

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES IN GUATEMALA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this Situational Analysis is to evaluate the efforts for the conservation of the sea turtle in Guatemala, within the framework of the National Sea Turtle Strategy, with a special emphasis on the 20% conservation quota system, and the short and long term sustainability of this system. Among its main results are the following:

- The overall population trend of the olive ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys olivácea*) on the Pacific coast of Guatemala is increasing. Our nesting crawl count program has documented that the nesting density in the 8kms of monitoring at the Hawaii site has increased from 906 crawls in 2003 to 1,422 crawls in 2019, although 2018 and 2019 have seen a worrisome decline (Grafica 3). This trend has been confirmed in crawl counts carried out on the 7 index beaches of El Chico, Churirin, El Paredón, Conacaste, Monterrico, Hawaii and La Barrona since 2013 (Grafica 4).
- Crawl counts show that olive ridley nesting density on the Pacific coast of Guatemala is much higher in the southeast (closer to El Salvador) than in the southwest (closer to Mexico) being the peak index beaches in Hawaii and La Barrona (Grafica 7).
- In 2019, the economic value on the beach (wholesale price) of the legal olive ridley egg market on the Pacific coast of Guatemala was Q 2,154,570 or US \$ 291,158. The economic resale value, that is, the cost to the final consumer, was of Q8,115,656 or US \$ 1,082,087.
- At the national level, the numbers of eggs rescued and incubated per year have increased from 46,000 in 2003 to 598,653 in 2019. This increase is largely due to the purchase of eggs by the private sector (hotels, ecotourists, vacation home owners...). In 2019, 59% of all rescued eggs were bought or exchanged for food aid while only 29% were delivered to 31 hatcheries as part of the 20% conservation quota. (Graficas 1 & 2)
- In 2019, 18,247 successful nests (subtracting 9.67% of false nests) were laid on the beaches of the Pacific for a total of 1,690,767 eggs. Of these, 589,234 eggs or 34.85% were rescued and incubated at 31 hatcheries. (Grafica 10)
- The nesting of the leatherback turtle remains scarce, with 0 - 4 nests per year reported mainly in the southeast of the country. In 2018, three nests of this species were recorded, but unfortunately no eggs from these nests hatched. In 2019 no nests were reported. (Grafica 8)

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If you have any questions, or if you want the full Spanish report or the original data, please contact us at cmuccio@arcasguatemala.org or +502 7830-1374.

