A 12 YEAR TREND OF SEA TURTLE STRANDINGS IN TAIWAN, 2014 – 2025

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Taiwan's systematic sea turtle stranding rescue operations began in 2014. The period from 2014 to 2018 was marked by a spontaneous development phase led by sea turtle researchers, while the period since 2019 has been one of policy-driven implementation. Over this 12-year period, more 2,500 sea turtle stranding events were reported across Taiwan, along with an additional 400 fishery bycatch incidents. These stranding events were primarily distributed across three major regions: Northern Taiwan, Southern Taiwan, and the Penghu archipelago. The analysis of stranded sea turtles in Taiwan consistently shows that the Green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) is the dominant species, accounting for 81.2% of all stranding events. The remaining cases are distributed among four other species: Hawksbill (8.6%, n=201), Olive Ridley (5.4%, n=125), Loggerhead (3.9%, n=92), and Leatherback (0.5%, n=11). More complete records for both the analysis of stranding causes and the identification of fishery bycatch types have been maintained since 2019. From 2019 to 2024, sea turtle bycatch resulting from fishing activities accounted for 10.4% of the total reported cases. The primary types of bycatch were accidental captures in set nets (59.6%, n=118), entanglement in gillnets (18.2%, n=36) and capture by trawling (6.1%, n=12). It is noted that the types of fishery bycatch exhibit regional differences and are likely underestimated. In the analysis of sea turtle stranding causes were entanglement in marine debris or ghost net (7.3%, n=124), vessel strikes (2.5%, n=43) and ingestion of fish hooks (1.2%, n=21). Notably, a high percentage (41.9%) of the vessel strike incidents occurred around Xiao Liuqiu, which may be linked to the high volume of shipping traffic in that area. It is important to note that while Green turtles form the bulk of strandings across the region, the

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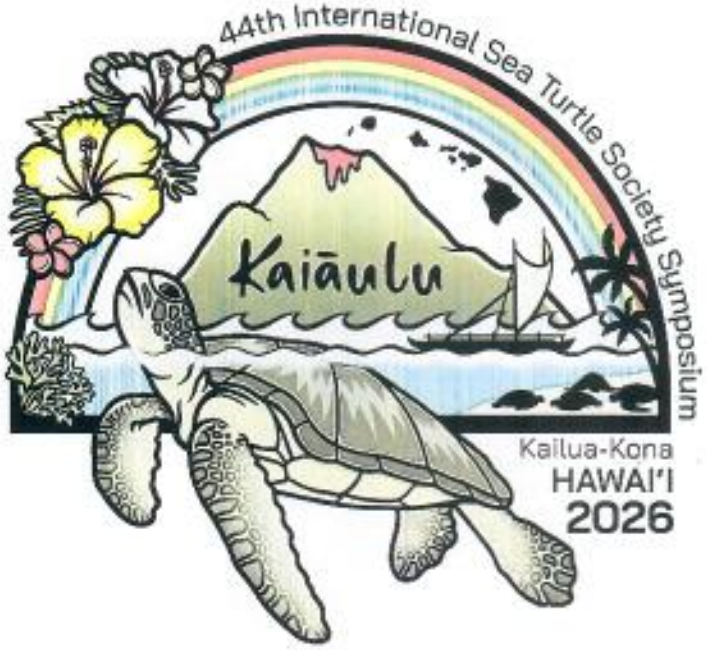

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