

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

LANG TENGAH TURTLE WATCH

TANJONG JARA RESORT



# CONTENTS

Summary .....	01
Our Team .....	02
Nest Adoption Programme .....	06
Nest Inspections .....	07
Hatchling Releases .....	09
Community Engagement .....	12
The Rangers .....	14
The Visitors' Hut .....	15
Guest Satisfaction .....	16

# SUMMARY

- Lang Tengah Turtle Watch started off the season with a team of mostly international staff members who had to leave the country due to the pandemic. We operated with one Malaysian staff member for a few months before a new team of Malaysians came on board to continue operations until the end of the season.
- Lang Tengah Turtle Watch at Tanjong Jara Resort saved 9,801 green turtles and painted terrapin eggs, releasing 7,469 endangered hatchlings into the waters around Tanjong Jara Resort.
- Lang Tengah Turtle Watch at Tanjong Jara Resort managed both beaches on either side of the resort, enabling us to relocate 56 endangered turtle nests from the beaches in closest proximity to the resort into our hatcheries, an increase on the 44 nests saved in 2019. Tahu Tiga continued to hold reserve status, managed by us, and concurrently we were also the tender holder for Kuala Abang.
- 78% of 139 guests rated Lang Tengah Turtle Watch 5/5 for the overall experience of the activities offered by us during their stay.
- This year, 112 nests were saved, of which 108 nests were sponsored as part of our nest adoption programme. Since Lang Tengah Turtle Watch at Tanjong Jara Resort began in 2016, over 500 nests have been saved from being sold to the market.
- We removed 442 kg of rubbish from Tahu Tiga Beach, the beach adjacent Tanjong Jara Resort. This was accomplished with the help of 120 participants including resort staff, guests, and local community members.
- Lang Tengah Turtle Watch was unable to develop our community outreach programme in 2020 due to the pandemic situation, but we intend to continue our school outreach programmes in 2021 (restrictions permitting) to target an even wider audience.
- A new Visitors' Hut should be ready and operable by the start of the 2021 season.

# OUR TEAM



**Long Seh Ling**

*Principal Officer*

Seh Ling graduated with an MSc in Conservation & Biodiversity at the University of Exeter. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, focusing on the sustainability of local community livelihoods and sea turtle conservation in Terengganu marine parks. She has over nine years of experience working in sea turtle conservation and joined the team in July 2020.



**Nur Abidah Zaaba**

*Site Co-Manager*

Abidah graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Marine Science from University Malaysia Sabah. Before joining Lang Tengah Turtle Watch in June 2019, Abidah worked in turtle conservation with Reef Guardian Malaysia, based in Sabah.



**Jason Gan**

*Site Co-Manager*

Jason graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Tropical Environmental Biology from Monash University. He was an intern in the busy 2019 season and joined Lang Tengah Turtle Watch as Site Co-Manager in July 2020.



# Research Assistant Interns



*From left to right:*

*Top row: Syed Ahmad Fattahuddin, Ambrose Chin Ze Ann*

*Second row: Aida Roslan, Dalila Hassan, Eileen Nyeow @ Yau Yee Ling, Lim Song Xin*

*Third row: Mok Weng Dee, Lisa Sunita, Bryan Chan, Isandra Shazlynn*

	Internship period	Nationality	Current/Past Study	Comments
<b>Syed Ahmad Fattahuddin</b>	May - September	Malaysian	Degree in Mechanical Engineering, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)	Previous experience working with sea turtles under Island Watch Conservation Initiatives (IWCI)
<b>Ambrose Chin Ze Ann</b>	June - October	Malaysian	BSc in Tropical Environmental Biology, Monash University Malaysia	Previous experience in preparing environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports and socioeconomic surveys
<b>Aida Roslan</b>	June - September	Malaysian	BSc (Hons) in Marine Biology, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu	Previous experience working with macrobenthic organisms in Terengganu
<b>Dalila Hassan</b>	June - September	Malaysian	BSc (Hons) in Marine Biology, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu	Previous experience surveying fish diversity and abundance in Terengganu
<b>Eileen Nyeow @ Yau Yee Ling</b>	August - October	Malaysian	Bachelor of Money, Banking & Finance, University of Melbourne	Previous conservation experience working with tigers at MYCAT
<b>Lim Song Xin</b>	August - September	Malaysian	BSc in Environmental Science, Universiti Sains Malaysia	Joined as part of industrial training placement from USM
<b>Mok Weng Dee</b>	September - October	Malaysian	BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science, University of Nottingham Malaysia	Previous experience analysing sea turtle mortality in Malaysia
<b>Lisa Sunita</b>	September - October	Malaysian	BSc in Marine Science, University of Auckland	Previous experience working at Aquaria KLCC as an aquarist
<b>Bryan Chan</b>	September - October	Malaysian	BSc in Environmental Science, Queensland University of Technology	Previous experience in the agriculture sector in Timor Leste
<b>Isandra Shazlynn</b>	September - October	Malaysian	BSc (Hons) in Biology, Universiti Sains Malaysia	Previous experience working on fungal diversity at sea turtle nesting sites in Penang

