

Date: Tue, 9 Jun 1998 08:08:45 -1000 (HST)
From: "George H. Balazs" <gbalazs@honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu>
To: balazs <gbalazs@honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu>
Subject: Re: French Frigate Shoals- 2

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On 9 Jun 1998, Sylvia Spring wrote:

> RE>French Frigate Shoals- 25 Years (fwd) 9/6/98

>
> thanks George, its nice to know that. 25 years ago - a long time.
I think I was still at Uni ...although when I come
to think of it - I started working on turtles
for the PNG Government
not long after
in 1975 and got to meet you all (including Archie) at the World
Conference in 1979. How time flies.. Sylvia

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> -----
> Date: 8/6/98 5:41 PM
> To: Sylvia Spring
> From: George H. Balazs
> Dear Sylvia-- I can't recall now if I sent this to you. Just to let you
> know that it was folks like you that I was fondly thinking of when I
> wrote the part about collaboration, partnerships and friendships!
> Best regards, George

> ----- Forwarded message -----

>
> Date: Mon, 1 Jun 1998 14:11:27 -1000 (HST)
> From: George H. Balazs <gbalazs@honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu>
> To: Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation <CTURTLE@lists.ufl.edu>
> Subject: French Frigate Shoals- 25 Years

>
> Due to some good luck, perseverance and a year or two of dreaming about
> it, 25 years ago today I touched sand for the first time at French Frigate
> Shoals. A DC-3 "Gooney Bird" aircraft, of World War II vintage, put us
> down on the 3000' Tern Island gravel runway. Ironically the landing was made
> through a mass of swirling sooty terns (see National Geographic, May 1978).

>
> I had traveled to these remote islets 500 miles up the Hawaiian chain from
> Honolulu to start a systematic tagging and monitoring study of the green
> turtles nesting there. One that would, I had hoped, last for "three
> years" with seed-money kindly granted by the New York Zoological Society
> under Dr. Wayne King.

> Not much was known then about such things as how many green turtles nested
> in Hawaii, what nesting cycles they displayed, the turtles' dispersal
> throughout Hawaii (or maybe elsewhere in the Pacific), growth rates of the
> youngsters, and time to maturity. However, what was clearly known at that
> time, in Honolulu and on Maui and other inhabited islands of Hawaii, was
> that a good market and high price existed in the restaurant trade for
> green turtle meat. And that the turtles had no legal protection and could
> be caught pretty easily in certain places using modern scuba gear and
> relatively cheap synthetic tangle nets.

> I would have scarcely remembered this date of June 1st, or given it any
> notice, had it not been for Ursula Keuper-Bennett's sharp eye for
> historical moments, and deep appreciation for the Hawaiian honu that
> husband Peter and her dive with each summer off of Maui. And talk about
> frequently on Cturtle. Thank you Ursula and Peter, for your involvement
> and for your affectionate website segment on French Frigate Shoals
> (<http://www.turtles.org/ffsland0.htm>). During the 25 years of our tagging
> and monitoring program (the 26th season this year), much has been learned
> almost entirely through the collaboration, partnerships, and friendships
> built with other researchers and lay persons. Peter and Ursula exemplify
> in the finest fashion a portion of those many individuals.

> For these past 25 years the tagging of turtles to achieve individual or
> cohort recognition has been the "gold-standard" foundation of our work.
> About 2000 nesting greens have been tagged and nearly 3900 others, mainly
> immatures, in numerous Hawaiian coastal foraging habitats. However,
> technological advances in tags, and our current financial ability to
> purchase them, have allowed us to now exclusively use PIT tags. The chances
> appear to be greater for these tags to be retained by our turtles when
> another 25 years pass by.

> Based on our annual number of nesters, and in-water sampling of immatures,
> and anecdotal reports by recreational divers, green turtles in Hawaii show
> very encouraging signs of population recovery since being protected in
> 1978 under the US Endangered Species Act. Yes, we have this nagging tumor
> problem that is severe in individuals at many locations. The work on this
> disease is essential and continues by an array of respected pathologists,
> virologists and epidemiologists. Far better today, however, to look at
> the bright side. The numbers are up throughout Hawaii. And the road to
> population recovery is indeed possible, given some patience, the passage
> of time, and hard work by many individuals respecting one another's
> diversity of opinions, talents and efforts.

> Aloha, George Balazs

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> Received: from honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu (honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu [128.171.242.32]
> by solwarra.gbrmpa.gov.au (8.8.8/8.8.8) with SMTP id LAA17221
> for <sylvia_spring@quickmail.macnet2.gbrmpa.gov.au>; Mon, 8 Jun 1998 11:
> Received: (from gbalazs@localhost) by honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu (950413.SGI.8.6.1
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