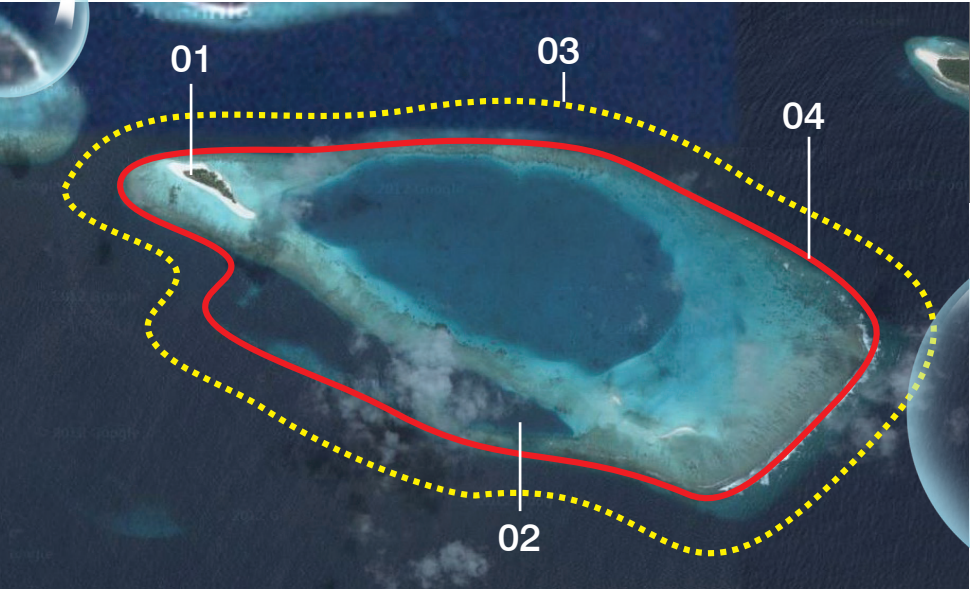


Hanifaru in Baa Atoll is an uninhabited island with a natural underwater bay famous for whale sharks. The bay is known to divers as 'Aquarium' or locally as "Vandumaafaru adi" and is home to a large number of whale sharks, grey sharks, manta rays and sting rays, and is also a nursery for these species.

HANIFARU ecosystem is vital for the aggregation of whale sharks and mantas and is a unique natural habitat. It is also one of the very few such places in the world.

The Map shows the WHALE SHARK SANCTUARY at HANIFARU, BAA ATOLL



- 01 Hanifaru Island
- 02 Hanfaru Bay Area
- 03 Buffer zone Boundary
- 04 Core Area Boundary



MANTA RAYS
a frequent visitor



&
WHALE SHARKS
a filter feeder,
a delightful underwater sight



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The Government of Maldives established the Atoll Ecosystem Conservation Project in 2003 (with support of UNDP and the Global Environment Facility) with the purpose of designing and demonstrating an effective management system for atoll ecosystem conservation and sustainable development on Baa Atoll, which could then be replicated throughout the Maldives.

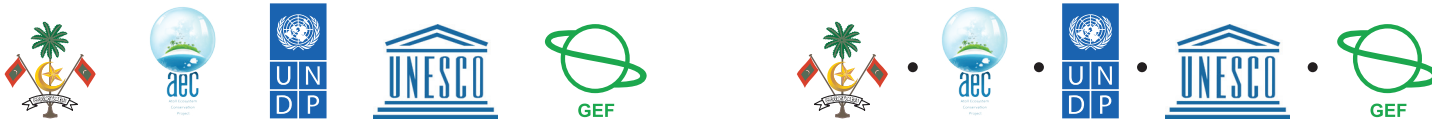
Baa Atoll was selected as the demonstration site for this project on account of its globally significant biodiversity, the commitment and capacity of local communities, the potential to address threats to biodiversity and to demonstrate sustainable use.

In recognition of the outstanding natural values of this atoll, and the commitments being made by local communities and resorts, the AEC project proposed international designation of Baa Atoll as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve through the government on 28 September 2010 and Baa Atoll was declared as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve on 29 July 2011.



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There is seasonal movement within the Maldives and in Baa WHALE SHARKS are sighted from May until October
Whale sharks visit Hanifaru to feed along with mantas, These mass feeding events only happen a few times each month and depends on the, relative plankton concentration



1

Olhugiri Island and its house reef was declared protected on 4th June 2006.

Special Features

- Located at the southern end of Baa Atoll the island is one of two islands in the Maldives with regular roosting of Frigate Birds (mainly Lesser Frigate *Fregata ariel*). The island is also known for breeding red-billed tropic bird and nesting turtles.
- In the past the island was used by traditional medicine practitioners for collecting medicinal plants. The island was also used for collecting coconuts, palm leaves, fire wood and agriculture.
- The island before declared protected was used mainly by both Thulhadhoo and Hithadhoo locals, they commend the island for its unique vegetation and fertile soil.

