

ISSUE 3, 2011



ISLAND NEWSLETTER

Issue 3, 2011

September 2011

Welcome from the General Manager!



Mr. Luke J COX

General Manager and PADI IDC Staff Instructor at Matak Island

Welcome to this our third edition of the Matak Island Newsletter for 2011!

It has been an incredibly busy period here at the resort, with one of the busiest and most successful seasons that we have had to date.

Since our last edition in June, so much has been happening at the resort, it has been difficult at times to keep up with all of the

changes and exciting developments.

This season we have welcomed a record number of guests both from local arenas and further afield as Europe and Central Asia.

One of the most exciting changes has been that of many Chinese guests from the Peoples Republic of China, holidaying in Borneo for the first time, and finding their way to Matak Island.

Coupled with our International guests from Italy and the UK, it has made for some great times, both in the water and in the bar at night.

This year we have carried out a record number of PADI certifications likewise for a full range of courses from Discover Scuba Diving and Rescue Diver, right

the way up to the professional rating of PADI Divemaster.

It is so great when we greet our guests off the jetty when they arrive as "resorters", but then a few days later they leave as PADI certified Divers.

With our daily Sipadan trips and trips to neighbouring Si-Amil Island we have really been able to offer the best-of-the-best in recreational scuba and snorkeling trips too.

The effective eco-work that the team has been doing on our house-reefs in restoration and enforcement work is also starting to reap rewards too, with our new artificial reef pyramids and the first white tip reef sharks being sighted off Humphead Point for years!

Please read on and enjoy the news!



THE FIRST WHITE TIP REEF SHARKS SEEN FOR YEARS AT THE ISLANDS WERE SPOTTED AT HUMP-HEAD POINT THIS MONTH, SIGNALLING THAT THE SHARK POPULATION IS RETURNING!

"Coral Heads Developing Nicely on the Mermaid"

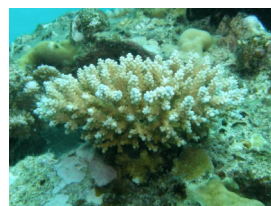
It seems like yesterday that we sunk our 2nd artificial reef at the resort in the shape of the Sipadan Mermaid, however in reality, she has her 2nd birthday this month!

The Sipadan Mermaid, our 52ft steel boat was made into a wreck on 26th September 2009 and we are delighted to report that she has become a thriving habitat of life at the end of the island.

Situated on a sandy bottom of 18-25 metres, we are now starting to see an incredible amount of life in and on her.

Hard Coral Heads are now starting to form on her steel superstructure, and very recently huge schools of glass and bait fish have moved onto the wreck literally in their millions making for some outstanding photography.

Joining the baitfish has been another resident barracuda and some large groupers who live next to the old propellers!



Inside this issue:

- Love is in the air at Matak Island
- MIDE a first for Hardy!
- Jenny B and Juho qualify as Divemasters
- We are now an EFRI Centre
- Our 3 Island Wardens start their duties.



Congratulations and great thanks to Astra Kasih who are one of our latest turtle nest sponsors this year. They follow a long line of guests who have donated RM200 to the Matakang Turtle Hatchery fund!

“Record Numbers of Turtle Nests at Matakang for 2011”

Ever since the turtle hatchery was founded at the resort in 2006. we have always been blessed with a healthy amount of turtle eggs each season. However this year has seen record numbers of turtles landing our beaches to lay their eggs.



Both Hawkesbill and Green Turtle egg numbers have reached record levels this year, to such an extent that we have had to open a second hatchery to accommodate them all.

One of our turtle team, Eteng said, “At one point we have had over 38 nests which is the most that I have ever seen at one go here”.

This record number of nests is a great sign that the marine environment is improving in East Malaysia and it is as equally satisfying to see such a success rate in hatchlings from the eggs. An average of 100 eggs successfully



become hatchlings from a nest of 115 which is a better success rate than ever before.

We believe that this is down to thorough training of the turtle team and our devotion to the marine environment.