This was an extraordinary year in terms of the general disruption endured and the changes to our team at Tanjong Jara. Before the pandemic, Lang Tengah Turtle Watch was almost entirely comprised of international staff and interns.

Due to the onset of Covid-19, all of our international team members returned home to their respective countries, leaving only our Co-Manager Abidah Zaaba to continue operations at Tanjong Jara for several months. Despite this, Abidah, with the help of last-minute arrivals of senior interns Syed Fattahuddin and Ambrose Chin - managed to continue running the project to the high standards set by Lang Tengah Turtle Watch in the past.

Abidah and the interns managed to salvage a very difficult situation; with the closing down of the resort for several months and the movement control order implemented throughout the whole of Malaysia, they were still successful in saving thousands of sea turtle eggs during this period.

The arrival of Principal Officer, Seh Ling, and Co-Manager, Jason, in July came just in time for the reopening of the resort. Without the passion and determination shown by our tireless team, 2020 would not have been a successful season for Lang Tengah Turtle Watch at Tanjong Jara Resort.

Building on a strong organisational backbone plus local talent we adapted throughout the pandemic, luckily, we were able to quickly recruit Malaysian interns and continued the rest of the season, saving as many turtle eggs as possible.



*Our team in March 2020.*



*Our team in October 2020.*



# NEST ADOPTION PROGRAMME



*One of the first nests adopted in the 2020 season.*



*A photo of a hatchling with a nest marker to be sent to the adopter.*

2020 has seen the second-highest number of nests saved since the programme started in 2016, with a total of 112 nests, of which 108 nests were adopted. Of these, 21 were critically endangered painted terrapin nests and the remaining were green turtle nests. Despite being unable to gain new adoptions from resort guests for several months due to the resort's closure during the movement control order, we were still able to continue purchasing eggs from local tender holders and fulfilling adoptions on our waiting list from the previous season. The strong support for the project shown by Tanjong Jara Resort guests in 2019 provided us with the necessary funds to save turtle eggs in 2020 despite the lack of revenue from the nest adoption programme.

We have saved 9,801 eggs from being sold to the market from human consumption in 2020 and successfully released 7,469 hatchlings back to the sea. Although the purchasing of nests was halted in early September (to allow ample time for incubation in our hatcheries before the onset of the monsoon), visitors were still taking part in the nest adoption programme and were willing to wait for their nest to be adopted the following year. As a result, we have 43 nests to be adopted on behalf of the adoptees when the season begins in March next year.

2020 had fewer nests adopted than 2019 (the highest to date with 163 nests) partly due to the lower overall sea turtle nesting figures in mainland Terengganu. Sea turtle inter-seasonal nesting usually occurs between two and four years, with 2019 being a peak season for turtle nesting. Nevertheless, the high number of nest adoptions in 2020 (155 if we include nests on the waiting list) has shown that our efforts to create awareness among the public about the importance of conserving turtle populations, especially in Terengganu, has been positive.



# NEST INSPECTIONS



*Guests seeing a hatchling during a nest inspection.*

Nest inspections provide an opportunity for us to engage resort guests in the work we are doing and offer an interactive and informative experience. We check our green turtle and painted terrapin nests in the latter stages of incubation, and inspections allow us to identify the development stage of the eggs, as well as any potential problems in the nest.

