



## COUNTRY UPDATE: SRI LANKA



# 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Northern Indian Marine Turtle Task Force 6-8 May 2025(online)

### Government Member:

Rekha Sanjeevani Rajasinghe  
Assistant Director (Marine)  
Department of Wildlife Conservation

### Non-Government Member:

Dr. Lalith Ekanayake (*Ph.D.*),  
Chairman,  
Bio Conservation Society (BCSL), Kandy  
Marine Turtle Specialist –IUCN/SSC-MTSG.



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### 1. New research or conservation projects related to marine turtles and/or their habitats

- **Amararathna, M.S.O.M., Rajasinghe, R.H.M.R.S., Samaranayake, R.A.D.D.D., Kumara, K.J.S., & Sandaruwan, W.K.A.P. (2024).** *Comparative Analysis of Turtle Nesting Dynamics in Sri Lanka's Bundala National Park, Rekawa Sanctuary, and Kumana National Park: A Study of Data from 2020 to 2023.* In Proceedings of the Annual Session WILDLANKA 2024, Volume 10, Issue 1, p. 25. Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.
- **Silva, A.P.R., Priyadarshana, P.H.M.G.C., & Rathnayake, R.A.M.S. (2024).** *Status of Illegal Marine Species Trade in Sri Lanka: A Decadal Review from 2013 to 2022.* In Proceedings of the Annual Sessions WILDLANKA International Symposium – 2024, Volume 10, Issue 1, p. 71. Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.
- **Shyamika, N.C., Gunasekara, V.R., De Zoysa, A.C.D., & Weerakoon, D.K. (2024).** *Current Status of Turtle-Based Tourism in Kosgoda.* In Proceedings of the Annual Sessions WILDLANKA International Symposium – 2024, Volume 10, Issue 1, p. 28, Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.



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- **Ekanayake, E.M.L., Liyanage, U.S.P.K. & Amararathna, M.S.O.M. (2023).** X-press pearl ship impact on sea turtles. In Maritime Accidents and Environmental Pollution - The X-Press Pearl Disaster Causes, Consequences, and Lessons Learned (1st ed.). Vithanage, M., de Alwis, A.P. and Botheju, D. (eds), 173-189, CRC Press. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003314301-9>



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- **Community Engagement for Sea Turtle Conservation**

The Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) has launched a project to involve local communities near sea turtle nesting sites in conservation efforts.

Community members, previously involved in poaching, are **trained to protect turtle nests naturally and safely release hatchlings**. In return, they receive **monthly payments** based on the number of hatchlings released. This initiative aims to reduce poaching, support local livelihoods, and enhance sea turtle conservation.

- **Marine Museum and Visitor Centre at Kalpitiya**

The Department of Wildlife Conservation has begun the construction of a **Marine Museum and Visitor Centre in Kalpitiya**. This facility aims to raise awareness about marine conservation, highlight the region's rich marine biodiversity, and educate visitors on sustainable practices. The centre will serve as an informative hub for both locals and tourists, supporting conservation efforts and promoting eco-tourism in the area.



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- **Sea Turtle Egg Hatchery Project at Kumana National Park**  
The Department of Wildlife Conservation collaboratively with a PVT organisation conducting sea turtle conservation project in Kumana National Park. This initiative is led by a private organization and aims to enhance the protection and survival of sea turtle eggs in the area.
- **Sea Turtle Conservation Documentary**  
The Department of Wildlife Conservation has produced a documentary focused on sea turtle conservation, which was **broadcasted to raise awareness about the importance of protecting sea turtles**. The documentary highlights key conservation efforts, challenges, and the vital role of local communities and organizations in ensuring the survival of these marine species.
- <https://youtu.be/00thloNMCsA?si=z2t0z-szVRnUpgc6> (It is Our Responsibility to Protect Turtles | කැප්චර්වන් රැක ගැනීමේ වගකීම අපේය | A Documentary)



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- **Rekawa Sanctuary – Turtle Visitor Centre**  
The Department of Wildlife Conservation upgraded the Rekawa Sanctuary to establish it as a dedicated Turtle Visitor Centre with Sampath Bank PLC.
- **Kumana National Park – Turtle Visitor Centre Upgrade**  
The Department of Wildlife Conservation is enhancing the Turtle Visitor Centre at Kumana National Park.
- Turtle And Coastal Health United Programme (TACHUP) collaboratively with DWC.
- Turtle volunteer programme by Pelagicos PVT Ltd. collaboratively with DWC.





