

BLUE & GREEN LAAMU

*The Marine Conservation & Sustainability
Newsletter by the Maldives Underwater Initiative*

JANUARY 2022



As the monsoons change, so does the manta ray activity in Laamu. As a result, the Manta Trust team started increasing surveys at Kurethi and were rewarded with an encounter with this gentle giant.



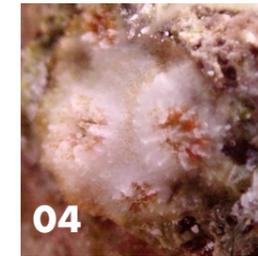
MALDIVES UNDERWATER INITIATIVE by Six Senses Laamu

The winning shot of MUI's 2021 Underwater Photography competition, taken by Anooof who is currently an intern at Six Senses Laamu's Dive Center, Deep Blue Divers.



WHAT'S INSIDE?

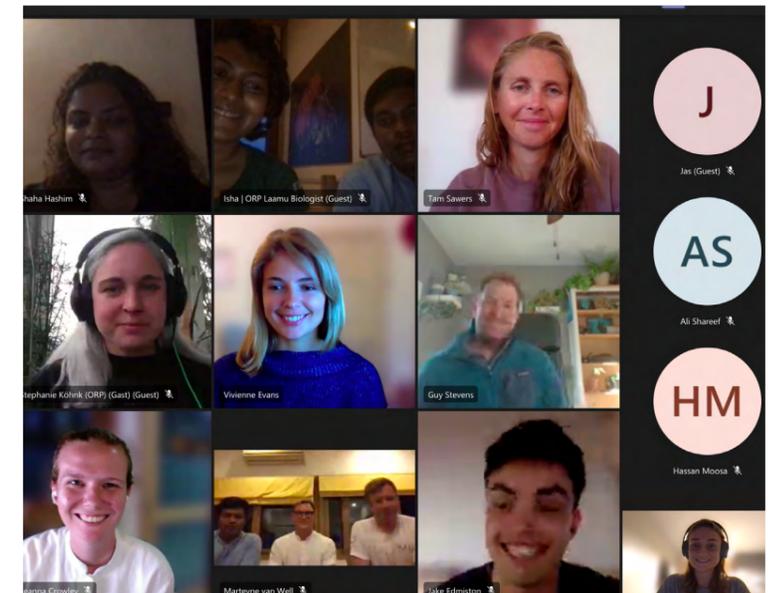
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MUI ANNUAL CATCH UP

It's not often the whole Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI) team is together in one place (albeit virtually)! In January, being the time for goal setting and planning for the year ahead, MUI held its third annual catch-up call incorporating all partners, both on and off island, in a big MUI family catch-up.

On the call the team talked through their goals for 2022, in addition to highlighting potential collaborations in order to achieve the best conservation results. One of MUI's leading qualities is their partnerships with various stakeholders, bringing in expertise from varying backgrounds, fields, and locations. Meetings like this allow the team to gain a full understanding of the work plans for next year, and how we can best support each other. 🌊



4 partners work together in MUI: Six Senses Laamu, the Manta Trust, Blue Marine Foundation and the Olive Ridley Project

SIX SENSES CONSERVATION

WE'RE CORAL PARENTS!