Every week we pass the daily schedule of our nest inspections to the resort to display at the reception in order to inform guests about our activities. Nest inspections take place at 10 a.m., and between late May and

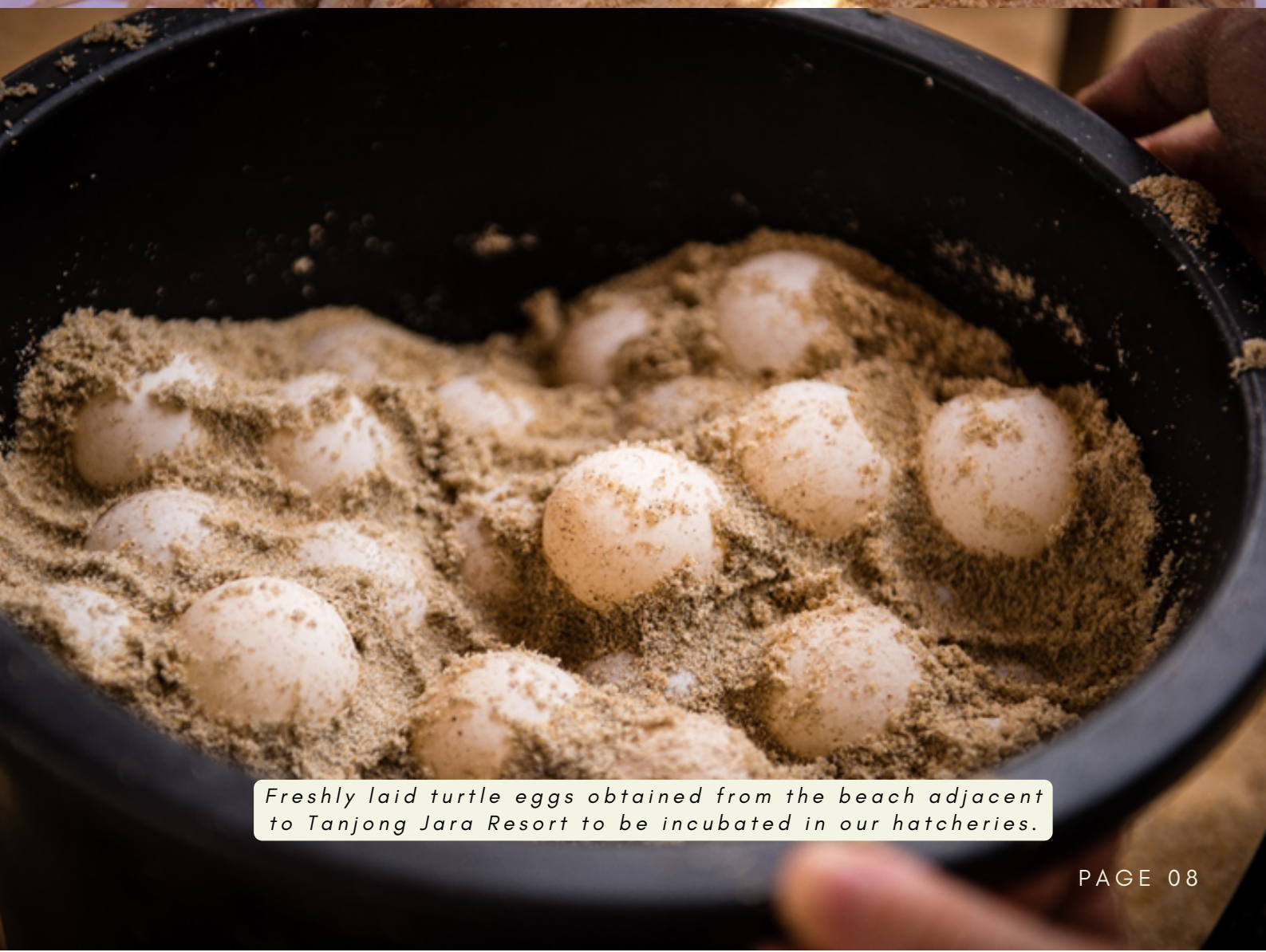
September, we had nest inspections almost every day.

Nest inspections allow us to explain the conservation process to guests, as well as the context of turtle conservation in Malaysia, turtle biology and their life cycle. This season, we have included nest excavations (see next photo) to be done with guests. Nest excavations allow us to assess the overall success rates of each nest and provide opportunities for guests to see sea turtles in every stage of their development. This new activity has been received well at the hatcheries.





