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# Analysis on Global Sea Turtle Conservation

Ziyi Yu *

College of Science, Purdue University, West Lafayette, United States

* Corresponding Author Email: yu1465@purdue.edu

**Abstract.** Climate change is a major concern to sea turtle populations, notably in terms of temperature-dependent sex determination (TSD) and sea level rise. TSD is a biological mechanism that decides the sex of turtle hatchlings dependent on hatching temperature, and with global warming, sex ratios are becoming increasingly imbalanced. Furthermore, increasing sea levels endanger vital nesting locations, aggravating the threat to turtle populations. This article investigates these climate-related concerns while also looking at various habitat restoration strategies. Strategies such as collaborating with local fishermen and moving turtle eggs aim to reduce bycatch and poaching. Conservation measures are also thoroughly studied, with a focus on captive breeding and the ethical problems that come with it. Through public outreach, the rehabilitation center not only treats wounded turtles but also spreads awareness about turtle conservation. When considered collectively, these initiatives highlight the critical need for an integrated strategy to protect sea turtles from the growing stressors posed by their habitat. This project aims to investigate the challenges posed by climate change to sea turtles, as well as methods for protecting and restoring their environment. Ultimately, it will provide integrated solutions to guarantee the sea turtles' long-term existence.

**Keywords:** Temperature-Dependent Sex Determination, Climate change, Captivity, Rehabilitation.

## 1. Introduction

Sea turtles are ancient Marine species that have existed for more than 100 million years and play a crucial role in Marine ecosystems. These species help maintain the health of seagrass beds and coral reefs, and these habitats provide critical habitats for other Marine life. However, climate change is increasingly threatening the long-term survival of sea turtles. Rising global temperatures, rising sea levels and ocean acidification are all contributing factors to these threats. One of the issues of particular concern is temperature-dependent sex determination (TSD), a biological process that determines the sex of hatchlings based on the temperature at which their eggs hatch. Higher temperatures lead to more female hatchlings, thus disrupting the natural sex ratio with potentially serious consequences for population dynamics [1].

In addition to TSD problems, rising sea levels also threaten turtle nesting sites that are already very vulnerable. These nests are located on beaches, many of which are disappearing due to coastal erosion, storm surge, and human activity. As these critical habitats shrink, turtles are forced to seek new, more inhospitable areas to lay eggs, which may further jeopardize their reproductive success [2]. Given these mounting environmental threats, scientists and conservationists are urgently seeking solutions to restore habitats and maintain a sustainable turtle population.

Several studies have focused on the effects of climate change on sea turtles, especially the role of TSD. Studies have shown that an increase in temperature of only a few degrees can significantly change the sex ratio of juvenile turtles, resulting in a population dominated by females [3]. This phenomenon may lead to population collapse in the long run because of the limited number of males available for breeding. In addition, rising sea levels are causing widespread loss of nesting habitat, further adding to the pressure on these populations. Coastal erosion driven by climate change is expected to accelerate, resulting in fewer suitable nesting sites.

In addition to environmental challenges, conservation efforts are used to mitigate damage. Captive breeding programs, although controversial, have become indispensable measures as an important strategy to preserve genetic diversity and species survival. In addition, rehabilitation centers provide

critical care to injured or sick turtles while raising public awareness of conservation efforts. These initiatives highlight the need for multifaceted measures to address the many threats posed by climate change.

This paper aims to address the need for a comprehensive approach to turtle conservation by integrating research on climate change impacts, such as temperature-dependent sex determination and habitat loss, with practical habitat restoration and conservation strategies. By combining these key areas into a unified framework, this paper fills a gap in related research. This thesis is divided into two main parts: the first part examines the impacts of climate change on sea turtles, especially TSD and sea level rise; The second part focuses on conservation strategies such as captivity and rehabilitation. This combined approach provides actionable insights into turtle conservation.

## 2. The Effect of Climate Change on Sea Turtles and Methods for Restoring Habitats

### 2.1. Temperature-Dependent Sex Determination (TSD)

As a type of environmental sex determination, temperature-dependent sex determination means the phenotypic sex of their embryos is determined by the incubation temperature of the eggs instead of by genetic factors as in many other animals [4]. When the temperature is higher than the pivotal temperature, more female sea turtle tends to be produced, and vice versa. The pivotal temperature is a specific temperature where the ratio of males to females is 1:1, which varies slightly among different sea turtle species and nesting locations [5]. Even small changes in hatching temperature can lead to significant shifts in the sex ratio of hatchlings.

