management System Software". This database was developed under the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit - Sulu Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion - ASEAN Marine Protected Area Network.