

MARCH/APRIL 2012

nau**ique**

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ASIA'S VACATION ISLANDS

Elite holiday isles for the well-heeled

18TH SINGAPORE STRAITS REGATTA

Race report and pictures inside

EASTER AND SECRETARIES' WEEK CELEBRATIONS

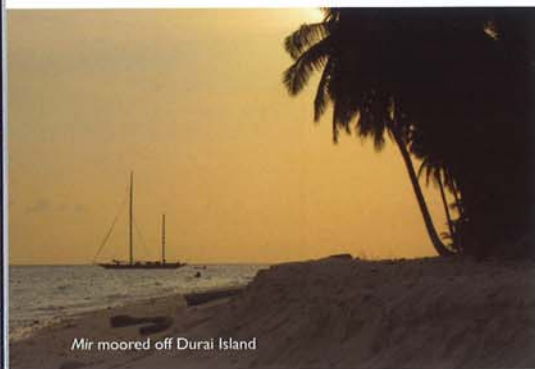
Mark your calendar with cruises,
parties, wining and dining!

Protecting Anambas

A newly formed Marine Protected Area has been developed for Anambas Islands, taking it to new heights in the overall marine conservation for Southeast Asia. **By Abigail Alling**



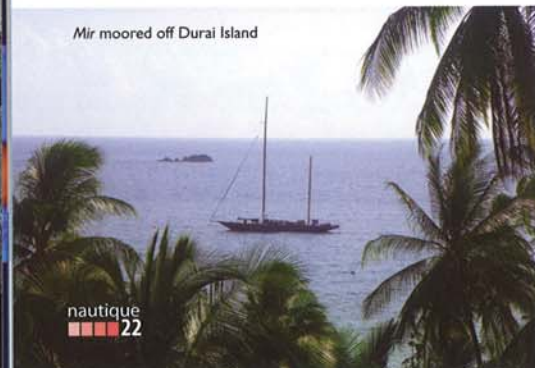
Healthy coral reef at Durai Island



Mir moored off Durai Island



Green turtle heading back to sea after laying eggs



Mir moored off Durai Island

When it comes to pristine seascapes, the white windswept beaches of Durai Island in the Anambas are without equal. Marked by 20 or more sea turtles nesting above the high tide zone, the sight is simply breathtaking.

Mother turtles rise out of the shallow reef waters just after dusk and make their way up the soft sandy beach. Sometimes, they are stopped by huge pieces of driftwood, a tangle of rope or miscellaneous trash that have been washed up on the beach. Usually though, they make it far up the beach where high tides won't reach them, thus making a safe place to lay their eggs. Upon arrival, about 100 eggs per turtle are deposited carefully into holes (made with their flippers) and then covered again with sand to protect the babies during the two-month long incubation period.

The people of Anambas protected this nesting beach in January 2010, with help from Premier Oil and Biosphere Foundation. In July 2011, the Government of Anambas declared Durai and its neighbouring island, a Marine Protected Area (MPA). This far-reaching decision to protect these two islands was made in concert with a declaration to establish an MPA for most of the Anambas Islands – a project that was guided over years of work by the President of Raffles Marina, Francis Lee. Anambas Islands is now poised to take a lead in marine conservation for Southeast Asia.

In support of this initiative and with permission from the local government, Biosphere Foundation mapped the Durai Island coral reef to learn about its health in July last year. We were pleased to see some lovely, healthy coral tables

and large boulder porites coral heads around Durai, which gave us an idea of how the entire reef must have looked like at one time. Unfortunately, more than 50 percent of the reef was severely damaged by dynamite fishing (mostly in the past), anchor damage, over-fishing (resulting in a scarcity of fish), and an infestation of Crown of Thorns starfish that are eating corals and killing the remaining living reef. Moreover, we noticed, in the fish markets, that most of the reef fish for sale were juveniles. Thus the situation in Durai is probably similar to other areas in the Anambas Islands.

Healthy fisheries and sea turtle populations need healthy reefs, so the newly formed MPA is a big step towards restoring the ecology of Durai Island. It is documented elsewhere around the world, that protecting 30 percent of marine areas from harmful activities and fishing can restore fish stocks and replenish over-fished areas. The present challenge is to gain long-term support from the community to care for this MPA and truly step back from harvesting sea turtles, fish and other marine life within its zone.

We will return this year to follow up with our friends in Anambas, especially Pak Lahanie, the guardian of Durai who dutifully and carefully continues to protect the sea turtles, and now, the Marine Protected Area of Durai. Come sail to Anambas Islands and enjoy its beauty and team of emerging conservationists!

For more information and to follow our progress, please visit www.biosfirindonesia.org and kingdomofdurai.blogspot.com/