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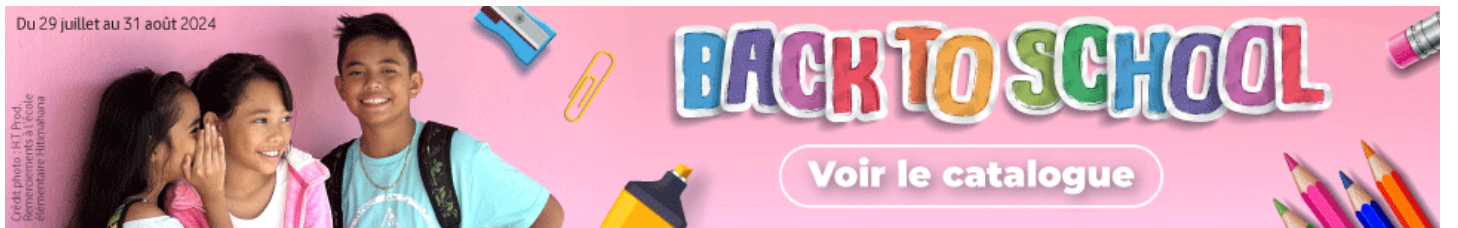
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An “exceptional” green turtle nesting season in Tetiaroa



This year, nearly 35,000 baby green turtles were born in Tetiaroa under the protection of the Te mana o te moana association. Photo credit: Théo Guillaume / Te mana o te moana.



Tahiti, July 30, 2024 - The Te mana o te moana association, dedicated to the preservation of green turtles, has published the results of the nesting season in Tetiaroa. A year described as "exceptional", with nearly 35,000 baby turtles born and 219 nestings observed during nighttime surveys.

Read also: Te mana o te moana, guardian angel of sea turtles and their sanctuary in Tetiaroa.



As announced by Cécile Gaspar, co-founder and director of strategy for the Te mana o te moana association, to Tahiti Infos last January, this green turtle nesting season was the second best recorded since the creation of the association 18 years ago. This information was revealed on its Facebook page. Some figures illustrate this season: volunteers, working day and night, noted more than 1,400 turtle ascents and confirmed the existence of 441 nests. Thanks to the meticulous analysis of each nest recorded, Te mana o te moana estimated the number of babies born at 34,980, with notable peaks in laying in December and January, pivotal periods, similar to the previous year. During the night surveys, 219 females were observed, allowing the identification of 76 individuals, 13 of which had already been recorded in previous seasons.

Each year, the data collected by the association is added to those already collected, an essential component for the work of the association's scientists. *"It is important to have long-term data, in order to learn more about the inter-laying times of turtles. With our latest assessment, we*

have managed to determine that a turtle comes to lay eggs on average every six years in Tetiaroa,” explains Cécile Gaspar. Note that this research program is authorized and partly funded by the Directorate of the Environment (Diren). “We are really happy with these results, because we are always learning more about turtles, particularly about the impact of climate change on the sex ratio (number of males and females per laying, editor’s note).”

Erosion, a growing problem

While this year, scientists and volunteers from Te mana o te moana have recorded a record number of traces, an unfortunate observation has nevertheless emerged: the problem of beach erosion, which prevents turtles from accessing their nesting sites. “The turtles are starting to be disturbed by this phenomenon,” says the scientist. This is yet another concern, as the Tetiaroa site aims to be a sanctuary for these marine reptiles. “We had already managed to eradicate the rats thanks to a program, we take care of the little injured ones that we find... of course, There is still predation by crabs, but we are maximizing their chances,” she explains. Faced with this erosion problem, which affects not only the Tetiaroa atoll, but all the Polynesian islands, the association will launch a revegetation program in cooperation with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to try to save the coastlines. “Among the four pilot sites, two are located in Tetiaroa.”

In addition, the association will soon try, again with the support of Diren, to extend its data perimeter. Indeed, Cécile Gaspar has announced that she wants to set up on certain remote islands, thanks to the participation of the populations. “We would like to set up the same patrol and surveillance system that we do here in Tetiaroa, on other islands where turtles usually lay their eggs,” she explains to us. The project should be launched soon by Diren.



According to Cécile Gaspar, co-founder of the association, erosion is starting to become a problem on Polynesian beaches. It prevents turtles from reaching suitable places to lay their eggs. Photo credit: Théo Guillaume / Te mana o te moana.

A winning bet that continues

Te mana o te moana is an association dedicated to the protection of sea turtles on the atoll of Tetiaroa. Founded in 2004, its launch coincided with the construction of the famous hotel The Brando. “Cécile had initially suggested that I establish an association in Moorea to take in sick



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or injured turtles (the association also has a turtle care center at the InterContinental in Faa'a, which was located in Moorea until June 2023, Editor's note) recalled Richard Bailey, president and CEO of Pacific Beachcomber, the company that owns the Brando, speaking to Tahiti Infos last January. He is also co-founder of Te mana o te moana with Cécile Gaspar. "Between 2004 and 2009, the date construction of the Brando began, Cécile and the volunteers noted traces of egg-laying on the atoll." By mutual agreement, the hotel villas were moved back several meters into the vegetation compared to the initial plan, so as not to disturb the turtles' nesting. Since then, the hotel and the association have lived in harmony, with guests being invited to attend the nesting. A wish expressed by Marlon Brando to Richard Bailey before the construction of the complex: "He wanted visitors to his island to learn and share knowledge."

Written by Thibault Segalard on Tuesday, July 30, 2024 at 3:27 p.m. | Read 1181 times



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