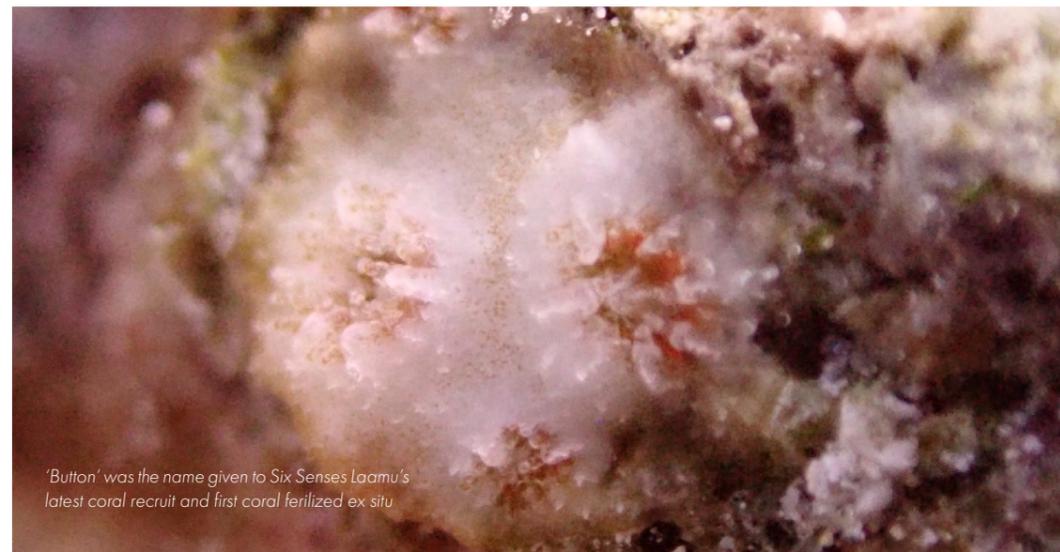
The Six Senses Laamu Research Team is very proud to announce that they have found young coral babies growing on the rocks that were placed on the coral reef last month as part of their coral reef replenishment research project.

It is incredibly exciting to know that the same tiny coral larvae, which were observed free swimming in a petri dish only two months ago, are now starting to grow their own coral colony on Six Senses Laamu's house reef.



11 species of coral were recorded spawning in January

But, this wasn't the only success the coral team had this month! To everyone's surprise, there was another huge spawning event only three days after January's full moon and there are three special things about this spawning event! Firstly, in relation to the full moon, this is the earliest spawning event the team has recorded since starting the project in February 2021. Secondly, it was also the largest spawning event of them all with multiple colonies and even multiple species spawning over a couple of hours (the team was busy keeping up with recording all the data while swimming between spawning colonies)! And thirdly, the spawning happened on a different part of the house reef that isn't usually monitored. This reef ('Rikke's Reef'), located between the dive centre and supply jetty, is very shallow with some corals being exposed during low tides, and, most excitingly, is also a fairly young reef. This is all great news for the research team and gives MUI lots of new insights into the health and reproductive cycle of our beautiful house reef. 🌊



'Button' was the name given to Six Senses Laamu's latest coral recruit and first coral fertilized ex situ

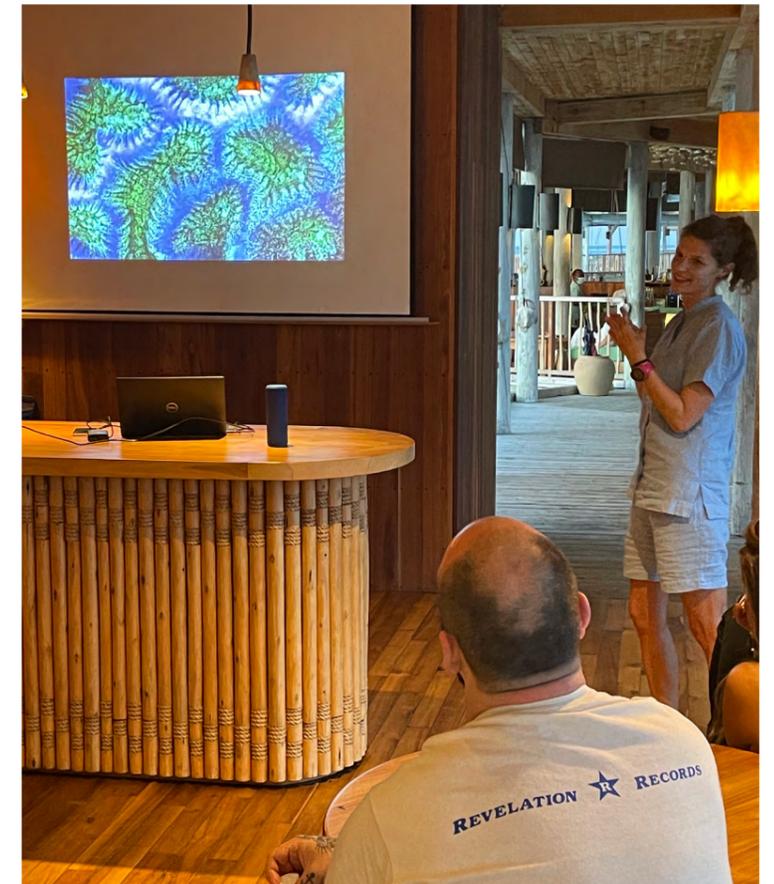
REDEVELOPING PRESENTATIONS

As the team grows and the projects develop here at MUI, the team want to make sure Six Senses Laamu's guests are kept up to date with all of their progress. Therefore, the team are continuously updating and improving on many of their guest activities.

