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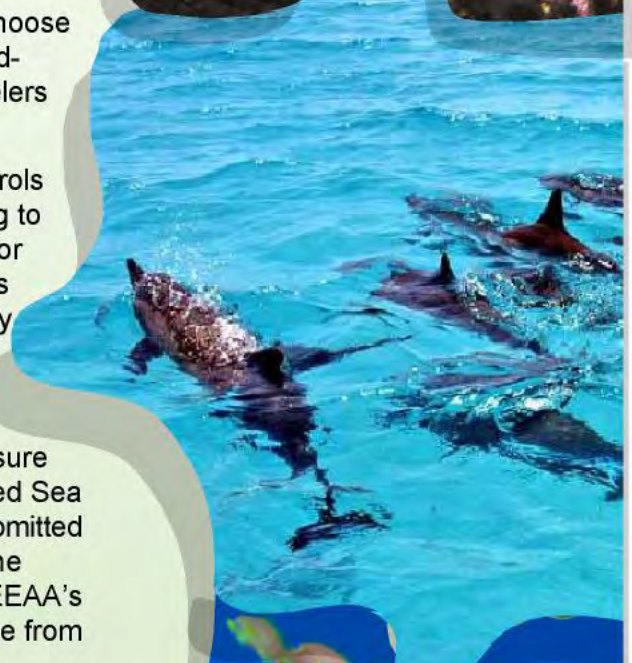
Samadai Island, (the Dolphin House)

One of the main attractions of the Southern Red Sea region, Samadai Island is a crescent-shaped reef 5 km southeast of Marsa Alam. It forms a natural lagoon providing year-round habitat and breeding grounds for a population of *Stenella longirostris*, or Spinner Dolphins, named after their acrobatic displays in which they spin longitudinally along their axes as they leap through the air.

Samadai Island's dolphin population is unusual because they choose to stay throughout the year rather than making their home in mid-ocean. Naturally, the dolphins are drawing more and more snorkelers and divers to see them, threatening their own well-being.

Egypt declared the island a protected area in 2004, and now controls the approach of both speedboats and snorkelers. Those wishing to see the dolphins pay $15 for the privilege, generating revenue for the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), which funds the Red Sea Rangers, the organization responsible for the many parks and protected areas along Egypt's Red Sea.



This fee system was developed as part of the USAID-funded Egyptian Environmental Policy Program, which included a measure focusing on the EEAA's capacity to generate revenue for the Red Sea Northern Zone. The Minister of State for Environmental Affairs submitted a proposal for an expanded diver and snorkeler fee system to the Supreme Council of Tourism—a proposal intended to increase EEAA's ability to independently finance operations by increasing revenue from conservation-related tourist activities.

With technical assistance provided by USAID, EEAA undertook a wide ranging consultation process with major Red Sea stakeholders—the dive and tourism industry, NGOs, business owners, and government entities—regarding development of a revenue generation and expenditure plan for the sustainable management of Red Sea marine ecosystems. The process culminated in a standard user fee that is applicable to the entire Egyptian Red Sea coast.

Public awareness campaigns support the Rangers' efforts to educate both tourists and locals about the dolphin areas around Samadai as well as fragile turtle breeding grounds, mangrove forests, and coral reefs.