



CHUMBE ISLAND CORAL PARK NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2005



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Happy New Year to you from all the Chumbe staff!!!

Since August we have had a fabulous season and have settled in to the new office well. The project was presented with another international award from Britain and has been nominated for two more in 2005. Carol Daniels our Conservation Co-ordinator has moved on to Scotland where she has a marine conservation job, a very different experience to Chumbe. The education programme continues to delight, inform and entertain numerous Zanzibari school children. Ramadan occurred in the month of October and Jonny Miller took on the role of Ramadan ranger. Finally, I am sure that you are wondering if Chumbe was affected by the tragic tsunami that occurred on Boxing day. I am including a short personal experience from Omari Nyange, our head ranger, for your interest.

Another Award!

At the World Trade Market (WTM) in London, UK, Chumbe Island Coral Park was presented with the 'Best in Marine Environment' in the first Responsible Travel awards. This special award was launched by Responsibletravel.com in association with The Times newspaper (UK), World Travel Market and Geographical Magazine (Magazine of The Royal Geographical Society). Eleanor Carter (Project manager from 1998 - 2003) picked up the award at the WTM. Details of the award can be found on www.responsibletravel.com or go to our link on the awards page of this website.

Staff:

A big welcome back to Godfry Mronga who worked with the Ranger department and left for a short sabbatical and further career enhancement on Mafia Island. He returned to work with the team on Chumbe in December.

Also, welcome to Molly O'Bryan our new volunteer. After visiting and falling in love with Chumbe Island she offered her substantial experience in marketing and administration and is now working in the office. She hails from America but has been an Africa-o-phile for many years.

Conservation and Education Programmes.

Conservation

Carol Daniels left the project in October after working for the project for just over a year. In that time she created, improved and consolidated many of the projects within the conservation programme. For example, the rangers have now all been trained to do reefcheck surveys.... Not only do the rangers work closely with fishermen they are also surveying for any problems such as Crown of Thorns and Urchins which have become more prevalent along the Tanzanian coast. The new demarcation and lifesaving mooring buoys organised by Carol are being used regularly and help the fisherman assess the boundary of the reef. Carol was also very active in the ongoing research on Ader's Duiker, vegetation survey proposals and the ongoing Indian House Crow reduction programme. A big thanks to Carol for all of her work. Carol's marine and terrestrial science reports can be found in our Reef Sanctuary page of this website.

Education

Lisa has done a sterling job of organising school trips, though Ramadan meant that they had to be put on hold as the children were not allowed to go swimming for fear of water entering their mouths and breaking their fast early! Since the year 2000 there have been 114 school trips, of which the majority were organised in the last two years under Lisa's guidance. Since 2003, all of the 550 girls who came to Chumbe participated in the snorkelling activities despite having never swam before. They were very excited by what they saw beneath the water and by the fact that they, themselves, actually got in the water and snorkelled! Not only do they leave Chumbe with new knowledge and ideas but also with a huge sense of achievement that is even bigger than their smiles!

Schools are now taking the initiated environmental clubs. throw from the island has its own and the teachers often pop into current environmental issues with Ministry of Education, are now the region to follow the example



initiative and at least two have Chukwani school which is a stone's Environment and Coral Reef Club the Chumbe office to discuss Lisa. CHICOP, along with the planning to assist other schools in of Chukwani School

Also, the Coral Reef module designed by the previous project manager, and the continued success of the education programme, has inspired the Ministry of Education to write and print new environmental education booklets covering issues such as eco-tourism, alternative technology and marine conservation issues. These booklets are currently being edited by Lisa and are due to be printed late next month.

Lisa will be leaving the project at the end of January and her role will be filled by a Tanzanian. Two years ago Lisa was the Ramadan Ranger - she immortalised this role which late last year was courageously taken on by Jonny Miller, a marine biologist who had worked with Frontier in Pemba.

Memoirs of a Ramadan Ranger - Jonny Miller:

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, during which Allah is said to have revealed the first verses of the Qur'an to Muhammad. It is a month of fasting for Muslims, where nothing may pass their lips between sunrise and sunset. This causes problems for the Rangers as some water will always be imbibed when snorkelling. Hence the Ramadan Ranger - a month-long position to continue the guided snorkelling tours.

