

Herd of dugongs sighted off the coast of Thai island

April 22 2020



This aerial view screengrab from Thailand's National Marine Park Operation Center shows dugongs sunning themselves beneath clear turquoise waters off the coast of southern Libong island

Mesmerising aerial images showed a herd of more than 30 dugongs

drifting serenely off the coast of a Thai island on Wednesday.

Thailand's [tourism industry](#) has taken a battering since the outbreak of the coronavirus, putting millions out of jobs after the pandemic paralysed global travel.

But the slowdown in visitor foot traffic has brought a wildlife revival along shorelines and waterways, including reports this week of record numbers of leatherback turtle nests on the country's deserted beaches.

Drone images released by the National Marine Park Operation Center showed the dugongs sunning themselves beneath clear turquoise waters off the coast of southern Libong island.

The slow-moving sea creatures, closely related to the manatee, are classified as a [vulnerable species](#).

Thailand has not always been a safe haven for wildlife, with plastic waste choking [marine life](#) and [water pollution](#) from boat traffic damaging habitats.

Last year, an orphaned baby dugong was found stranded on a beach in southern Thailand, winning hearts nationwide as conservationists fought to keep it alive.

It died months later from an infection worsened by bits of rubbish lining its stomach, reviving public debate on Thailand's urgent need to tackle its plastic addiction.

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