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SEA TURTLE CONSERVANCY

NOVEMBER 2018

HATCHING SEASON

¿What NOT TO DO?

- Dig the nests
- Touch the hatchlings and/or bring them to the water
- Take photos with FLASH
- Be in front of the hatchlings

¿What TO DO?

- Enjoy while observing the hatchlings
- Stop dogs from digging the nests and chase away predators
- Inform the National Park about any suspicious activity
- Move away any obstacles from their way to the ocean, like big logs

REMEMBER:

- ⇒ Touch, dig nests or manipulate sea turtles is **LEGAL**, even for certified guides.
- ⇒ Inform the **National Park** (2709-8086), the **Police** (2767-1593) or the **STC** to report any suspicious activity.



Photo 1. Green sea turtle hatchling (*Chelonia mydas*)

TORTUGUERO ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

The Tortuguero Environmental Committee was created this year through the alliance between the Sea Turtle Conservancy, the Tortuguero National Park, the Association of Volunteers to Service in Protected Areas, and the Integral Development Association of the Tortuguero community. The objective of this group is to carry out environmental education activities and programs in the community and to work together for the protection of the sea turtles and the environment in Tortuguero.



The main focus of work along the season has been the Eco-labeling program, with more than 30 establishments participating for a more sustainable tourism. Other



Photo 2. Tortuguero Environmental Committee organizations and institutions

er activities were organized with the students of the high school. A turtle tour was carried out, where they could see the nesting process and also the different organizations work on the beach was explained. A beach cleaning was also carried out and, finally, a recycling contest was held and the winners were lucky enough to participate in the first Educational Trip to Cahuita National Park.



We are very proud of the results after the work done and we hope this is only the beginning of a great partnership to keep working in the community to protect and conserve the environment. Thanks to all the collaborators that have made it possible!

SEA TURTLES THREATS

PLASTIC MARINE DEBRIS

Sea turtles confuse plastics and food and they die because of their digestive system blocks. They also can die when they get trapped on plastics or it causes them deformities and diseases.

How to help! REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE plastics! Avoid single-use plastics such as straws, utensils, and plastic bags.

LIGHTS AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

Artificial lights can scare nesting females, and cause hatchling disorientation, which will go in the wrong direction and possibly die.

How to help! Please use red lights and report any white lights you see on the beach. Change visible white lights on nesting beaches for red lights.

ILLEGAL SHELL TRADE

Hawksbill sea turtle has been hunted for centuries to make jewelry from their shells.

How to help! Avoid "turtle-shell" designs when purchasing handmade souvenirs in tropical countries. Educate and spread awareness to friends and family to prevent the continuation of this illegal trade.

HARVEST FOR CONSUMPTION

In Central America and Asia, sea turtles are being hunted to take their meat and eggs for selling and consumption.

How to help! Choose not to support restaurants that serve turtle and do not consume turtle meat or eggs in order to help reduce the demand for this illegal practice.

ILLEGAL FISHERY PRACTICES

Due to the unsustainable commercial fishing practices, sea turtles and other animals may find themselves entangled in long lines or ocean trawls and die.

How to help! Choose sustainable seafood caught by sea turtle friendly fishing practices to eliminate bycatch.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The rise of the temperature can cause the reduction of coral reefs or other sources of food, and reduce potential nesting beaches because of the sea level rise.

How to help! Partake in energy-saving practices using renewable energies. Reduce carbon emissions, participate in reforestation...

DURING ITS EXISTENCE OF MILLIONS OF YEARS, THE SEA TURTLES HAVE SURVIVED VARIOUS CHANGES TO ITS DIFFERENT HABITATS CAUSED BY CLIMATE AND GEOLOGICAL CATASTROPHIES.

THEY ARE ALSO FACING NUMEROUS NATURAL THREATS;

1) EGGS AND HATCHLINGS FACE MANY PREDATORS ON THE BEACH (ANTS, CRABS, AND RACOONS).

2) ONCE IN THE OCEAN, HATCHLINGS FACE BIRDS, FISH AND SHARKS.

VERY FEW, MAYBE ONLY 1 OF EVERY 1,000 BORN CAN COME TO MATURITY.

WHEN THEY ARE ADULTS, THE NATURAL THREATS DECREASE AND THEY HAVE VERY FEW PREDATORS, AMONG THEM THE SHARKS AND THE JAGUARS.

NEVERTHELESS, IT IS THE INCREASE OF THE HUMANS THREATS, WHAT HAS INCREASED THE PRESSURE ON THESE ENDANGERED SPECIES.

CAHUITA NATIONAL PARK EDUCATIONAL TRIP

Thanks to the effort of the Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC), along with the Tortuguero National Park (TNP) and the Association of Volunteers to Service in Protected Areas (ASVO), the First Educational Trip to Cahuita National Park was held on November 17th and 18th. The participants were 7 students between 16 and 19 years old, who were the winners of a recycling contest carried out at the Liceo Barra de Tortuguero High School.



Photo 3. Cahuita National Park Educational trip participants

The contest was organized to promote the waste separation among the young population of Tortuguero and the students had to sort correctly all the garbage they could get from their homes, neighbors, friends, the beach... and take it to the Tortuguero's recycling plant. After 4 months, the ones who separated the largest amount of trash had the opportunity to visit another National Park and discover a different environment of the one they have in Tortuguero.