This month, the team's Coral presentation was redesigned and presented by Six Senses Laamu's Research Coordinator, Miriam, so guests can learn more about the animals and structures that are so vital to the Maldives and to Laamu. Six Senses Laamu's Community Outreach Coordinator, Ali, designed and presented a new and exciting presentation on the team's projects that run within Laamu's community, helping guests understand how the team support the local communities around the atoll and why it is so important to do so. 🌊

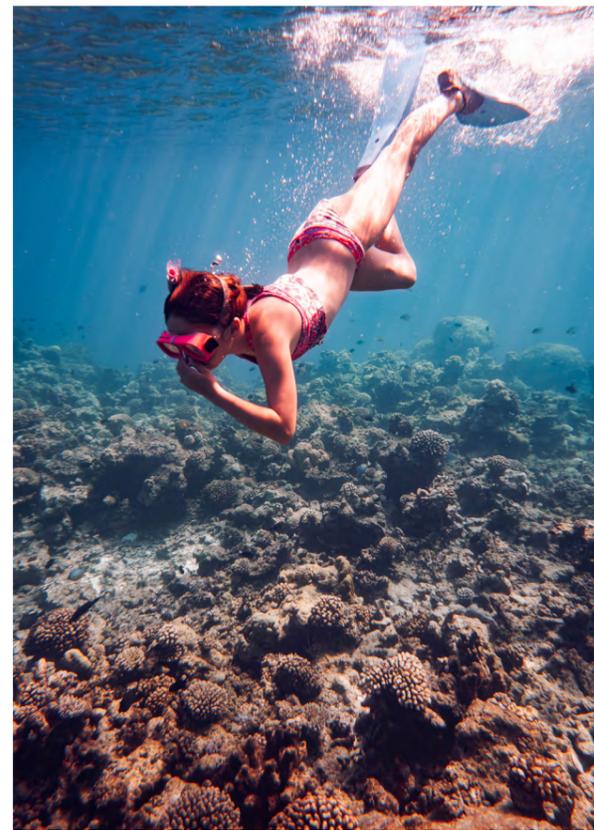


181 Guests at the resort watched MUI's presentations in January





A warm welcome to the team to Partel, Siret, Karit, Theo, Antonia, Abigail, Isabelle, Jack, Felipe, Aurora, Platon, Olivia, Hamish, Maya and Bento, and a big welcome back to Zoe and Nina, who all participated in Junior Marine Biology in January!



BREAKING RECORDS FOR JUNIOR MARINE BIOLOGY

January was a very exciting and busy month for our little VIP's at Six Senses Laamu as the team conducted a record number of Junior Marine Biology sessions with the children!

Over the 22 sessions conducted in January, there is no doubt lots was learnt, and many budding Junior Marine Biologists started on their path to protecting the oceans. The team were thrilled to welcome 17 new faces to the ever-growing team of Junior Marine Biologists, and also rekindle with three familiar faces who came back to Laamu to continue their journey with MUI!

As the team of Junior Marine Biologists grows, so do the sessions on offer. This month, the team introduced an exciting new element to their Megafauna of Laamu session with the use of a RUV (Remote Underwater Video) to show the students different methods of collecting data. This additional feature proved very popular and successful with the first deployment of the RUV successfully capturing a shot of a reef shark cruising by the camera! 🌊



20 Junior Marine Biologists completed the course in January

OUR EDUCATION



1,632 moments of education were shared with guests



157 moments of education were shared with hosts



100 moments of education were shared with the community

THE BIG STUFF



193 megafauna surveys were conducted by the MUI and DBD teams



1,332 sharks were sighted



529 rays were sighted



505 turtles were sighted

THE MANTA TRUST



MONITORING OF SECONDARY SITES

The northeast monsoon, which spans through December to April, results in manta rays cleaning at alternate sites. As manta sightings had dropped at the Manta Trust team's primary research sites, Fushi Kandhu and Hithadhoo Corner, the team started increasing surveys at Kurethi – an outer reef on the southwest of Laamu atoll that has a deep cleaning station, which mantas frequent during this time of year.

