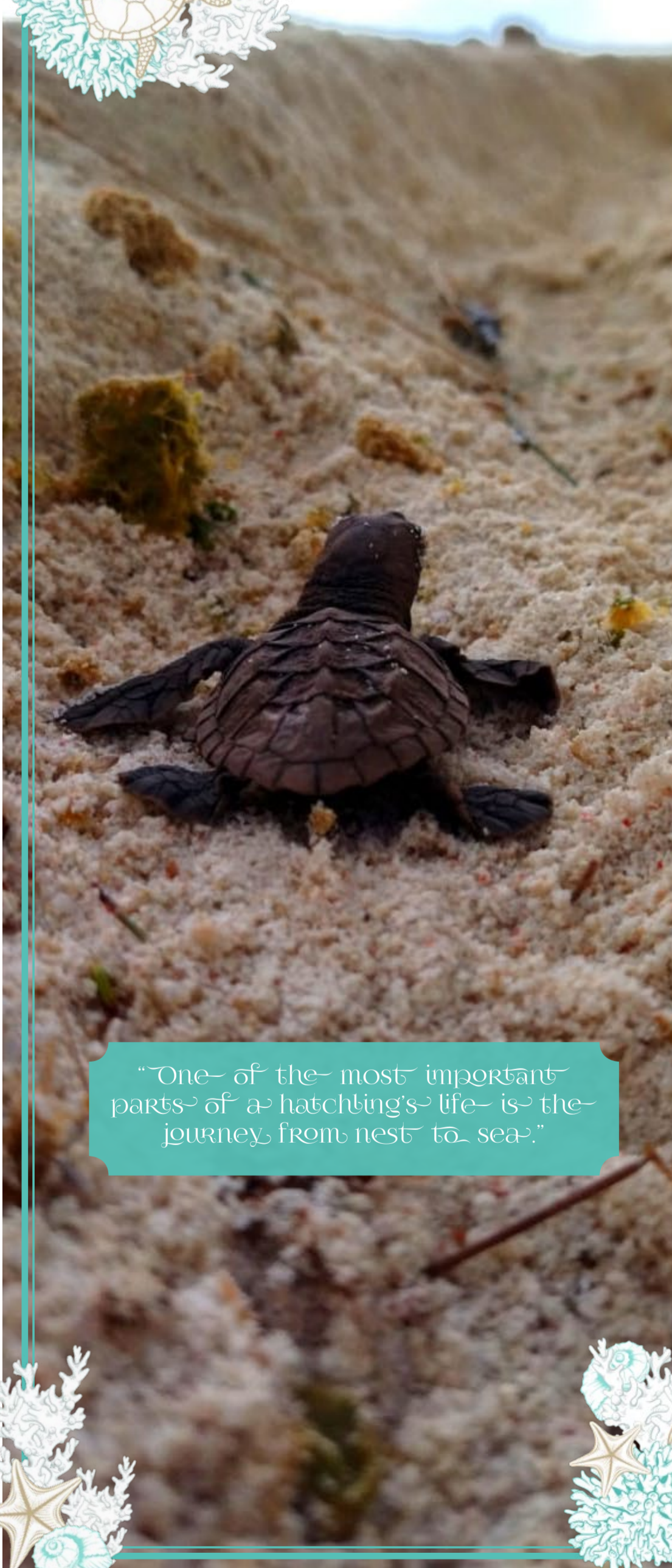


# From successful turtle nesting to successful hatching



“One of the most important parts of a hatchling’s life is the journey from nest to sea.”

CONTRIBUTED BY NASREEN KHAN  
ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

The strikingly beautiful Silhouette Island in the Seychelles - of which 93% is a designated National Park, is not only home to the luxury Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa, but has long been home to critically-endangered hawksbill turtles and giant tortoises.

In February 2022, the ICS team discovered a female hawksbill turtle laying very close to an erosion zone at the high-water mark. She safely laid 116 eggs, and was gently tagged by ICS Conservation Officer, Nasreen - before returning to the sea. The nest was immediately relocated a few metres higher to a safer spot, to prevent it from being eroded away. Nest relocations are not recommended unless the odds of the turtles hatching are greatly affected by the location.

A few months later, the Hilton’s Security Department alerted the ICS team that the nest was hatching. Disorientated, the hatchlings started making their way towards the village and away from the sea. The team dug a deep trench from the beach crest to the water’s edge, and placed the hatchling in, so that they would not veer off path again. 99 hatchlings succeeded in reaching the sea.

The following morning, the team returned to examine the nest. We were delighted to see that a few more turtle hatchlings were still emerging from the nest. The ICS team saw this as an ideal opportunity to invite the children attending Hilton’s Island Academy to observe this incredible mo-



Mama Hawksbill



Security collected the lost turtles



Digging a new nest takes a while; 3rd attempt



Hilton Academy helped with counting hatched eggs



Relocation of the eggs. We filled 4 egg trays



We found 2 predated by crabs

ment. It was a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness on sea turtles, especially on what to do during hatching encounters. Gathered around the pit, the young explorers looked on patiently and learned they should never carry a baby turtle to the water as they could interfere with a process called natal philopatry, the ability of an adult female to return to the same beach she was born (hatched) on, to lay her eggs.

After the hatchlings emerged, the nest was carefully excavated. A total of 114 turtles successfully hatched, no undeveloped eggs were found, two hatchlings were still in the egg chamber but had been predated upon by crabs (which are a common predator for baby turtles as they can easily dig into the nest to feed on the developing embryos).

Nasreen Khan of ICS said; “One of the most important parts of a hatchling’s life is the journey from nest to sea. This is where their strength and resilience start and when imprinting happens. Imprinting allows for adult females to lay her eggs on the same beach she hatched on. The long dangerous walk to the ocean is also vital for them to learn how to use their flippers before they hit the currents. It’s like learning to walk before you run, they need to walk before they swim. It was a great learning experience for the children to witness this and to learn what to do if they saw hatchlings in the future. The children now have the tools, should they ever come across hatchlings on their way to the water again, and can now guide others on the do’s and don’ts.”