2

Dhigali Haa was decalred protected in October 1999 and on 5 June 2011 the boundary area of Dhigali Haa was increased to inlcude the area Dhigali Giri.

Special Features

- High biodiversity and standing population of hard and soft corals and associated marine invertebrates and vertebrates.
- This area is a long and narrow reef characterised by a colourful reef top with overhangs. The reef top at Dhighali haa is between 12m and 16m deep, with slopes down to depths of about 32m. Red-encrusting coralline algae are abundant and there are many colonies of digitate and branching *Acropora* spp. Corals.
- At the time declared protected Dhigalihaa was famous for sighting barracudas and turtles. Sharks have declined markedly in B. Atoll the last few years and today divers reports no shark sightings at this specific area, where 5 years back the area was rich in grey and white-tipped reef sharks.

3

Mathifaru Hura Region was declared as protected on 5 June 2011 and the protected area of coverage includes Mathifaru Hurra island and reef (outside and inside the atoll) and Dhashufaruhuraa island and reef (outside and inside the atoll – Dhoru Kandu).

Special Features

- High biodiversity and standing population of hard and soft corals and associated marine invertebrates and vertebrates.
- Nest sites for green and hawksbill turtles.
- Includes known grouper aggregation spawning sites.
- Roosting and nesting sites for the Black-Naped Tern, Lesser Noddies and Brown Noddies.

4

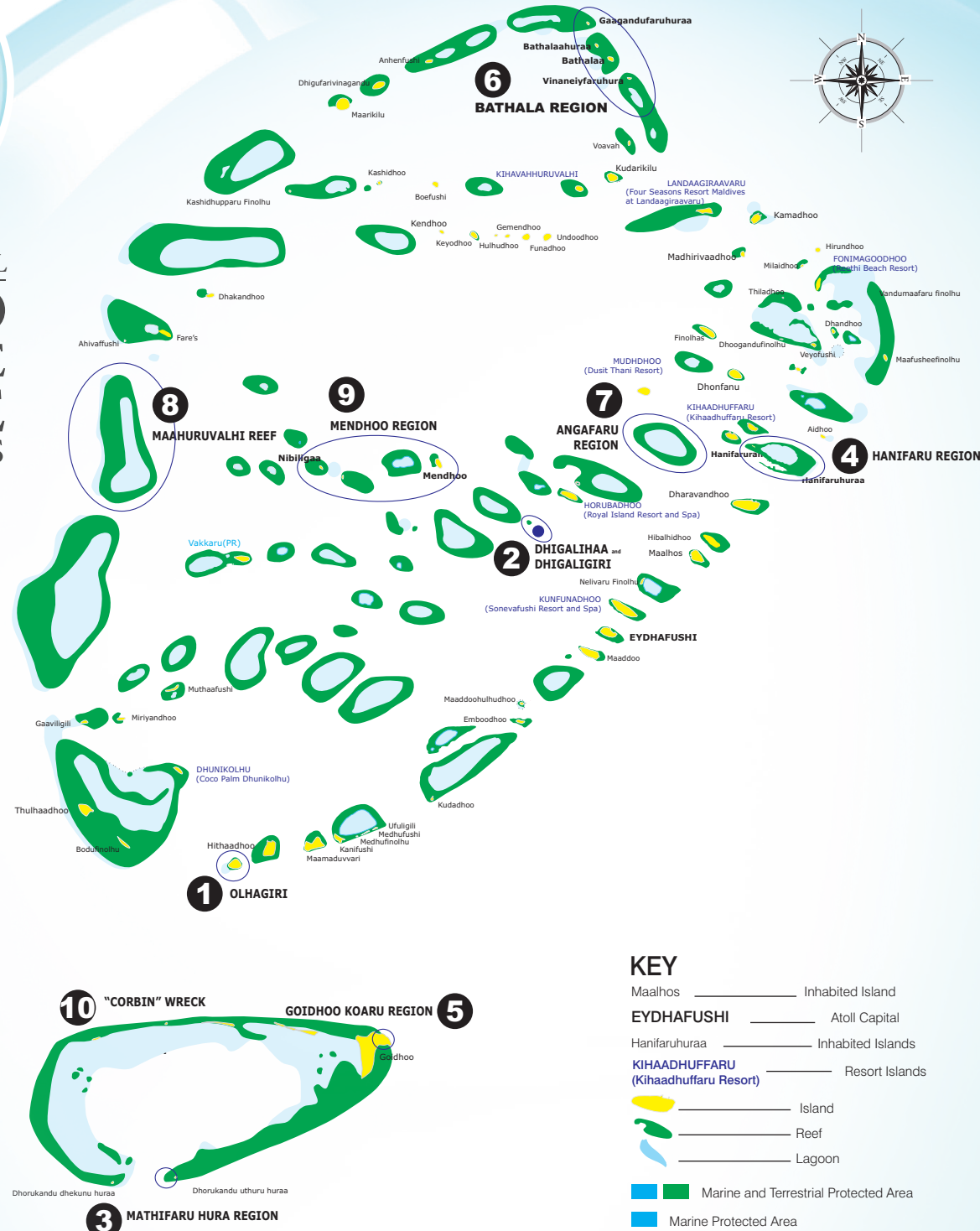
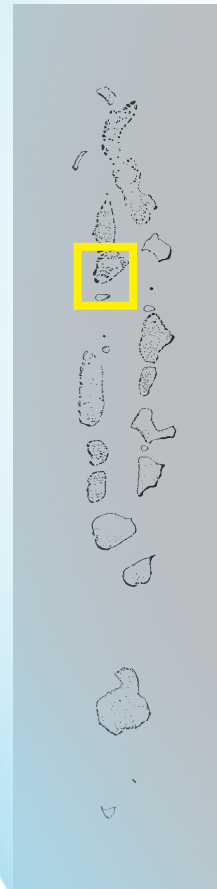
Hanifaru was declared protected on 5 June 2009 and the protected area of coverage includes the uninhabited island of Hanifaru and the reef of Hanifaru extending to 200m.