The TNP helped with the logistics of the trip providing a van for the transportation and also the accommodation inside the park, in a station called "Puerto Vargas" where



Photo 4. SINAC van and "Puerto Vargas" house inside the National Park



Photo 5. One of the participants in the snorkel activity (left). Coral reef in Puerto Viejo (right).

the park rangers live while they are working. Once in the field, one of the main activities in the trip was snorkeling in Puerto Viejo to discover the marine biodiversity. None of the participants have had the opportunity to snorkel before and for some of them it was a real engaging experience. The other focus of the trip was a guided walk through the forest inside the Park, where they could observe its flora and fauna species and they also learned about the only National Park in Costa Rica that is managed between the community and the SINAC (Conservation Areas National System). In addition, the experience included activities where the students could develop other teamwork and coexistence skills, such as carrying out a fundraising for the trip or cooking some of the meals.

The final result was very successful; the participants learned many things and they discovered a different envi-



Photo 6. Trip participants observing birds

ronment while enjoying new experiences. This kind of activity is important for the young population of Tortuguero since it can create new interests and motivations for their future.

Thanks to the students and their families for their participation and support, to Cahuita and Tortuguero National Parks, to ASVO and to all the people who made this trip possible. Hopefully this will be the first of many educational trips. Thank you so much and see you next time!

SEA TURTLE NESTING SEASON SUMMARY (JUNE- OCTOBER 2018)

This year, the **green sea turtle** (*Chelonia mydas*) nesting season ends with a total of 14,418 nests in the 8km surveyed by the STC.

Biometric data were taken from 1568 green turtles, of which 762 were new encounters.

In addition, this season 2 green sea turtles have been recorded with a lack of pigmentation (leucism), a rare feature among sea turtles.

Regarding the **hawksbill sea turtle** (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), a total of 61 nests have been recorded in the 8km of beach, being this the highest nesting season for this especie in Tortuguero so far. Data has been collected from 7 of those turtles, and 4 of them were new encounters.

In the 5km of beach surveyed in **Jalova** (south area of the PNT), GVI has collected data of 265 green turtles, 192 of which were new encounters.

In addition, 12 hawksbill sea turtles were also found, 10 of which were new encounters.

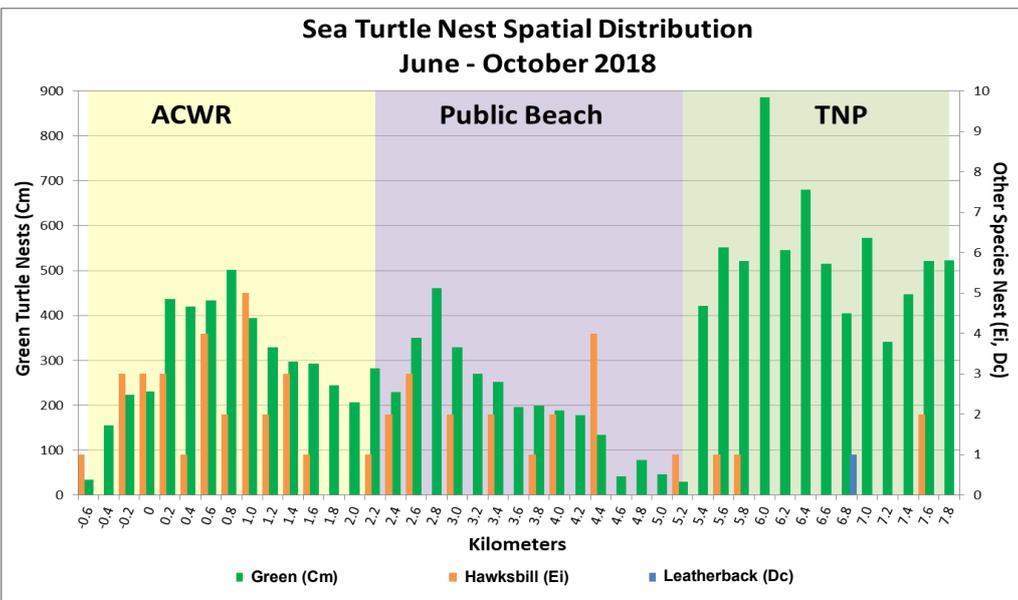
This season we also have had quite a few turtles predated by jaguars. A total of 139 green sea turtles and 11 hawksbills have been recorded in the

29km of the beach. Unfortunately, we still find nests and turtles taken illegally for sale and consumption. This season poaching rates recorded between June and November in the 8km of beach are still alarming:

- ⇒ 144 green sea turtle nests
- ⇒ At least 6 adult green sea turtles
- ⇒ 4 turtles tied on the beach, which were rescued by the STC

SOME INTERESTING DATA OF THE SEASON ...

One of the green turtles registered this year was found for the first time in 1984, it has been observed nesting in Tortuguero a total of 28 times, and always between the same 2km of beach! There has also been a green turtle that was observed for the first time in 1997 and has been seen a total of 16 times in Tortuguero, 3 of which were during this season.



In the graphic, you can see the distribution of the Leatherback, Hawksbill and Green sea turtles nests throughout the 8km of beach separated by sections:

- ACWR: Archie Carr Wildlife Refuge
- PB: Public Beach
- TNP: Tortuguero National Park

Graphic 1. Leatherback, Hawksbill and Green sea turtles nest activity in Tortuguero National Park (June-October 2018)