

Hawksbill Turtle Conservation

We're a big fan of Hawksbill Turtles on Treasure Island, not only are they beautiful majestic creatures, synonymous with Fijian culture and history, but they are a vital part of our coral reefs ecosystems. We are lucky that they live and breed here on the island! For over forty years Treasure Island Resort has been an advocate for the protection of Hawksbill Turtles, we were one of the first resorts in the Mamanuca Island group to employ a full-time Environmental Officer and dedicated Environment Team to run our Hawksbill Turtle Conservation Programme, among other projects. Through this programme we have released hundreds of turtles back into the wild each year; luckily this is something that has caught on with other local resorts now running similar programmes.



Hawksbill Turtle nesting season in Fiji can run from October to June each year, one of the longer nesting seasons for marine turtles. Throughout this nesting season we patrol regularly looking for new nests. Once a nest has been identified we place a small fence around and monitor it, when the eggs hatch we place the hatchlings in one of our turtle ponds where we care for them until they are less vulnerable. We then release the turtles back into the wild in small batches between 6 months and 24 months old. This conservation approach is known as a Hatchling Headstart Programme, and we are one of the very few resorts in Fiji that have the necessary permits from the

Department of Fisheries to keep turtles for conservation purposes. We ensure the turtles have ample opportunity to develop natural behaviours so they are adequately prepared for release. We adopt recognised best practice procedures for this type of programme, and in our release methodology, and consult with experts around the world to ensure the best care for our baby turtles whilst they are with us on Treasure. We submit our data to national and regional databases to contribute to development of more effective conservation strategies.



Where possible, turtles will be tagged and the unique identification number recorded before they are released. We then take the turtles to the release location where they are released on the beach close to the water's edge and allowed to crawl to the sea. This process is called 'imprinting' and is considered critical to development of navigational cues which enable them to return to their beach of birth when they begin to nest later in life.

One success story is a turtle named Adi Mamanuca who hatched on Treasure Island, she was released with a satellite tag in 2008 and her journey was tracked for 270 days when her signal was lost. She recently returned to our neighbouring island Bounty where we were able to record the sighting and start tracking her again.

We have turtle feeding displays every day (check the activities board for times) and weekly talks by our resident Environment



Team. Otherwise for more information about the Hawksbill Turtles please pay a visit to our Main Turtle Enclosure (located next to the Little Treasures Kids Club house) or ask at Reception for a member of the Environment Team who will be more than willing to answer any questions. We thank you in advance for your support of our Hawksbill Turtle Conservation programme and kindly ask that when visiting the turtles you **do not feed them without prior permission or touch them**. Although they are very docile gentle creatures, if they are alarmed or you get too close to their beaks they can bite and the experience can be very stressful for all. They can also carry salmonella bacteria which may transfer to humans: children and vulnerable adults are particularly susceptible.