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- **Working with Local Communities to mitigate marine turtle bycatch and turtle human conflict at Kalpitiya Peninsula, Sri Lanka.**

The Bio Conservation Society (BCSL) is conducting marine turtle bycatch assessment and community awareness programs in Kalpitiya peninsula. BCSL has successfully conducted first ever LED light trials in gill nets to mitigate marine turtle bycatch in fishing gears.

- **Play for Nature cricket tournament**

With the inspiring theme “Play for Nature”, The BCSL has conducted a cricket tournament at Kalpitiya Peninsula to raise awareness about Sea Turtle & Coastal Biodiversity Conservation across the Peninsula. A total of 12 Under-19 teams with 180 young cricketers from the Kalpitiya Peninsula was played during the tournament.



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### 2. Large infrastructure developments affecting marine turtles and/or their habitats (proposed or underway)

- **Marine Museum and Visitor Centre at Kalpitiya**  
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- **Visitor Centre at Vankalei Sanctuary**  
The Department of Wildlife Conservation is currently constructing a Visitor Centre at Vankalei Sanctuary.
- Tourism impact
- Harbour development



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### 3. Changes in national policy, laws, or management frameworks affecting marine turtles and/or their habitats

#### ❖ Issued Conservation Circular No.01/2024

The Department of Wildlife Conservation issued an internal circular (Conservation Circular No.01/2024) on best practices of operating a turtle egg hatchery under the supervision and management of the Department of Wildlife Conservation

#### ❖ Regulation of Private Turtle Hatcheries

The Department of Wildlife Conservation has finalized the regulatory framework for private sea turtle hatcheries. This regulation aims to ensure proper standards, enhance conservation outcomes.



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### 4. Emerging threats or challenges

1. **Predation by Domestic Animals**
2. **Beach Erosion and Habitat Loss**
3. **Natural Predators**
4. **Transboundary Fishing Practices**  
Certain unsustainable fishing practices occurring in adjacent international waters—particularly non-selective and destructive methods—have led to a notable increase in sea turtle mortality.
5. **Illegal Harvest and Human Consumption**
6. **Commercialisation Under the Guise of Conservation**
7. **Turtle bycatch**
8. **Illegal fishing gears**





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### 5. Achievement/Success story

- ✓ Wildlife Conservation, in collaboration with **SANCCOB (Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds)** and **OCPP (Ocean Country Partnership Programme)**, successfully conducted a specialized training on **oiled wildlife response** for wildlife officers and stakeholders.
- ✓ The program led to the **drafting of Sri Lanka's first National Oiled Wildlife Response Plan**, which is currently under review for finalization.
- ✓ Establishment of the Marine Steering Committee
- ✓ The Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) has **expanded sea turtle conservation efforts** in the North Western and Western regions with the support of the private sector.





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### 5. Achievement/Success story

- ✓ The Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) was able to increase the number of turtle egg hatcheries under its management. (18)
- ✓ Strandings Workshops, Necropsy Trainings (OCP, DWC, Peradeniya University)
- ✓ Citizen Science for Marine Tourism in Sri Lanka, (Oceanswell, OCP, DWC )
- ✓ DWC has an application to gather the data from public, will launch soon.
- ✓ Regional Capacity Building Programme on Marine Pollution Responses in South Asian Seas Region – SACEP (OCP, DWC, MEPA etc)





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### 5. Achievement/Success story

# LED light - trials to mitigate sea turtle bycatch- BCSL





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### 5. Achievement/Success story

# BCSL Cricket Tournament



**Thank you**