*One of our interns performing a nest excavation for guests.*



*Freshly laid turtle eggs obtained from the beach adjacent to Tanjong Jara Resort to be incubated in our hatcheries.*

# HATCHLING RELEASES

Nest inspections are integral for us to assess the development stage of the nest and to know when a nest is likely to emerge. During these inspections, if we find hatchlings that appear ready to emerge later that evening, we will contact reception staff who inform guests of a scheduled hatchling release to take place at 10 p.m.

We invite guests to join us at our Visitors' Hut shortly before 10 p.m., to allow us to informally chat about the project and show a video outlining some of the work being done by the organisation. At 10 p.m. we then give a comprehensive briefing about the release, to ensure that it is carried out in a manner that avoids causing unnecessary stress to the hatchlings.

The hatchling release is carried out about 300 m away from the resort, at a location that minimises light pollution, as white light can be confusing for the hatchlings. The guests are safely guided down the beach to the release site under red light to ensure minimal disturbance to potential nesting mothers.

Hosting these hatchling release activities with guests proved especially tricky in 2020 due to restrictions placed on group sizes. Fortunately, with the help of senior Tanjong Jara Resort staff, we were able to put into place new guidelines and standard operating procedures to continue carrying out this popular activity at the resort while respecting social distancing and group limits.

Previously, hatchling releases would be conducted in one large group with one briefing provided to guests. This year, however, guests were split up into groups of 15 and four staff members/interns would provide separate briefings. Guests were also separated into four groups at the hatchling release site.

To date, Lang Tengah Turtle Watch at Tanjong Jara Resort has been able to release over 39,000 endangered turtle hatchlings back to the sea. The support received from Tanjong Jara Resort and YTL Hotels in 2020 allowed us to significantly increase our contribution to restoring and protecting sea turtle populations on the East Coast of Malaysia.





*Hatchlings making their way to the sea with Lang Tengah Turtle Watch team and Tanjong Jara Resort guests looking on.*



*One of our staff members providing the hatchling release briefing to a family of eight.*



In 2020 we were able to release:



7,336

ENDANGERED  
GREEN TURTLE  
HATCHLINGS



133

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED  
PAINTED TERRAPIN  
HATCHLINGS

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



*Local school students participating in a beach clean-up event in 2019.*



*Our team and resort staff participating in a beach-clean up event together.*

## Beach Clean-Ups

Following successful community outreach in 2019, we initially planned to continue our involvement with the local community, local schools and universities by conducting beach clean-up events this year.

220 school students across four schools were involved in Lang Tengah Turtle Watch's beach clean-ups during 2019. These events were facilitated with the aid of over 30 university students and numerous teachers and community members. Two of our beach clean-ups were sponsored by Straw Free KL.

However, due to Covid-19 restrictions, we were unable to carry out beach clean-up events with local schools and universities in 2020.

Nevertheless, we were still able to conduct a beach clean-up event on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. This event was in conjunction with the International Coastal Clean-Up (ICC) Day 2020, where 40 participants including Lang Tengah Turtle Watch staff, Tanjong Jara Resort staff and guests worked together to remove waste from the beaches closest to the resort. Majlis Perbandaran Dungun also conducted a beach clean event simultaneously with ours, which Lang Tengah Turtle Watch also helped to organize. This brought the total number of participants of these events to over 120 people.



In total 442 kg of waste was removed from beaches around Tanjong Jara Resort, of which 119 kg was recycled. The empowerment of the community to take care of the local environment is an incredibly important part of conservation work, as without local support conservation projects struggle to be sustainable. Cleaner beaches will result in a more suitable habitat for marine species which make their home in the area, including sea turtles. This also reflects positively on guest satisfaction as they will enjoy cleaner beaches during their stay at Tanjong Jara Resort.



*Tanjong Jara Resort guests and our staff sorting through recyclable materials.*

## School Outreach Project



*School students joining us for turtle-themed activities in 2019.*

In 2019 we successfully continued our educational school outreach programmes in Dungun, Terengganu. The main objective of these programmes was to raise awareness about the importance of conserving sea turtle populations and the environment. The target audience were local students in Dungun, Terengganu. Interactive talks which highlighted the way marine pollution threatens sea turtles, as well as information on their life cycle, were presented by the Lang Tengah Turtle Watch team to 225 students at a local school in Dungun.

