

## Media Release **No. 597**

**For release 17 November 2014**

### **TURTLE A LONG WAY FROM HOME HELPS US LEARN MORE ABOUT THE VULNERABLE SPECIES**

The first record of a green turtle migrating between northwest Pacific Ocean and Far North Queensland comes after a tag was recently recovered in the Torres Strait and tracked back to Piai Island.

The Indonesian turtle tag was given to Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU) Rangers and passed on to Dr Col Limpus, Chief Scientist of the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection Threatened Species Unit, who specialises in marine turtles.

Dr Limpus found that the tag was attached to a nesting green turtle on 10 February 2014 at Piai Island, which lies northwest of Waigeo Island – off the extreme north-western corner of West Papua – in Raja Ampat West Papua Province, Indonesia.

Based on the nesting location, the female will belong to the New Guinea genetic stock that breeds along the entire north coast of New Guinea.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu, said this new finding reiterates the importance of community-based turtle tagging programs and the ongoing need for collaboration between Rangers and scientists.

“Green turtles are listed as a vulnerable species, this is why the TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit implements ongoing turtle management programs to safeguard their future,” Mr Elu said.

“The great majority of green turtles in Torres Strait originate from the northern GBR genetic stock, although there are a total of six different genetic stocks that are feeding together in our region”.

“Despite continual monitoring and studies of the turtle and dugong population in the Torres Strait over many years, this is the first record that we have of a green turtle migrating between a northwest Pacific Ocean nesting beach and Torres Strait in Far North Queensland.

“This reinforces the fact that we’re still learning, and that the collaboration between TSRA Rangers, scientists and neighbouring countries is so crucial to protecting the future of the green turtles.”

The group conducting the monitoring studies at Piai Island is a local non-government organisation called the Papua Sea Turtle Foundation (Yayasan Penyu Papua) working specifically with turtle conservation in West Papua, Indonesia.

Since 2007, they have been monitoring the green turtle nesting activity at Piai Island in Raja Ampat West Papua, Indonesia.

Papua Sea Turtle Foundation partners with Conservation International Indonesia, WWF Indonesia, and the State University of Papua Manokwari - West Papua.

Mr Elu thanked Dr Col Limpus and the TSRA Rangers for their dedication to marine turtle conservation and sustainability. This highlights the importance of international collaborative

approaches to the management of Green Turtle populations within the Asia Pacific region and the need for protection and monitoring of turtle nesting rookeries like Raine Island in the northern Great Barrier Reef.

**ENDS**

TSRA Media Contact – Bruce Nelson on 0423 403 449



Caption: TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit, Malu Kiai (Boigu) Rangers tagging a juvenile green turtle which contributes to the international turtle tagging program (Image: TSRA)



Caption: TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit, Erubam (Erub) Rangers checking the tag of a nesting Green Turtle during a turtle nesting survey trip to Maizab Kaur (Bramble Cay) (Image: TSRA)



Caption: A nesting green turtle returning to the ocean after laying her eggs in the Torres Strait (Image: TSRA)