Rising temperatures, mostly caused by climate change, can have a considerable influence on sea turtle populations in a variety of ways, most notably through the Temperature-Dependent Sex Determination (TSD) mechanism. Higher sand temperatures at nesting beaches result in more female hatchlings and fewer male turtles. If temperatures consistently climb over the pivotal temperature, there will be an excess of female turtles and a significant lack of male turtles, potentially causing mating and genetic variety issues. This lopsided sex ratio may affect the long-term viability of sea turtle populations. Also, increased hatching temperature will overall reduce hatching success, the temperature of the nesting site sand significantly impacts the growth and survival of embryos [6]. Elevated temperatures may also lead to developmental abnormalities in hatchlings, impacting their survival and fitness [6]. The findings of this study indicate a strong female-biased sex ratio and significant deterioration in hatchling quality, both in morphology and locomotor ability, within current rookeries. Potentially leading to a higher chance of being captured by predators. Also, besides from direct impacts of temperature change, increasing ocean temperatures can cause a prevalence of coral diseases, and coral reefs are crucial habitats for certain sea turtle species [7]. This can decrease the availability of food and shelter, adversely affecting the health and growth of turtle populations

### 2.2. Other Climate Change Effects

Coastal regions are progressively being impacted by numerous global change issues. As humans emit more and more greenhouse gases like CO2, the net temperature of the earth is constantly increasing, causing sea levels to rise as water thermally expands and ice sheets melt[8]. And nest site selection necessitates a delicate balance; places too near to the coast pose problems like floods and erosion, while those further inland are vulnerable to desiccation and increased predation. As a result, the beach regions where sea turtles lay their eggs are shrinking due to rising sea levels, which forces the same number of female turtles to nest in smaller and smaller locations. The intraspecific rivalry will increase as a result, and later nesting turtles can unintentionally destroy eggs that have already been laid. Sea turtles will also be forced to lay their eggs closer to inland regions due to increasing sea levels, which puts them at greater risk of being eaten by other animals. Furthermore, continuous high tides or rising sea levels may cause turtle eggs to be immersed in water for extended periods of time, which can lower the success rate of hatching. This is because of two factors: dehydration (produced

by excessive salinity in seawater causing a concentration gradient, which inhibits the eggs from acquiring the necessary moisture) and egg asphyxiation (insufficient oxygen supply)[9].

### 2.3. Methods for Restoring Sea Turtle Habitats

Between January and September 1991, TAMAR interviewed fishermen in Ubatuba, Brazil, to collect data on turtle captures, such as species, size, fishing methods, and understanding of conservation rules. These interviews revealed that numerous fishing methods, particularly floating weirs, unintentionally catch turtles. TAMAR has created cooperation with fishermen who voluntarily report turtle catches despite the fact that they do not receive any recompense and face problems such as broken nets and lost time. The partnership's success relies on education and community engagement, as well as the creation of alternative revenue streams such as mussel farming, handicrafts, and recycling workshops. TAMAR supports conservation efforts through a variety of means, including frequent personal contact with fishermen, participation in local events, and educational programs at its Ubatuba visitor center. In addition, TAMAR offers turtle conservation training to university students[10].

A study in Cuixmala, Mexico was carried out over multiple breeding seasons with the aim of protecting the sea turtle nests located on the beaches of Cuixmala and was led by the Cuixmala Ecological Foundation. To avoid poaching and predation, beaches are monitored at night for turtle nests, which are then removed, documented, and relocated to a secure hatchery. The hatchery is relocated once a year to minimize contamination, and precautions are made to protect the nest from predators. The study tracked the hatchlings' hatching process and examined the nest after natural hatching to measure the number of hatched and unhatched eggs. The study additionally investigated at human poaching and compared the findings to other protected beaches in Jalisco state. The study also compared the survival rates of nests transplanted within the hatchery to those in situ exposed to natural settings. The study evaluated hatching success and sex ratio, predicted sex ratio using temperature monitoring, and determined turtle sex in the lab[11].

In summary, Ubatuba and Cuixmala each implemented different sea turtle conservation measures and successfully achieved their goals. These measures include collaborating with local fishermen to reduce turtle bycatch, conducting manual patrols of key turtle nesting beaches, and regularly relocating turtle eggs to protected hatcheries to minimize poaching and predation. By listing the methods and measures adopted by these two locations for sea turtle conservation, we aim to supplement the key points mentioned in this paper and provide inspiration on how to turn established theoretical knowledge about sea turtles into practical, actionable conservation strategies.

## 3. Conservation Strategies: Captivity, Rehabilitation, and Release

### 3.1. Captivity

#### 3.1.1. Role in Conservation: The importance of captive breeding programs to ensure species survival

Programs for captive breeding and reintroduction are a controversial but effective way to manage endangered species. Although they have shown to be able to stop the extinction of species, they are resource-intensive and are therefore usually used as a last resort for the protection of endangered species. However, babies born in captivity frequently have challenges rewilding. As for captive breeding programs in the sea turtle conservation field, they aim to preserve sea turtle genetic variety while also increasing the population of endangered sea turtles. These efforts provide a safety net against extinction, particularly when populations drop fast owing to poaching, habitat damage, and climate change. Later captive turtles can be reintroduced into the wild after circumstances improve, therefore captive breeding is critical for population recovery. One major benefit of captive breeding is that scientists can readily monitor and study sea turtles for lengthy periods of time while providing safety because they are housed in relatively regulated and contained habitats (such as aquariums and zoos). Moreover, these marine turtles can also be utilized as test subjects to see whether medications

or techniques that haven't been tried in the wild yet are feasible. However, conducting these experiments can lead to public controversy and ethical debates, as the methods or drugs being tested on these sea turtles carry potential risks that could endanger their lives.

