

BASKING BEHAVIOR OF GREEN TURTLES IN THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

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Land basking in Galapagos green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) was first recorded in the 1960's by buccaneers William Dampier and William Ambrose Cowley. Several observations were made during the 1970's and 1980's by several researchers who analyzed the possible role of this behavior in avoiding predators, mating and thermoregulation. We present results of a study that carried out between December to May from 2002 – 2005 in the nesting beaches of Bahía Barahona and Quinta Playa (Isabela Island), Las Salinas (Seymour Island) and Las Bachas (Santa Cruz Island). We tagged, measured, and examined every turtle found along the beach during day and night hours in order to conduct comprehensive studies of the population. We encountered more than eight hundred land basking turtles on two of the primary nesting beaches in the Galapagos, Quinta Playa and Bahía Barahona. Many turtles rested on the sand for prolonged intervals during both day and night. Ninety percent of basking turtles were females; the trend for relative abundance of basking females was consistent with the nesting female abundance trend among nesting seasons. Basking females encountered with flipper tags were all identified as nesting females from current season, thereby suggesting that basking behavior is related to reproduction.

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