

same significant decrease in the vicinity of pier. The post construction pattern for green turtles show increased emergences several miles north and south of the pier.

CHALLENGES TO CONSERVING MARINE TURTLES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC: GREEN TURTLES A CULTURAL ICON AND FAVOURED FOOD

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Throughout the South Pacific Islands turtles, particularly greens, have been food for 3,500 years. Marine turtles are also important cultural icons appearing in art, important for many cultural practices and are a totem for many Pacific Island peoples. Current indications are that the number of green turtles continue to decline precipitously -primarily due to local hunting combined with habitat loss and predation on nests by humans and animals. Yet there is very little reliable information on the current status of turtles here. There is no systematic recording of capture, nor monitoring and protection of nesting beaches, and in fact there is little record of important nesting beaches and feeding areas. Recent efforts by communities, local and regional NGO's, government agencies, and regional organisations are starting to produce information on country status and important nesting beaches that are being incorporated into community and country conservation plans. This paper will present preliminary results from this ongoing work from four countries: Fiji Islands, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu that indicates the hope and challenge for future conservation.

SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION IN THE SOUTH CARIBBEAN, TALAMANCA, COSTA RICA: 2006 SEASON

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This program included the beaches in Cahuita National Park (Puerto Vargas and Black Beach - 82°49'W, 09°45'N) and Gandoca beach (9°59.972' N, 82°60.530' W) in the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge. Both of these protected areas are located in the south Caribbean of Costa Rica. Conservation work has been carried out since 1990 in Gandoca, and 2000 in Cahuita-Black Beach. The activities of the program have been divided into five areas: Research and Conservation, Environmental Education and Public Awareness, Political Advocacy, Social and Economic Alternatives and Conservation Planning. The main species recorded in these beaches was the Leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) with 9,805 total nests in Gandoca and 1,176 nests in Cahuita-Black Beach since the beginning of the program. The main impacts on the population in the region are poaching of eggs, beach erosion, marine debris carried by the currents and rivers, as well as hunting for nesting females. Conservation actions led to a reduction of illegal poaching of eggs from 100% to 3% in Gandoca, and 20% in Cahuita-Black Beach. A total of 496 nesting females have been tagged with passive integrated transponders (PITs) in Gandoca for the period 1999-2006, and 125 in Cahuita-Black Beach. The information generated shows that this population inter-nests in both places and in other beaches in Panama and Costa Rica, which highlights the importance of coordinated conservation action at a national and international level.



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