#### 3.1.2. Ethical Considerations: Balancing conservation needs with animal welfare concerns

Conservationists must strike a balance between the necessity to maintain turtle species and the ethical problems associated with keeping creatures captive. Critics say that imprisonment may alter the turtles' natural behavior, resulting in higher stress or shorter lifespans. Facilities should prioritize developing settings that imitate natural surroundings in order to increase animal welfare, while also educating the public about the relevance of these initiatives. For example, the breeding program took place at the Underwater Observatory Marine Park in Eilat, Israel, where Hawksbill sea turtles were kept in a controlled environment for observation and research. To promote effective breeding, mating habits were observed, and a technique of separating males and females during off-season times was put into place. Initially kept in place for protection, eggs were later transferred to incubators for improved environmental control. Hatchlings were raised in specially designed containers and their growth was closely observed. Juveniles were examined for health and survival skills before being released into the wild; certain turtles were kept for future breeding[12].

### 3.2. Rehabilitation

#### 3.2.1. Injured and Sick Turtles: The role of rehabilitation centers in treating and caring for injured sea turtles

Rehabilitation work has long been an important method for saving wild sea turtles and restoring their normal survival capabilities because it provides medical care for injured, ill or bycaught sea turtles. Wounded by boat strikes, entrapment in fishing gear, pollution, and illness. These institutes evaluate injuries, give medical care, and finally release healed turtles back into the wild. When injuries or illnesses are too severe to recover from, euthanasia is sometimes considered a merciful way to end their suffering and ensure they do not suffer in misery for an extended period of time. Successful rehabilitation initiatives can also yield useful information on turtle health, post-release survival, and migration patterns.

Moreover, rehabilitation activities help to increase the knowledge foundation for species conservation. Each treated animal gives significant information on the medical care, behavioral management, and circumstances required for a successful recovery. This knowledge may be used to enhance care for other organisms, both in captivity and in the wild, so it will benefit future conservation initiatives.

However, a key disadvantage of rehabilitation efforts is the large financial commitment needed for each sea turtle. Medical treatment, care, and habitat preservation can be quite costly, making these projects fiscally tough. High expenditures frequently result in limited cost-effectiveness, presenting challenges to long-term operations. As a result, many rehabilitation projects rely heavily on government financing and other forms of financial support to sustain their operations in the long run. This reliance on external financing emphasizes the importance of continual financial resources and strategic planning to ensure the viability and effectiveness of sea turtle rehabilitation initiatives.

#### 3.2.2. Public Awareness: How rehabilitation efforts can raise public awareness and support for conservation

In addition to the obvious advantages to animals, rehabilitation programs also provide an essential educational role. These activities give the public useful insights into the struggles that wildlife confront, encouraging a better knowledge of conservation concerns. These projects increase sympathy and support for animal conservation by allowing people to observe the recovery process and promoting community engagement in preservation efforts. Rehabilitation centers frequently act as educational sites for the public, informing people about the risks that sea turtles face and how conservation initiatives might help them. Volunteer opportunities, virtual tours, and educational

sessions urge the public to get involved in these programs, establishing the groundwork for long-term support for turtle conservation efforts.

## 4. Conclusion

This paper explores the profound impacts of climate change on sea turtles, particularly through temperature-dependent sex determination (TSD) and habitat loss, and approaches for habitat restoration. The results show that rising global temperatures are disrupting the natural sex ratio of sea turtles, with higher temperatures leading to more individual females. In addition, rising sea levels are reducing nesting habitat for turtles, threatening their reproductive success. By analyzing conservation techniques such as working with local fishers and relocating turtle eggs which aims to reduce bycatch and poaching., this paper proposes some feasible options to deal with habitat loss. At the same time, conservation strategies such as captive breeding programs and rehabilitation centers have played a key role in maintaining turtle population stability, increasing genetic diversity, and raising public awareness of conservation.

The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive approach, which combines the biological impacts of climate change with practical approaches to conservation. In this way, the paper not only deepens the understanding of how climate change threatens sea turtles but also provides viable options for addressing these challenges through habitat restoration and conservation measures.

However, there are some limitations to the current study. The long-term success of habitat restoration projects is uncertain, as these efforts may not fully offset the large-scale environmental changes brought about by global warming. In addition, while captive breeding programs have been successful, further research is needed on ethical issues and the challenges of reintroducing captive-bred turtles into the wild. Future research should focus on optimizing restoration techniques, especially in the context of sea level rise, and assessing the long-term viability of captive breeding and rehabilitation efforts. In addition, international cooperation and policy frameworks will be key to implementing large-scale conservation strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change on turtle populations.

In conclusion, addressing the impacts of climate change on sea turtles requires an integrated approach that combines scientific research, conservation practices, and public engagement. By continuously optimizing recovery methods and conservation strategies, turtles will have a better chance of surviving in an increasingly uncertain environment.

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