In addition to that, a total of 188 students from three different schools in Dungun were invited to visit the Lang Tengah Turtle Watch hatchery at Tanjong Jara Resort. The students were able to learn more about turtles, the threats that they face from marine pollution and were even able to observe our nest checks. While these activities were unfeasible in 2020 (due to pandemic restrictions), we have every intention to continue our school outreach programmes in 2021 and possibly reach an even wider audience.

# THE RANGERS

In 2020, two beaches were under our supervision and as such, we collaborated with two rangers who would patrol each beach. En. Rani was in charge of patrolling Tahu Tiga Beach whilst En. Aziz patrolled Kuala Abang Beach. Both rangers contacted the Lang Tengah Turtle Watch team if a nesting mother was found during their patrols. With their help, we managed to relocate 48 nests from Tahu Tiga Beach and eight nests from Kuala Abang Beach.



*En. Rani watching a nesting turtle as she finishes laying her eggs.*



# THE VISITORS' HUT



*One of our former interns interacting with guests at the Visitors' Hut.*

Our Visitors' Hut has been a mainstay feature at Tanjong Jara Resort since 2016. Since then, we have welcomed thousands of TJR guests and hundreds of school children to our Visitors' Hut where we are able to educate the general public about sea turtle conservation in Malaysia.

The beginning of this season saw the Visitors' Hut in disrepair due to wear and tear over the years. Lang Tengah Turtle Watch has managed to secure external funding to construct a brand-new Visitors' Hut for the upcoming 2021 season. Planning and off-site construction of the new Visitors' Hut has already commenced, and we hope to have everything ready before March 2021 to welcome new and returning guests alike.

# GUEST SATISFACTION

In 2020, 156 guests completed feedback forms after visiting the visitors' hut for a nest inspection, hatchling release or an informal visit during our operating hours.

Analysis of this feedback highlighted the following results:

- 91% of 24 returning guests surveyed felt that the resort had been enhanced by the establishment of the turtle project.
- 21% of 156 guests surveyed were first-time visitors who had been recommended to stay at the resort specifically to experience the turtle conservation activities on offer. Some sources of recommendations include friends who had stayed at the resort before and social media postings.
- Guests surveyed consistently complimented the approachable nature and extensive knowledge of the Lang Tengah Turtle Watch team.
- 78% of 139 guests rated Lang Tengah Turtle Watch 5/5 for the overall experience of the activities offered by Lang Tengah Turtle Watch during their stay.
- 89% of 138 guests surveyed said they would return to the resort specifically to visit the turtle project again.
- 100% of 140 guests surveyed would recommend Lang Tengah Turtle Watch at Tanjong Jara Resort to friends/family/colleagues.

Lang Tengah Turtle Watch at Tanjong Jara continues to be an attraction for guests, who value its presence at the resort. A total of 3,400 guests attended our activities this season with our nest inspections (1,023 guests) and hatchling releases (895 guests) being the most popular activities. These numbers are especially encouraging given that the resort was closed for over three months due to the pandemic situation.

We continue to review our protocol and methods, to build on the feedback we receive from guests, and ensure that we are achieving the highest standards possible.

The most common feedback we received from guests was similar to last year's feedback, that guests would appreciate knowing more about the project from an earlier stage in their visit through the front office team. Guests also mentioned that there could be more signage around the resort, to make it easier to find the Visitors' Hut and hatcheries.

# Guest Review on TripAdvisor

## **"Relaxing Beach Vacation with Excellent Service"**

**Reviewed August 2020**

*"[...] The turtle hatchery on the resort's beach is a nice addition. We got to see a baby turtle hatch during our stay, which was pretty amazing. [...]"*

## **"World Class Beach Resort in the East Coast of Malaysia"**

**Reviewed September 2020**

*"[...] There were tons of things to do there...even the opportunity to watch the release of baby turtles. [...]"*

## **"Wonderful Vacation"**

**Reviewed October 2020**

*"[...] We were also lucky to catch the baby turtle hatchling release. [...]"*