

Parting Shot 2

Save one's ass is an expression in the English language for the occasion when someone has been got out of trouble. Sometimes it needs to be taken literally.

When the summer diving season ends in Estonia and the water temperature drops to 4 degrees, the wish for warmer waters raises its head. My own exploration program's Southeast Asian chapter got its new page in the Philippines last autumn. To organize my dives I chose Sea-Explorers Philippines. They run several dive centers on different islands in the Visayas and they have a very comfortable island hopping system between these destinations.

My first stop was in their center in Dauin, which is located on the South-Eastern coast of the Negros island. There are many very interesting dive spots around Dauin but one of the highlights is definitely the Island of Apo. My second dive in the waters of this

paradisiacal island was almost ending when I noticed quite a big green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) who was scratching his back against the corals. To get a better picture, I tried to sneak as close to him as possible. To my surprise, he completely ignored me and let me take photos of him in peace. After a couple of minutes he decided to go to the surface for a bit of air (usually green sea turtles can stay underwater up to four or five minutes with just one breath). However, for some reason, a crocodile fish who had been lying on the sand closeby bolted after him. The reason appeared when the turtle returned to his former spot between the corals - some kind of fishing line had got stuck in his tail and there was a bundle in the end of it. The crocodile fish had probably thought it to be a potentially catchable fish. My guide Rico Alaban came closer as well and we decided to have a closer look at it. The turtle didn't even blink.

First, Rico tried to detangle the line but then it came clear that it wasn't around the tail, but inside... For a moment we were both baffled, but then decided to carry on. A little bit of kneading and careful tugging and Rico had the tangle of line in his hands. The turtle seemed to be completely unbothered by our actions. We left him scratching himself against his favourite piece of coral and finished our dive.

Every year thousands of sea turtles die from eating non-degradable debris. So it is always worth cleaning the corals from plastic and fishing lines when noticed, not only in AWARE Cleanup Day.

Kaido Haagen
www.kaidohaagen.com



Do you have an interesting shot with a short story behind it?

If so e mail us and yours could be the next "Parting shot".

peter@uwpmag.com