Special Features

- High biodiversity marine region possessing a unique dynamic water circulation system that during western monsoons, aggregated for feeding (whale sharks and manta rays) and mating (manta rays) in high numbers of endangered mega fauna animals (whale sharks and manta rays).
- The site is biologically and biodiversity significant for Baa Atoll, Maldives and globally.
- Nesting sites for green and hawksbill turtles
- Occasional roosting site for black-naped tern, lesser noddies and brown noddies.



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5

Goidhoo Koaru Area is located on the northern side on the inhabited island of Goidhoo. The area was declared protected on 5 June 2011.

Special Features

- This area has the highest biodiversity and largest mangrove forest within Baa Atoll and one of the largest mangrove ecosystems within the nation and has a high biodiversity population of mangrove associated vertebrates and invertebrates.
- This site is also a popular roosting site for migratory birds such as the Ruddy Turnstone and Nothern Shoveler. A number of other migratory birds are generally found as well during the north-east monsoon in this area.

6

Bathala Region was declared protected on 5 June 2011 and the protected area of coverage includes Bathalaahuraa reef and the islands including the channels and the island of Gaagandufaruhuraa to the north and the island and reef of Vinaneyfaruhuraa to the south.

Special Features

- Very high biodiversity, diverse habitat and standing population of hard and soft corals and associated marine invertebrates and vertebrates.
- Nesting sites for green and hawksbill turtles and includes known grouper aggregation spawning sites. Roosting site for black-naped tern and Includes known grouper aggregation and spawning site.

7

Angafaru was declared protected on 6th of June 2009.
The protected area includes Dhonfanuthila, Dhiguthila and
Mahaanagaa.

Years back this area was a breeding ground for both grey (*Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*) and white tip (*Triaenodon obesus*) reef sharks. Pregnant females and juveniles of both species were regularly observed at 'Shark Nursery', a once popular local dive site. Due to over fishing, reef shark numbers have dramatically decreased from this site.

Special Features

- High Biodiversity marine region with standing population of hard and soft corals and associated marine vertebrates and invertebrates.
- The reef system is directly associated with the unique dynamic water circulation system of the protected area of Hanifaru, that nursing south-west monsoons aggregates for feeding high numbers of endangered mega fauna animals (whale sharks and manta rays).

8

Maahuruvalhi Reef Region was declared protected on 5 June 2011 and the protected area of coverage includes Maahuruvalhi Reef including the channels of Ahivahfushi Kandu and Maahuruvalhi Kandu.

Special Features

- High biodiversity and standing population of hard and soft corals and associated marine invertebrates and vertebrates (especially fin fish).
- High populations of IUCN red listed species including (Napoleon fish (*Cheilinus undulatus*),
- It is known as a grouper and may be a fish aggregation site for reproduction.

9

Mendhoo Region was declared protected on 5 June 2011 and the protected area of coverage includes the island of Nibiligaa Island and reef, Mendhoobinmathee Faru and Mendhoo Island and reef and Kaburu Faru.

Special Features

- Very high biodiversity and standing population of hard and soft corals and associated marine invertebrates and vertebrates.
- Nesting sites for green and hawksbill turtles.
- Nibiligaa is a key bird roosting and nesting site for Lesser Noddies and Brown Noddies as well as the Black-Naped Tern, Greater Crested Tern and Frigate Birds

10

The wreck of "Corbin" was declared protected on 5 June 2011 and the protected area of coverage includes area one square kilometer around the wreck.

History of Corbin

The Corbin was a French ship of 400 tons, which set sail from St. Malo with the Croissant on May 18, 1601, in search of trade with the east. Plagued by misfortune and ill discipline, the Corbin was destined for disaster and met its end on Goidhoo, or Horsburgh Atoll, on July 2, 1602. It was carrying a cargo of silver and attempted salvage at the time of loss was unsuccessful because of deep water.