They started to deploy their "Eyes On The Reef" remote underwater time-lapse camera on the station, and were gifted with not only manta identification photographs, but also other

incredible megafauna encounters. Whilst deploying the camera on one dive, the team recorded rare zebra shark courtship behavior right next to the cleaning station! 🌊



MANTA ON THE SURFACE

The change in monsoon seasons also directs the plankton, which manta rays feast on, to the south-western edge of Laamu atoll. This results in increased sightings of manta rays feeding on the surface rather than at depth.

The Manta Trust team marked the start of the year with surface feeding surveys, in which they slowly cruised along the outer south-west edge of the atoll and kept their eyes peeled for manta fins breaking the surface. Most manta ray sightings in Laamu are in deeper waters at cleaning stations, so they were thrilled to have some great encounters with mantas gorging on plankton at the surface, where they quickly could hop in the water and capture identification shots of their belly spots. 🌊

39 in water surveys conducted by the Manta Trust team

43 manta ray sightings

25 confirmed sightings through photo identification

6 remote underwater photography surveys with 228 hours recording time

101 guests dived with and taught about manta rays

50 manta memos were sent to guests from dives



MASTERS TRAINING

The Exeter University masters projects are well underway. In January, the Manta Trust Laamu team conducted online training sessions with one of their students, Chris Wenham, who will be analyzing the "Eyes On The Reef" data for their thesis.

The next few months will be spent processing the data collected over a one year period, before Chris visits the resort for field work in April to deploy the remote cameras and study the mantas in person! 🌊



Fonadhoo intern Jazwan interviewing a man fishing on the Fonadhoo-Kahdhoo causeway

SURVEYING LAAMU'S REEF BIOMASS

Blue Marine Foundation's (BLUE's) reef biomass surveys have continued in January and are now entering the final weeks of data collection across 7 islands in Laamu Atoll.

Locals from these islands, trained by BLUE as Fisheries Officer Interns, have been recording catch data from fishers since November. This is being done in

Hiithadhoo and Maamendhoo - two islands just a short distance from Six Senses Laamu. Additionally, fishing catch data is being collected from Fonadhoo, Gan, and three more islands across the atoll.

Since December, fishing picked up during the local holiday period and over 144 fish landings were recorded



114 fish landings were recorded across Laamu

in January. To date, a total of 411 fish landings have been recorded, providing useful data to help BLUE and Maldives Resilient Reefs understand fishing patterns in Laamu and how much biomass is being removed from the atoll. 🌊



Sunrise fishing trips use trolling to catch large ocean fishes. These trips often land tuna, wahoo, or barracuda but are always guaranteed to snag a lovely sunrise!

FISHING WITH GUESTS

This month, BLUE began their surveys of the recreational guest fishing trips conducted at Six Senses Laamu. This work involves going out on fishing trips with guests to record the size and types of species being caught, as well as communicate the importance of sustainable fishing practices.

The data collected on these trips will inform an assessment of resort fishing activity and allow the BLUE team to work alongside Six Senses to assess the ecological impacts of guest fishing trips on Laamu's unique marine ecosystems. 🌊



6 guest fishing trips were accompanied by BLUE for research



26 fish were measured and recorded during guest fishing trips



An adult wahoo landed by a guest on a morning fishing trip



**OLIVE RIDLEY
PROJECT**

THE OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

OUR GROWING NESTWATCH TEAM

In the spirit of the new year, the Nestwatch team at Six Senses has also freshened up with eight new faces joining the team in the first month of the year! The team of volunteers now include hosts from a range of departments such as F&B, operator and gardening. They're showing up to their shifts with passion for sea turtle conservation, and of course it doesn't hurt to see the starry night sky above as they wait for nests to show the first signs of hatching.

