



BANWA

PRIVATE ISLAND

# A PRIVATE ISLAND SANCTUARY IN A MARINE PROTECTED AREA

An insight into the conservation programmes and local community support work  
undertaken by Banwa Private Island's Aquos Foundation.



AQUOS

FOUNDATION

BANWA PRIVATE ISLAND

Central to Banwa's ethos from the very beginning was a desire to support, nurture and protect the island's delicate ecosystem and the rich array of flora and fauna it provides habitat for.

It's this mission that inspired us to set up the Aquos Foundation.

Our first goal was to help protect the critically endangered Hawksbill Turtle, and as part of this work a reef rehabilitation programme was also initiated.

Banwa has long been a favoured nesting site for the Hawksbill, and we quickly set up conservation practices to protect preferential areas for the turtles to lay their eggs.

Since 2016, over 4,500 Hawksbill eggs have been laid on our beaches, of which 61% have seen hatchling turtles emerge.

Our research programme involves nest identification and evaluation, monitoring, DNA sampling and tagging, and these initiatives are already providing rewarding results, with our tagging team now regularly recording repeat returns of identifiable turtles.

With reef conservation so fundamental to the future wellbeing of our marine turtle population, our Reef Balls programme is helping to stimulate the regeneration of corals around the island. To date, our work has resulted in the deployment of over 400 structures which provide habitat for the corals to colonise.



We're seeing very encouraging coral growth with up to 10cm per annum recorded in branching corals and a significant uplift in the variety and density of fish species in the research areas. Importantly, threatened species including the Napoleon Wrasse, Coral Catshark and Humpback Grouper have all been recorded within the research areas.

Our reef regeneration efforts have been complemented by our work with the government agencies and community education projects to create a Marine Protected Area, which has defined core 'no-take' zones and buffer zones to provide a sustainable long-term solution for the local fishermen whose communities rely upon their income.



Back on land, our research work is focused on the indigenous Tabon Bird and the rare Mantanani Scops Owl.

When our development work on-island first started over ten years ago, very few Tabon Birds had been reported to be present. Now, breeding colonies have significantly increased and on the last count the active nest sites numbered 98, a huge increase on the ten sites recorded five years previously.

Our Tabon research programme which monitors breeding behaviour, predation and population has been supported with CCTV observation, and our best practice was heralded by the Palawan Council For Sustainable Development at its recent International Biosphere Conference in Puerto Princesa.

The island-dwelling Mantanani Scops Owl is also the subject of a research programme conducted by the Philippines Biodiversity Conservation Programme, and Aquos Foundation actively supports this ongoing research whilst also conducting its own observation and documentation into our diverse avian species which also include the endangered Chinese Egret and Far Eastern Curlew.

The increased population and diversity of Banwa's birds has also been stimulated by our significant work to re-introduce indigenous beach forest tree and shrub species, and the thriving island landscape provides the perfect habitat for our precious species.



Of course, so much of our work depends upon the support of our local communities, and Aquos Foundation has become the flagbearer of Banwa's Corporate Social Responsibility activities.

The Foundation has provided education and communication campaigns with supplies, equipment, training and logistical support. It has also organised medical missions and initiatives to provide local communities with water tanks and filtration systems.

Furthermore, working closely with the local Marine Protection Authorities, Aquos Foundation has also been able to utilise this engagement to provide a platform for the Foundation to educate the children about the importance of protecting their precious environment. This work continues to gain momentum, with pupils developing a deeper understanding about the issues surrounding plastics, sustainable fishing and the wider benefits of environmental awareness.

Indeed, the strong sense of community and connection to the ocean provided the original inspiration for the naming of the island. Previously known as Puerco, we renamed the island Banwa, meaning 'community', and derived from Tagbanwa, the name of the tribe whose people can be traced back to Tabon Man, believed to be the earliest human Palawan settlers, dating back to 14,000 years BC.

The warmth and generosity of our neighbours has been inspiring, as has their enthusiasm for sharing their infinite knowledge of, and passion for, the region's history and culture.



Our work to enhance Banwa's environmental credentials and provide further sustainable benefits continues apace. On the mainland, the settlement of Tumarbong is home to the island's organic farm and training village, providing ethically cultivated produce for Banwa's guests and staff, as well as education, not just for the Banwa team but the surrounding villages too.

Incorporating best practice in vermiculture (the cultivation of earthworms to convert organic waste in fertiliser) and apiculture (beekeeping), Banwa's farm village aims to be an educational hub for the local community too, whereby the island's team will train locals in how to grow and harvest organic produce successfully.



A training centre within the village will shortly be completed too, providing an ideal hub for our community interaction. The ultimate goal for this off-island staff village and farm is to be totally self-sufficient both in terms of power and food production.

This is fundamental to Banwa's ethos and the resulting guest experience, and the island's staff are further evidence of the authenticity of the vision. When there are no guests on-island, the staff multi-task in their areas of passion and expertise, delivering a further sense of community and shared goals.

Moreover, Banwa offers guests something that goes beyond luxurious accommodation or exquisite service. And that is a promise to reinvest a significant proportion of revenues back into the Aquos Foundation. So simply by being on the island guests are helping to support our vital work, preserving the environment for its visitors and the communities who rely on it.

It's a virtuous circle. As its work continues to make a positive impact, Aquos Foundation helps provide an even more beautiful, sustainable environment. The community, wildlife, and landscape all prosper, and the island becomes an even more magical place to be. This is what truly sets Banwa apart.

Banwa is now available to book on an individual villa basis, or as a fully exclusive island charter.

Contact: [reservations@banwaprivateisland.com](mailto:reservations@banwaprivateisland.com)

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