
THE SEA TURTLE PROJECT AT PHRA THONG ISLAND, THAILAND: WORKING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, TOURISTS AND VOLUNTEERS

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The Sea turtle Project at Phra Thong island, South Thailand started six years ago in collaboration with the Phuket Marine Biological Center, Thailand. The project focusses on three main aspects: scientific research, conservation awareness and education. Every season since the first year, the beaches have been monitored in order to evaluate the sea turtle nesting activities. Nesting activity was low (range from 4 to 13 per year) and belonged to three species: *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Dermochelys coriacea* and *Chelonia mydas*. In 2002, a satellite tracking device was applied on an olive ridley nesting turtle, the first in the Andaman Sea for this species. Thanks to the educational programme which consisted of lessons on different conservation topics in the local schools, the community was involved in the project. Being based in a small tourist resort, Golden Buddha Beach, awareness among tourists was always conducted. Volunteers from different part of the world participated in the project, contribution immensely and valuably to the fieldwork.

In 2002, the project developed a new conservation approach focusing on mangroves in collaboration with the Thai Institute of the Ranong Coastal Resources Research Center. The overall aim of the project is to understand and monitor the vegetation of the island, and to involve the local community. Species of mangroves were identified and a first GIS map of different habitats of the island was produced. Training to students coming from different countries was conducted during the project.

MARINE TURTLE NESTING AT THE ARCHIE CARR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, FLORIDA, USA IN 2002: GREEN TURTLE NESTING ACTIVITY CONTINUES TO INCREASE EXPONENTIALLY

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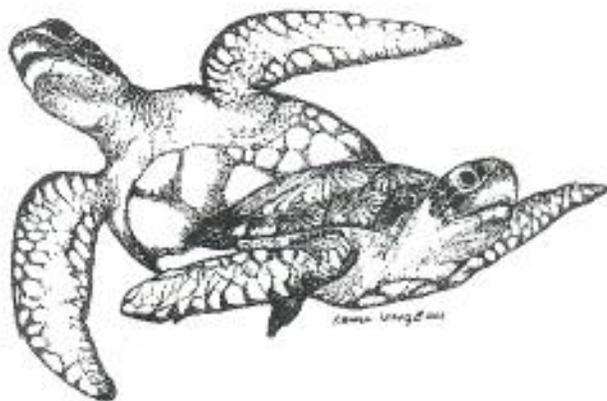
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The 21 km stretch of beach in South Brevard County, Florida, USA, known as the Archie Carr NWR, has been surveyed during each nesting season since 1982 to enumerate nest production for three species of marine turtles. Loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*), Green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*) regularly nest on this beach. Green turtle nesting has been growing exponentially since 1990 and set a new record again in 2002 with 2,588 nests. Loggerhead nesting finished as the second lowest year (11,631 nests) since 1990 but that number still constitutes a 25.1% increase above the long term average of the 1980s. Leatherback nest production at 11 nests was the lowest since 1997. We relate a number of especially significant tag recovery events that occurred during the 2002 season. Long term trends and related issues are discussed.



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