With the support of the security team, the Olive Ridley Project (ORP) biologist was able to catch a nest hatching early in the morning, just before sunrise. At the event, guests witnessed the miraculous start of life of 99 hatchlings, all of them walking slowly towards the lightening horizon and now facing the ultimate test of being the 1/1000 to survive to adulthood. 🌿



68 hours of
nestwatch conducted
by volunteers

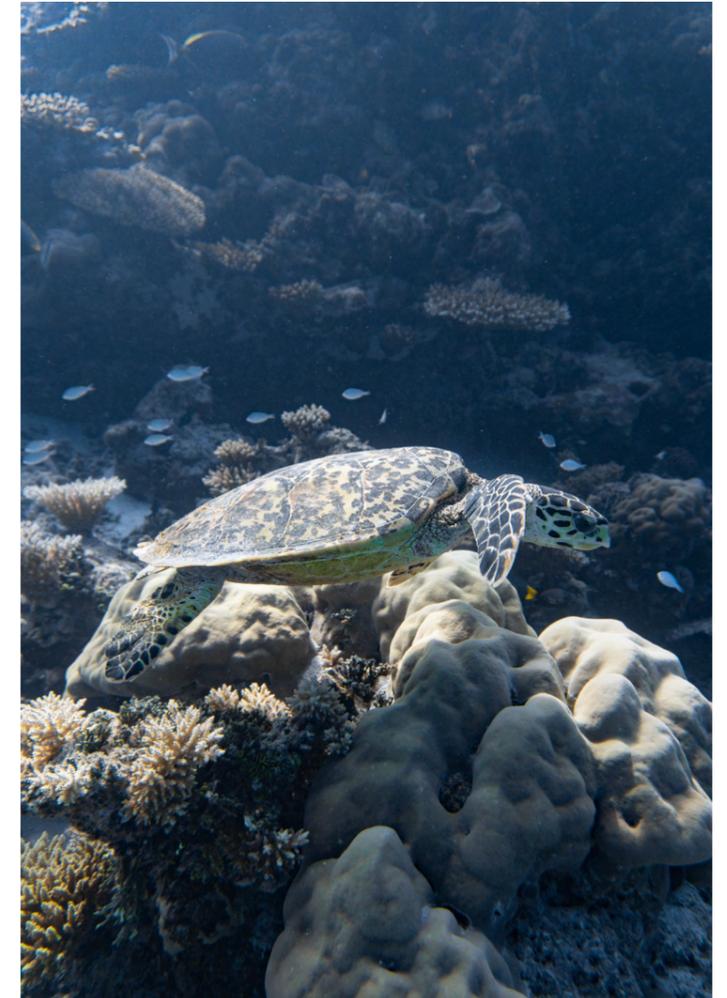


TURTLE OF THE MONTH

MARMALADE STINKY BISCUITS

If you've been snorkeling on the house reef right beside Chill Bar at Six Senses Laamu, chances are you've been greeted by this very friendly turtle!

Marmalade Stinky Biscuits is a juvenile hawksbill that has been resident to the house reef since 2018. This is the fourth consecutive year of sighting them since! Marmalade seems to have one thing on their mind- munching on as many of the delicious sponges scattered amongst the house reef as possible. They're a turtle on a mission, and other things - like navigating properly to avoid humans, slowing down when coming up to breathe - can wait. And, as Marmalade forages on the reef, they're also clearing up space for new corals to grow - which is super helpful for the new corals that spawned in January! Yes, Marmalade is a warrior making the reef healthier than ever and so if you spot them, give them your thanks and let them be on their way. 🌿



138 encounters of
turtles were recorded,
including 3 from guests



4 never seen before
turtles were identified



3 nests were laid at
Six Senses Laamu



99 hatchlings started
their lives at Six Senses
Laamu when 1 nest hatched

OUR HOME

CHEERS TO SUSTAINABILITY

As one of the brand's pillars, sustainability is incorporated into every department here at Six Senses Laamu. This month, the bar team kick started several projects to ensure the drinks they serve guests are the most sustainable they can be.

The team is working on a project they like to call 'Deconstructing the Classics' where they are taking traditional cocktails and reinventing them through using more locally, regionally and ethically sourced products, whilst staying true to the drink's DNA.

