

Marine Turtle Specialist Group

of the

I.U.C.N. SURVIVAL SERVICE COMMISSION

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Dr. Ernest Ross
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Dear Ernest:

Many thanks for your letter; it was nice to establish contact with you again, and please give my best regards to Mary.

I am enclosing - or rather sending separately - a packet of sea turtle teprints which I hope may be of interest. I am afraid nutrition of turtles is a field of which I am somewhat ignorant - as the enclosed paper on 'The Sun and the Turtle' will reveal! However, you should certainly make contact with John Hendrickson and with Mariculture, if you haven't already done so. Both are currently working on turtle nutrition, the former on the pure science basis at present, but the latter on a large commercial scale. Mariculture are having numerous problems of various kinds at the moment, I understand, but nevertheless you should get some kind of reply to your letter. The addresses are: Dr. J. Hendrickson Dept. of Biological Sciences, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721; Mariculture Ltd., Grand Cayman Island, West Indies.

Incidentally, the current IUCN policy is to treat 'Head-starting', i.e. raising of baby sea turtles for some months or years before releasing them, as a purely experimental procedure that should not be looked upon as a definite conservation measure. This is because it is possible that baby sea turtles have to go through an entirely natural life cycle if they are to breed successfully, and in the right places, when they mature. On the other hand, this may well be an over-cautious policy, and several recent recoveries demonstrate that yearling green turtles will at least survive and grow when released, though we are still not sure that they will reproduce.

I got back from French Guiana just a few days ago. We did a month's tagging and ~~found~~ tagged 649 leatherbacks, 20 greens, 18 ridleys, and 4 hawksbills. The smallest leatherback was only 51 inches, the two largest both 71½ inches, but in four years and thousand of turtles measured, I have yet to find a six-foot leatherback!

All the best,


Peter C.H. Pritchard