“With regular discounts on our PADI specialties, there has never been a better time to become PADI certified in one of our huge range of specialty courses available.

“Seasonal Currents Make Awesome Drift Dives”

Over the past few weeks our House Reef has become one of the most exciting places to dive in the area as the currents have simply been amazing.



“Sometimes we can start the dive at the Dive Centre and finish at the end of the island, always protected by our eagle-eyed boatmen”, said Dive Centre Manager, Neo.

Its kind of like riding an invisible scooter as you get to drift past huge Georganian Sea Fans and alongside huge Green Bull Turtles.

Its also been great for our Discover Scuba Diving (DSD) student groups too as they have managed

to see the whole reef in just one dive, experiencing the thrill of a 3 dimensional aquarium.

Come in and see for yourself the fun that can be had!



Our TEFL training partners help staff reach new levels of excellence

“Staff Graduate with Honors in English Language”

Due to the fact that in peak season a lot of our guests come from English-speaking European countries, it is important that some of our front line staff can communicate well with them.

Therefore, in April this year, a team of our staff volunteered themselves for a very long and intensive course in Service Level 1 English language.

The course was by no means easy evidenced by the fact that 18 staff started the course but only 8 completed and graduated. Work-



ing in their own-time, often late into the night the students had coursework, homework and both a final written and final spoken examination to pass prior to graduation.

Officially verified by TEFL, we are the only resort in the area to offer such a training session to our staff in order to make our service better for you our valued guests.

“Love is in the Air Again at Matakang”

When our new Wedding Chapel was launched at the beginning of the year we had no idea that it was going to be so popular.

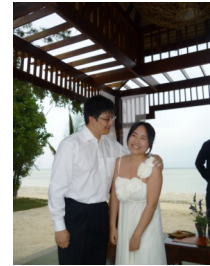
At the end of June it was almost one wedding after another and so we were really pleased to welcome two more guests from Hong Kong, Man Hui and Cai Yi Bo who chose to exchange their vows at our wedding chapel at the resort.

All of the resort staff always look forward to working on weddings at the resort as they are hard work but great fun for all.



The blushing Bride, Cai Yi Bo said, “We wanted a tropical beach setting to our wedding and we couldn't have wished for a more romantic setting than here”

After the ceremony, the newly weds went to our beach front gardens where they planted their very own coconut tree to mark their special day, which they have promised to come back and water now and then!



Our third couple this year exchange their vows amongst the tropical palms of the eastern facing wedding chapel, witnessed by all of our in-house guests!

“Turtles landing at the resort during daylight!”

Usually, our pregnant green and hawksbill turtle mothers will come up onto the beach at night to lay their eggs, as it is the safest way to avoid natural predators and of course it is far cooler for the pregnant mother in labour.

So you can imagine how shocked we were when one of our guests, Chris Jordan from the UK told us that he had seen flurries of sand being kicked up in the air by a large turtle on the beach at 1230 in the afternoon!

The Marine Biology team were quickly sent to the spot on the beach at the front of the island where they found this heavily pregnant green turtle frantically digging a nest to lay her eggs.



“To have a turtle coming up onto the beach in the midday sun to lay her eggs is indeed a most unusual occurrence”, said Marine Biologist Kee.

The team managed to get some great shots of this emotional act and at the same time gather some vital information for the Turtle Hatchery unit, and due to the fact that she was a tagged turtle this also helped us to track her back onto the island.

We wish her babies safe travels!



“WE couldn't believe the size of this green turtle who was so desperate to give birth.... In the mid-day sun!”

“An Excellent Year at MIDE 2011 and a world-first for Hardy”

Matakang isn't a stranger to travelling far and wide to spread the good news of what's going on at the resort, however we also enjoy attending our local shows closer to home too.

In July, we sent our crack team of Matakang staff to the Malaysia International Dive Expo (MIDE) in Kuala Lumpur for a 3 day exhibition alongside many other exhibitors and friends.

This year however was also a first for one of our resident Divemasters, Hardy who was selected to join the sales team for the tour.



Hardy had never travelled to KL before and in-fact had never travelled on a plane either so it was a great opportunity for him.