I visited Chumbe Island in June 2004 and was amazed at the special fusion of tourism, education and conservation that embodies the work of CHICOP. When I heard of the position I immediately offered my assistance, and on October 15th I took up the cape as Ramadan Ranger 2004!

The food (and cocktails!), accommodation and ambience of Chumbe Island were as perfect as I had remembered, and I felt so privileged to be working on one of the most beautiful and diverse coral reefs that I've ever seen. I particularly enjoyed snorkelling in the early morning; gliding through the calm, clear waters is a refreshing way to wake up and a great time to see turtles. Probably the most memorable experience though, was swimming with a pair of bottlenose dolphins. Or maybe listening to the songs of the migrant humpback whales...!



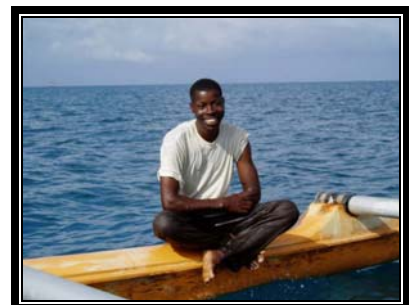
As the Ramadan Ranger (RR) there are opportunities to get more involved on the island. In the past RR's have given English lessons to the staff between snorkelling trips. This year I was able to lend a hand to the monitoring program and also give a few swimming lessons to some of the staff. In return, I was taught the intricacies of Bao (a pan-Africa game that looks confusing but is very addictive) and how to make those rope-wrapped bedside water bottles!

Four days of feasting marked the end of Ramadan, and the end of my stint as a Ranger. Time to hang up the cape and board shorts and head back to the UK for Christmas, but what a way to spend my last four weeks in Zanzibar... A huge thank you to all the guests and staff at CHICOP for a memorable time!

Head Ranger: Omari Nyange's experience of the Tsunami:

Omari had decided independently to do some extra research on the reef without mentioning this to the other staff.....

" It was 1.00pm (26.12.04) when I got into the sea. My aim was to check the temperature logger and to search for Crown of Thorns sea stars. I started from the Jetty to the edge of the reef. The current was ok and the temperature logger was fine. I then snorkelled to the south of the marine park area, near two small islands, to look for the sea stars. Suddenly, without expecting, the sea condition changed and a strong current arrived and carried me to the south of the two small islands. The seawater was like milk, big waves formed, seaweeds and small stones moved by the current. This was my first time to see a strong current like this since 1992. I tried hard to swim back to the island but I found it difficult. It was not easy to get to the island again. Soon, after finding the



current too strong to swim against I decided to go with it until I got help or found a good current to swim with. The current pushed me 4 - 5 km from Chumbe Island, my brain was working well and I did not panic. I can say good luck for me, and my life, there are some more days for me on this planet. What I found then? About 5km south of Chumbe Island I found the sea current divided into two ways. One going south and the other north east. I used all my energy to get into the north-east current because I knew it would help me get to Zanzibar. I swam until I reached between Chumbe and the Tele Islands. Then, I decided to try to get to Chumbe. It was around 4.20pm. I swam almost close to Chumbe Island, nearly 200m, but then I got in a rough current again and was swept to the south very fast. I wanted to catch the north point of the island but the current, which I was fighting, took me to the south point. I finally got to hold on to a rock on the south point. I used my left hand to remove my fins while my right hand held on to the rock wall. I held my fins in my teeth and tried to move away from the current.....hand on rock, step after step and feet on the rock bed. I did that for 20m then I found a good place to climb onto the island. When I got up on to the island I sat somewhere to think and thank God for helping me come back with good health. It was 6.06pm when I got to my room. I did not know what happened that day in the world until someone came and told me that there had been an earthquake - then I knew what it was. I am happy to be on earth again"

Apart from Omari's harrowing experience there has been no lasting effects of the tsunami on the island or the reef, fortunately all the rangers are strong swimmers and they will now all remember the safety procedures followed when they swim out to the reef alone. These last few months have been very memorable for all of us and we hope that you have a memorable, peaceful and productive 2005.

Best wishes,

Helen Peeks

Project Manager