In the '[Maybe Collins](#)', the team uses Canaima Gin, which is made in collaboration with the Amazonian community and financially supports NGOs which work to improve the quality of life of this indigenous community. Instead of lemon juice, red wine vinegar is made out of stale wine from our cellar, and the drink is topped with homemade tonic and a garnish of fresh Italian basil straight from our gardens.

The '[Jungle Bird](#)', is a #SimplySixSenses take on a Sidecar cocktail. To make it, the team collect leftover pineapple pulp from our breakfast service and turn it into a pineapple cordial which is then slightly smoked. They combine rum with some fresh coconut water, a homemade pandan syrup from our garden and add a pinch of salt to bring all the flavors together.

Besides these cocktails, the bar team are also busy on working on an ambitious fermentation and probiotic project which includes developing Kombucha (pictured to the right), Ginger Beer, LayaLaya Ade, Lemonade, Living Soda, Turmeric Ade, Strawberry Ade and more, all here on the island! Watch this space for more updates. 🌿



OUR COMMUNITY

NEW YEAR, NEW PROJECTS

The Six Senses Sustainability fund continues to provide opportunities for Laamu's community. In the last month, two new sustainability fund projects have been approved and are in development.

The first project is to build a study corner in the primary grade classrooms of L. Maamendhoo School, an island right beside Six Senses Laamu. This project aims to enhance students' ability to read and write by transforming the classrooms into an enjoyable environment where students have access to informative books and fun study materials. In addition, a reading program has been planned to track every student's reading journey and recognize students' progress and achievement. The team hopes the reading program will motivate and encourage students to learn more.

The second project focuses on eliminating single-use plastic shopping bags from the administrative capital of Laamu atoll, L. Fonadhoo Island. To reduce and eliminate the use of single-use plastic shopping bags, the Fonadhoo Women Development Committee will distribute locally made cloth bags to each household in Fonadhoo. In addition, door-to-door educational visits will be carried out to promote the use of reusable bags and to raise awareness about the harm single-use plastic imposes on our fragile environment. This project is a part of a more extensive initiative by the Fonadhoo Women development Committee to phase out single-use plastic use through a series of activities and awareness programs planned for the rest of the year. The Six Senses Laamu team hope to continue to support them in their efforts to make Laamu plastic-free. 🌿



50 items were donated to Laamu's community by Six Senses Laamu Guests

WELCOME TO MUI

MEET JAKE

In January, BLUE welcomed Jake to the team to work as the Research and Fisheries Coordinator based here at Six Senses Laamu.

Despite growing up in the United Kingdom a long way from the ocean, Jake has always been fascinated by the underwater world. During his BSc in Marine Biology, Jake completed fieldwork at the remote Lizard Island Research Station in Australia studying the impacts of climate change upon coral reef fish population dynamics. This experience catalyzed Jake's passion for conserving tropical seascapes and he has since completed his master's degree in Marine Systems and Policies at the University of Edinburgh, with his thesis investigating the effectiveness of parrotfish fisheries management in the Caribbean.

Jake is passionate about the importance of community-based conservation and is incredibly excited to work upon the inspiring reef fisheries sustainability projects based here in Laamu! 🌊



MEET NAAHI

A fresh, young face has also joined the ORP team here at Six Senses Laamu - welcome Naahi!

Naahi, from L. Maabaidhoo, grew up in the beautiful habitats of Laamu, learning to swim at the early age of six years old to enjoy the marine life the atoll has to offer. He grew up in a small community, going out swimming with his friends and going back home to learn more about the animals he encountered. At 14, he came across an entangled turtle in the water and as he watched the turtle swimming around the boat before diving deep after rescue, he knew he wanted to be in conservation.

He started scuba diving while he was studying marine science, and enjoys coming across the different species of fish and corals in the ocean. He was keen to learn more and gain experience on-site working with a marine biology team, so hopped over to Six Senses Laamu to work with the Olive



Ridley Project as an intern. His role on the island is to assist with photo-ID and nesting research and he's already learning to recognize the many different, unique turtles of Laamu. His tasks also include giving presentations, guiding snorkels, and working with the community to help protect the critical habitats of Laamu. We look forward to seeing ORP grow with Naahi's support. 🌊



To learn more about marine conservation and sustainability initiatives at Six Senses Laamu please contact:

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