What was especially nice was that Hardy was able to meet so many of his customers who he had dived with over the years at Matakang who have now decided to re-book and come back to stay with us again!



A happy Hardy takes a guided tour around the MIDE exhibition.

“Jenny B and Juho Qualify as PADI Divemasters”



Jenny and Juho carry out the final underwater equipment exchange before they qualify.

We were very proud at the end of August to finally qualify our two Divemaster trainees, Jenny Bakilid and Juho Karhu as fully-fledged PADI Divemasters.

Jenny joined the company many years ago, but has always aspired to be a Divemaster. However her first hurdle was that she could hardly swim.

The management team over an 18 month period have nurtured her from Open Water Diver through to Divemaster and we are most proud of her and her achievements which also include seeing her qualify as a Reef Check Trainer!

Juho (our international intern) followed in his brothers footsteps who qualified with us last year.

Juho came to the resort in February 2010 to do his Open Water and then went onto to do his Advanced Open Water.



So we were thrilled then when he agreed to come back to Malaysia this year for a 6 months internship to do his Divemaster training.

Juho's training consists of 3 months as a trainee and then 3 months work experience at the resort where he gets to sharpen his skills even further.

Dive Centre Manager, Neo, said, "this training course is good fun but is hard work and we ensure that all of our students leave as DM's who are the very best that the industry has to offer"

"With literally hundreds of guests coming onto the island every day for the festival period to enjoy our Hari-Raya hospitality, it has made it one of the most successful festivals in the history of the resort".

“The Busiest Hari-Raya in Resort History!”

In Malaysia we need no excuse to throw a party, but Hari Raya in particular is a very special time of year for us here in Malaysia.

It is a time of year where we celebrate the end of Ramadan and a time for us to celebrate with loved ones, friends and family.

Although a hard time of year for our staff, we really enjoy

welcoming guests both locally and from further afield to join us in our island celebrations.

This year our team of chefs cooked up some amazing treats including Tom Yam Soup, Beef Rendang, Java Fried Rice and Raya Cookies, including a huge selection of local fruits for our guests to enjoy.

The dive-centre remained

very busy too as all of our non-diving guests decided to take advantage of the crystal blue seas by taking snorkeling trips and Discover Scuba Diving experiences.



“Superyacht Orion 2 at Matakong”



Chef Eddy and Kak Mas show off Malay-style!

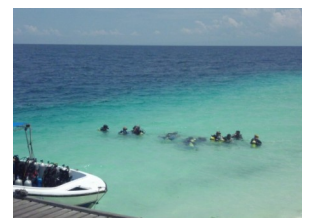
This season, the resort sparked off a great relationship with Orion Expeditions who run eco-tours worldwide on their two super ocean liners



Every 2 months for the next year, MV Orion 2 will come along-side Matakong Kecil where we offer a great selection of activities for the ocean-going guests.

The first trip to the resort saw us carrying out 14 Discover Certified Dive Courses, 6 certified guided dives, 34 people doing Malay Cooking Lessons and over 70 people enjoying the peace and tranquility of Matakong Kecil.

Some of our staff even had the opportunity to board Orion and explore her whilst she was docked at the resort!



“We are now an EFR Instructor Centre”

Living on a tropical island on the borders of beautiful Malaysia sounds like fun and often it is, but we always have to remember that we are some distance away from medical care if we need it, with Semporna some 45 minutes away by speed-boat.

Late in 2010 we qualified all of our Heads of Department as Emergency First Responders, however we have now taken it to the next level.

In essence, we can now offer Emergency First Response Instructor courses which is a great new asset to our belt of skills.

In July, our GM attended the EFRI training course in Kuala Lumpur and has been keen to start training instructors straight away.

Our first aim will be to train our Heads of Department as Instructors who can then train all of their team as responders.



Later in the beginning of 2012 we will then be starting to conduct courses on the mainland of both Semporna and Tawau, beginning with schools and educational establishments.

