



MY

Relationship

to

Mangroves

By Amina T



This project was formed by the people I interacted with throughout my internship. Their stories shaped my perspective of mangroves, and more broadly, a new perspective on a world I thought I knew.

The past 6 months challenged my way of thinking. It forced me to question my beliefs and to begin learning through alternate ways of knowing.

To any and every individual who gave the time to share with me:

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Introduction

I stepped into a new reality.



This vital ecosystem, covered in trash.

My first reaction:

"How could they let this happen?"



Throughout my academic career, it was ingrained how important these plants were. Like superheroes, they are the backbone of aquatic ecosystems. From their roots to their branches, they carry a tremendous responsibility.

So how could it be that I was picking out candy wrappers from their roots?

That's when I dug deeper. I found that mangroves are highly efficient sieves that capture the debris that moves in and out with the tide and river currents. It wasn't the negligence of the residents, but the **repercussions of a global waste issue.**



The Ecosystem of Mangroves

The bridge between land and sea



Mammals in the mangroves

- Crab Eating Macaques
- Smooth Coated Otter
- Dugong Fishing Cat
- Tarsier

Other interesting creatures

- Horseshoe Crab
- Stingrays
- Shark pups (Lemon, Black Tip, Hammerhead etc.)
- Sea snakes
- Eels

Birds in the mangroves

- Herons
- Kingfishers
- Bee eater
- Mangrove cuckoo
- White Ibis
- Osprey
- Turkey Vulture
- Eagles
- Kites
- Cormorant

Reptiles in the mangroves

- Mangrove Monitor
- Mangrove Pit Viper
- Gold Ringed Cat Snake
- Chinese Water Dragon (Green Iguana)
- Sea Turtles
- Crocodiles (historic)

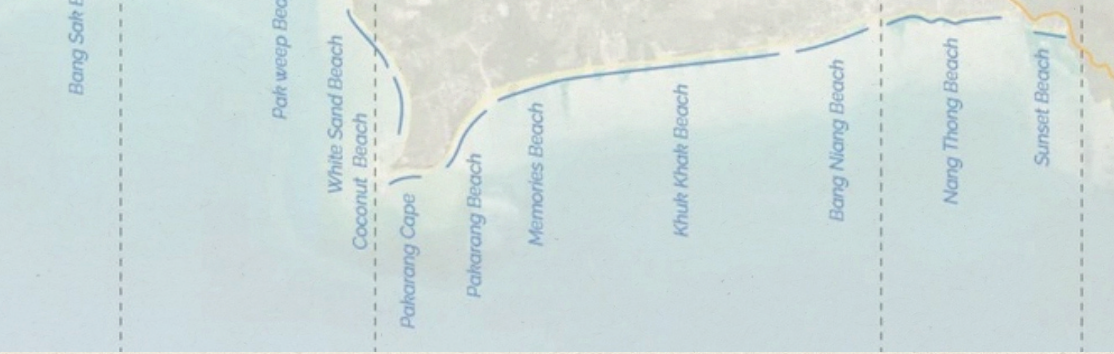


mangroves mean showing concern for our planet

Khao Lak was one of many communities hit by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that claimed 230,000 lives.

It was the site of 80% of the deaths within Thailand due to its flat coastal geography, previously low-rise bungalow construction of resorts, and lack of early warning systems.

It is thought that 4–5,000 lives were taken alone in Khao Lak. The unofficial death toll may have reached up to ten thousand due to the high number of undocumented Burmese migrant workers.



Mangroves were a saving grace for the Khao Lak community.

Mangrove forests played a massive role in protecting the coastline of Khao Lak from erosion. Mangrove trees can dissipate up to about 70% of the sea's energy.

When the tsunami hit Khao Lak in 2004 many of the small villages were protected by the mangrove forests and therefore sustained less damage than the Khao Lak beach areas – such as Nang Thong Beach and Bang Niang Beach.

3. <https://discoverykhaolak.com/tours/packagetours/khao-lak-mangrove-explorers/#~:text=The%20mangrove%20forests%20also%20play,key%20so%20safe%20tour%20operations.>



mangroves represent showing up for your community

Toilet
ଅବୃକ୍ତ

The previous photo was us preparing for International Mangrove Day. We had less than three days to prepare for over 150 people to come and join us for a full day event. Food, activities, transportation, signs, and so much more was done with a team of fewer than 10.

We took on immense responsibility, just as mangroves do. They act as nature's multi-taskers – purifying water, providing shelter and a major food source for aquatic creatures. Small but mighty, mangroves make up less than 2% of marine environments but account for 10 to 15 percent of carbon burial.



mangroves mean continued learning

I created a fillable questionnaire, translated by my fellow co-workers. I had friends fill out questions to learn more about their relationships to mangroves.

I was also able to speak to teachers, government officials, and locals who grew up with mangroves.



I learnt about mangroves as a source of income, allowing coastal people to feed their families. I also learnt that for many Myanmar people, mangroves are regularly used as charcoal. Especially for those living without electricity, mangroves have sustained families, those without another option.

This hasn't come without costs.

A few hours away, in a province named Trang, rapid economic development during the past three decades has led to widespread environmental degradation, and to marginalization of rural communities. Shrimp farms and illegal fishing have damaged the coastal region of Southern Thailand.

The only option was for the local people to take action. The Southern community model is focused on creating self-reliance in local fishing communities as a means to promote a sustainable model.

Bang Tawa, a community in the South, offers an educational cooking course, using seafood products to generate extra income sold at markets, by women.



mangroves brought new connections

I met individuals I never thought I would cross paths with.

Government officials, actors, teachers, monks.

I had conversations about the environment with an incredibly
diverse group.









mangroves are grieving

Towards the end of my internship, I lost a dear friend. Jack was my co-worker and friend.

He offered an unwavering amount of support during my time in Thailand. His loss was a huge shock for my team, and for me. He had helped me practice my Burmese and Thai, never judging my poor accent. After school, his daughters would run into the office, ready to greet their dad, who always had a smile on his face.

Like Jack, many of my co-workers grew up in Myanmar. Their homes just like the mangroves are disappearing.

Since the beginning of the century, Myanmar has lost over 60% of its mangroves over a 20 year period.

The majority of this loss is to land use changes, such as agriculture and aquaculture, fuel, and policies brought on by an **unstable government**.



mangroves forced me to show up with so much uncertainty, only to leave with a new appreciation for the unknown.

