

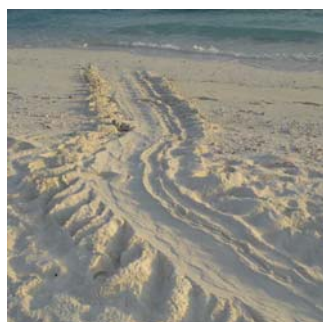
Green Turtle nesting behaviour on Kunfunadhoo Island

Of the five recorded species of sea turtles in Maldives, the Green Turtle is the one that regularly visits the beaches of Soneva Fushi for nesting. After having travelled thousands of miles in the Indian Ocean and survived many dangers in their life (being dug out by man and other animals as an egg, predation as a hatchling, slaughtering of the adults for meat and the shell etc.), the few successful mature turtles return to the same areas where they were born 30-50 years ago. How they make this impressive journey is still unknown, but they seem to use the earth's magnetic field as an orientation to find their beaches. Imagine the shock many females could get when seeing the places of their birth now illuminated with lights and, in some resorts, surrounded by sea walls!

Because Kunfunadhoo is a large island and the owners of Soneva Fushi avoid interfering with nature as much as possible, Green Turtles still find opportunities to breed here. Especially the western side of the island (around Turtle Beach) seems to be attractive as turtle nesting sites. However, great care needs to be taken that nesting turtles are not disturbed by noise and lights such as camera flashes in order not to interrupt their breeding activity. Since the beginning of the recordings in April 2005, at least 20 observations of turtle tracks and individuals have been made, indicating an average of one animal crawling up to the beach per week! The highlight of these studies has been the finding of females digging a nest in the night (on a few occasions) and the observation of the actual egg-laying process (on one occasion in July).

Undergoing great exertion to prepare the nest and excreting "tears" to prevent sand from entering the mother's eyes, the turtle drops about 100 fertilized, ping pong-sized eggs into a hole. When all eggs are laid, she covers them with sand and skilfully solidifies the sand with her hind flippers - an amazing sight to watch! The mother may return to the same beach a few times after that and lay even more eggs. The eggs take about two months to hatch, depending on the nest temperature and whether the nest is disturbed or not. Not all eggs develop into hatchlings, and most of the hatchlings will not survive their first days due to predation, disorientation and weakness. Only very few turtles will become adults, reach maturity and return to their breeding grounds. It is therefore absolutely necessary to protect the habitat where Green Turtles are nesting by minimizing human impact through light and noise reduction, no further development, reef as well as beach protection and, most importantly, by stopping the collection and consumption of turtle eggs - not only on Kunfunadhoo but on all Maldivian islands.

The Green Turtles at Soneva Fushi have a good chance of reproduction if left untouched and undisturbed and may contribute to the necessary increase in Maldivian and worldwide population numbers of this endangered species - and also to the positive image of our resort!



High season for Manta Rays in Baa Atoll

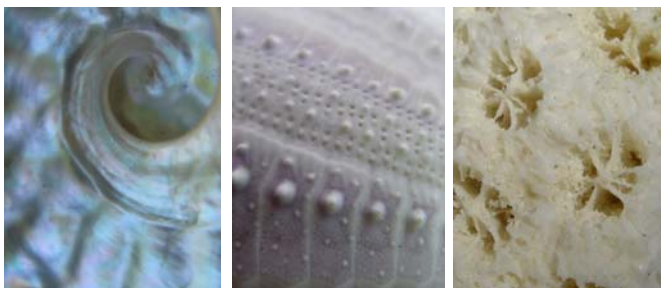
Following the seasonally changing currents in search of vast numbers of tiny planktonic organisms or schooling fish, Manta Rays are regular inhabitants of Baa Atoll's waters from June until October. Especially during scuba dives at Nelivaru Thila, Dharavandhoo Thila and Dhigu Thila, but also other dive sites, these gentle giants with a wing span of up to 6 m (on average around 4 m) can be observed swimming, feeding or becoming cleaned. Watching Manta Rays is probably most rewarding when meeting them at a cleaning station, where small cleaner wrasses and other fishes free them from parasites. They usually stay at those locations for a few minutes and do not hesitate to approach divers very closely - a mutual eye-to-eye inspection! The largest of all rays do not have a stinging spine and are considered harmless; they should, however, not be touched. The Manta Rays around Soneva Fushi have also been seen leaping out of the water, which is interpreted as a social behaviour or as a way of ridding of parasites.





Soneva Fushi celebrates World Ozone Day 2005

The ozone layer, which surrounds the earth and protects all life forms on it from harmful UV-B and other radiation, has steadily weakened due to the increased use of fertilizers, CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances. The International Day for the preservation of the Ozone Layer (World Ozone Day) has been celebrated for the past 10 years on September 16, because it was on this day in 1987 that the Montreal Protocol was signed by a number of countries concerned about the depletion of the ozone layer. In order to create awareness for this global problem among its staff, Soneva Fushi participated by switching off as many air-conditioning units as possible, especially in back-of-house offices, to reduce the amount of ozone-depleting emissions. In addition, the local environmental group MaaRES from Maalhoss took initiative to plant more than 100 native trees on the western side of Soneva Fushi for creating shade from the sun and improving the overall climate conditions.

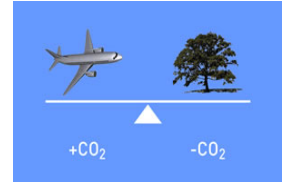


Abalone shell

Sea urchin skeleton

Hard coral skeleton

Carbon emissions offsetting programme is launched



Whilst Six Senses are working to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases within their hotels, one of the biggest impacts of a typical holiday stay is caused by flying. This can often account for 10 times more CO₂ emissions than a week's stay. To help tackle the issue, a special programme was developed with The Carbon-Neutral Company (formerly known as Future Forests) to offer guests the chance to offset the emissions caused by their air travel. For every one tonne of CO₂ produced by a flight, The CarbonNeutral Company will organize for one tonne to be saved through community-based projects around the world. These projects include replacing fossil-fuel energy for solar panels in developing countries as well as forestry. Our programme focuses on planting trees, which take up CO₂ and "neutralise" it. Guests have the opportunity to support three different forestry projects around the world. The initiative started on September 1.

Mushroom hut "Ever Soneva So Fungal"

In keeping with our food production strategy we will soon be growing a range of gourmet mushrooms (Shiitake, Oyster mushrooms, King Stropharia and Reishi) on pasteurized sawdust and wood chips from the carpentry workshop and shredded banana leaves from the fruit garden. The spawn will be produced in our sterile mushroom laboratory fed by a laminar flow hood. The mushrooms will be grown in a cave-like environment thanks to a state-of-the-art air-circulation system that humidifies and cools the incoming air to create the perfect environment for mushroom formation. Alongside the mushrooms we will cultivate a mixture of nutritious sprouts such as wheatgrass, mung beans, chick peas, broccoli, alfalfa and clover - a natural dose of vitamins, minerals and enzymes that will make you feel 10 years younger! All these delicious products will be available in our forthcoming Raw Food treetop, eco-restaurant complete with rope bridges, grey-water irrigation system, solar oven, mini-observatory and composting toilet!

Resident Marine Biologist on board!

If you are not familiar yet with the specimen on the left and would like to find out more about Soneva Fushi's sea and island life, you are welcome to join our resident biologist - on board since April 2005 - for snorkelling trips in the house reef as well as evening presentations about corals, fish & Co. Furthermore, you are invited to visit her in her office near the Water Sports Centre to discuss several issues of interest and browse field guides!