Mr. Luke said, “These life-saving skills are so important because you never know when you are going to need them. Our aim is to ensure that every school in the area has at least one EFR Instructor and a team of responders in order for them to assist in any case of emergency”.

Mataking really does go that extra mile to support the community.



We are now proud to say that we are now only one of a handful of centres in East Malaysia who can offer the prestigious EFR Instructor qualifications!

“Reef Restoration Pyramids Already Showing Great Potential”

In our May edition, we announced the construction plans for our Reef Restoration Pyramids which were under construction at the time of writing, however now it

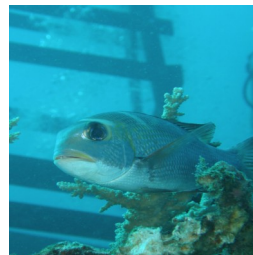


has come reality!

In June we submerged our first ten pyramids, adorning them with coconut leaf and we have seen huge results in a very short space of time.

Huge schools of Fusiliers can now be seen daily between the pyramids along with record numbers of hunting Blue Trevally, and we have even seen coral starting to naturally form already on the concrete feet of the structures!

The next stage of this project will be the sinking of more artificial reef spheres which you can read about in our next issue!



“Since the development of the pyramids and the ongoing transplant work, the House Reef has never been so healthy, vibrant and full of life under the sea!”

“Our 3 Island Wardens start their duties”

This month we are very proud once more to announce that 3 of our key players at the resort have been awarded the prestigious Honorary Wildlife Warden qualification.

Ambo (Duty Manager), Hardy (Divemaster) and Neo (Dive Centre Manager) worked extremely hard for this qualification which ended this month when they were finally given their enforcement cards, certificates and official

warden jackets.

This is an excellent new tool as the guys now have policing powers to help us protect the island



both above and below the waves.

It is also a great step towards us gaining Marine Protected Area (MPA) status in the long-term.

Much appreciation goes out to WWF Semporna who both facilitated and funded this amazing course and for helping us protect our fragile eco-system.

Well done team and good luck!



The Warden team with its VIPs inspects one of our 2 thriving turtle hatcheries at the resort..

Mataking Island—A Resort, Two islands and Spa

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facebook

We have some great deals on our accommodation at the moment here at the island, why not check out our website—www.mataking.com for more information.

Alternatively, we update our highly popular facebook site virtually daily. There are some great pictures and videos on the site for you to enjoy. Simply add yourself to our page—Mataking island, and join the other 1200 members for daily updates!

Look out for the next edition for this newsletter where we will be announcing lots of other great news, including:

- The World Record Coral Transplant Attempt takes place in October!
- An International Film takes place on our beautiful island setting
- “Malaysia, Truly Asia” comes to Mataking and posts a letter..... underwater!

Were on the Web....

Check us out at www.mataking.com.

You said..... we did!



Thanks for popping by!
See you again soon at Mataking!

The comments that we receive from our valued customers are very important to us here, as it allows us to make the improvements that YOU want to see at the resort.

Here are a few examples of what YOU said and what WE did...

YOU SAID....

“It would be good to visit other islands at times for maybe snorkeling or island hopping

WE DID...

“This is a great idea.

We have now offered this as part of a package here at the resort and can do island hopping/snorkeling trips to other islands such as Bohayadulong, Si Amil and Bohayan where we have

found some great new snorkeling places to explore”

YOU SAID...

We love Mataking Kecil for its isolation and beauty but can you build somewhere for us to rest there as it does get very hot?

WE DID...

“We anticipated that this might be a concern, so what we have done is built a unique shelter for our wandering guests.

Made of local belian wood and a local grass alang-alang roof, this is the perfect place to sit and watch the scenery with the water lapping near your feet right, situated just off the western beaches of kecil:

YOU SAID...

We would love to get involved and

do our bit for the environment at the resort. What can we do?

WE DID...

Our full-time Marine Biology Unit can advise you on what we are doing now to protect the environment, save the shark population and reduce marine debris.

Take care of yourselves for now and look forward to our next edition in December 2011.

UNTIL NEXT TIME... CIAO!!!

