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## **SKELETONS IN OUR CLOSET: SEA TURTLE SPECIMENS AT THE BERNICE PAUAHI BISHOP MUSEUM IN HAWAII**

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There are many advantages to natural history collections collaborating with marine turtle research and conservation programs to archive well-documented biological material. From a scientific standpoint, a diverse collection of taxonomically identified specimens located in a single institution can provide a wide variety of research opportunities without the financial and logistic costs associated with field studies. Specimen data, such as localities and collection dates, allow population, ecological, and genetic studies to be calibrated with time, which makes it possible for researchers to examine changes in populations and to track those patterns in relation to natural or human-induced changes in the environment. From an educational standpoint, donated specimens can be used during collection tours and special events to generate awareness within the non-scientific community of the challenges faced by those involved in sea turtle conservation. Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum and NOAA's Marine Turtle Research Program (MTRP) recently partnered to archive a collection of sea turtle skeletal material, the vast majority of which was collected in the Pacific over the past three decades. This accession of 120 specimens has vastly improved the Bishop Museum's marine turtle assemblage, making it one of the world's largest and most diverse collections of sea turtles from the Pacific region. It has doubled the number of specimens of the following species: *Caretta caretta*, *Dermochelys coriacea*, and *Eretmochelys imbricata*. And it has more than doubled the number of *Chelonia mydas* specimens, bringing the count up from 49 to 125. This poster outlines the workflow used by Bishop Museum staff to catalog, house, and database this large and valuable collection of specimens. By generously donating this material to the museum, MTRP has made the specimens themselves and their data accessible to the scientific community, ensured that the specimens will be housed in excellent storage facilities in perpetuity, and provided outreach tools that the museum can use to further its educational mission and promote interest in conserving sea turtle populations around the globe.

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## **SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE PRESENCE OF *CARETTA CARETTA* NESTS ON THE COASTAL AREA OF TARANTO IN PUGLIA, SOUTHERN ITALY.**

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The regular nesting of *Caretta caretta* on the western side of the Mediterranean basin clearly shows that this species is widening its nesting areas on the Italian territory. After a monitoring program of the beaches, the southern coast of Ionian Calabria has been recently recognized as the most important Italian nesting area of the loggerhead sea turtle.

The northern side of the Ionian coast (Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria) is potentially suitable as a nesting ground too, but in this area records of nesting are occasional, probably because a regular monitoring program of beaches is still missing.

In summer 2011 and 2014 "WWF Taranto" (WWF-Ta), duly authorized by Ministry of Environment, has coordinated the supervision and permanent observation of *Caretta caretta* nesting sites founded in both cases along a part of Ionian coastline 300m long and located in the area of Campomarino-Maruggio, province of Taranto (Southern Italy).

In 2011, 33 eggs successfully hatched on a total of 90 laid by the female loggerhead. In 2014, the nest contained more eggs (110 eggs) than the one of 2011, but unfortunately there has been no outcome, because sea storms have produced the outcrop on the surface of the eggs that were also trampled by unaware swimmers. Despite the failure of the nest, the presence of volunteers on the site has brought a number of positive effects on the territory.

In this period WWF-Ta volunteers, supported by other environmental organizations (WWF Oasi Policoro, Greenrope, WWF Martina Franca) led a number of education and awareness campaigns through bathers and created positive synergies with local communities, tourists and authorities. Volunteers gave information to help people becoming more conscious about knowledge and conservation of the Mediterranean marine environment and its sensitive species as the loggerhead sea turtle. The increasing awareness about *Caretta caretta* presence allowed an exchange with local authorities to promote and apply activities to protect the coast and its plant and animal life. Local authorities, above all the district of Maruggio gave support to the monitoring campaign through funds and infrastructures. This cooperation has promoted a three years plan including regular night patrols of the beaches in the nesting area, to ease the sighting of the female laying eggs, to early protect the nest from sea storms, to increase the awareness of people working and living near the sea and to plan environmental education courses for schools and seasonal tourists.

Overall the presence in this area of species under risk of extinction, as *Caretta caretta*, requires a careful context analysis, to prevent and estimate the extent of potential threats for nests and to develop new tourism scenarios.