

MARCH 2011 NEWS

I have recently returned from a trip to Mozambique where I was facilitating a retreat. I was blessed to have the most amazing person to co-facilitate the retreat with me. Tania is a beautiful woman, talented healer and the most amazing Nia dance teacher that I have ever met. (She can be contacted on 083 326 6352 if you are interested in attending her classes in Hout Bay, Cape Town.)

This is the fourth retreat that I have facilitated in Ponta do Ouro always returning to Dolphin Encounters to experience their highly ethical Dolphin swims and educational program. (Dolphin Encounters can be contacted on Tel: +27 (0) 11 462 8103 / Cell: +27 (0) 82 920 8952 / Email: info@dolphin-encounters.co.za / Website: www.dolphin-encounters.co.za. Our chosen venue is O Lar Do Ouro where our hostesses spoil us with wonderful food and pristinely clean and well organised accommodation and service. Their hospitality cannot be faltered. (They can be contacted on Tel: +258 21 650038 / Cell: +27 (0) 83 325 7026 / Email: info@pontadoouro.com / Website: www.pontadoouro.com

For me the highlights of this retreat was seeing Humpback Dolphins, a rare sight in Ponta do Ouro, and a late night excursion onto a secluded beach to go in search of Turtle breeding ground. All 12 of us walked this secluded beach in the dark of night looking for signs of hatchlings. We were accompanied by a beautiful young man called Rick, who runs the Turtle Conservation Program in the area, and two other conservationists. Rick is a mine of interesting factual information like, mother Turtles returning to their exact place of birth after 25 years where she digs 2 holes; one a decoy for predators and another in which she actually lays her eggs. Average amount of eggs laid around 110! Another fact which fascinated me was the fact that hatchlings move towards the moonlight in order to get to the ocean.

Whilst our conservationists walked high up the beach where the eggs are laid, we stayed closer to the sea looking for signs of hatchlings. What we saw were hundreds of crabs all over the beach. A proverbial sea of crabs! Once baby Turtles have hatched, these crabs become their biggest predators. The purpose of our presence, besides our own interest, was to chase the crabs away. This our mere presence achieved. Then by pure chance, I saw a baby Turtle at my feet. Suddenly all I could hear was "look, baby Turtle". This came from all directions. Time and space stopped for me at that moment. My heart filled with joy and my eyes filled with tears at the pure magic before me. Whether it was a Leatherback or Loggerhead made no difference. All I saw was the tiniest, most beautiful little creature moving as fast as he could over the vast expanse of beach straight towards the sea.

Well speak about maternal instinct, suddenly the torches were on, guiding him into the light; 12 pairs of eyes watching that not one crab got close, coaxing him to move fast towards the ocean where he had a 20 hour non-stop swim ahead of him. The voices could be heard saying, "Come little Turtle come. Here, in this direction. Go as fast as you can."

The temptation to lift him to the relative safety of the ocean was great but we had been told that the journey to the sea was needed to strengthen the baby Turtle so that he was strong enough to swim once in the ocean. So we did what we could; kept him safe, encouraged his journey and smoothed the

path ahead. We were blessed to guide 8 baby Turtles into the ocean that night. I must admit that I did not even for one second consider that the crabs would have no dinner that night.

At one stage I could hear the baby Turtle saying, "I know where to go and what is expected of me. The sea is my nursery. I know where to go." I am pretty sure that this was in response to the many women saying, "come this way ... you need to get into the sea ... shame poor little thing ... the ocean is so vast ..."

My excitement and amazement was so big that I spent little time animal communicating with these little creatures. One thing is for sure, I could feel their zest for life, their drive and determination to reach their natural habitat. Man, I still feel overwhelmed 2 weeks later!

Once one has been blessed by an experience like this, I can only emphasize yet again that as humans we need to remain mindful of nature and its needs. Vehicles of any kind travelling on beaches pose a huge problem. Not only by injuring the creatures living on the beach but by creating huge tracks that prevent these little beings getting to the ocean. Another sobering fact is that we, as the human race, are driven to have homes which are situated on primary dunes. The damage to nature is huge, for the mother Turtles, when returning to their breeding ground, may be met by a mass of homes; a fancy development, offering sea views and luxury accommodation. Where do they then lay their precious eggs? Yes, lower on the dune where they are further endangered. Another problem with homes being built on primary dunes is the lighting from the homes which at times confuse these little creatures. So instead of running into the ocean they are misguided towards a certain death.

I ask that each and every person reading this newsletter, spare a thought for Nature and thank God for the wonders of the Universe.

LOVE AND LIGHT

Debbie