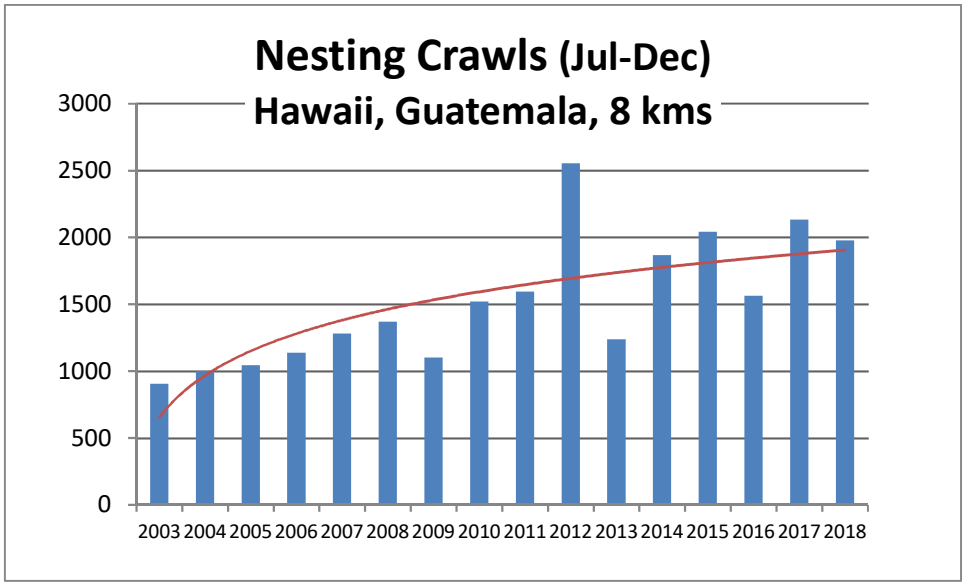
# Situational Analysis of the Conservation of the Sea Turtle in Guatemala

Guatemala, September, 2019

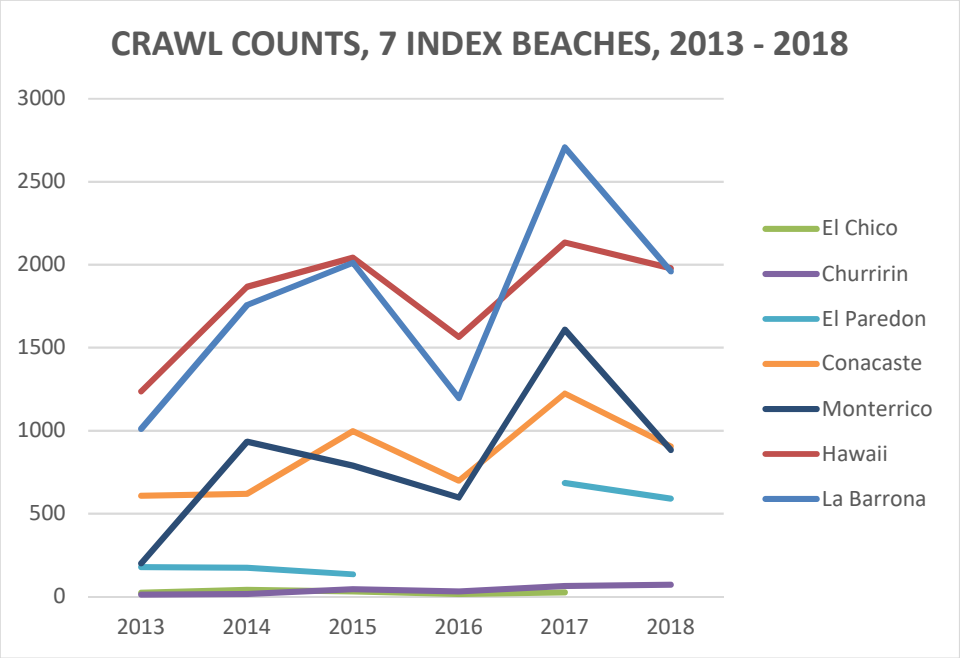
Dear Friends of the Parlama,

With pleasure, we are sending you this updated English summary of the "Situational Analysis of the Conservation of the Sea Turtle in Guatemala". This analysis includes the results of ARCAS's sea turtle population monitoring program carried out at seven index beaches along the Pacific coast of Guatemala from 2013 to the present. Among the key findings:

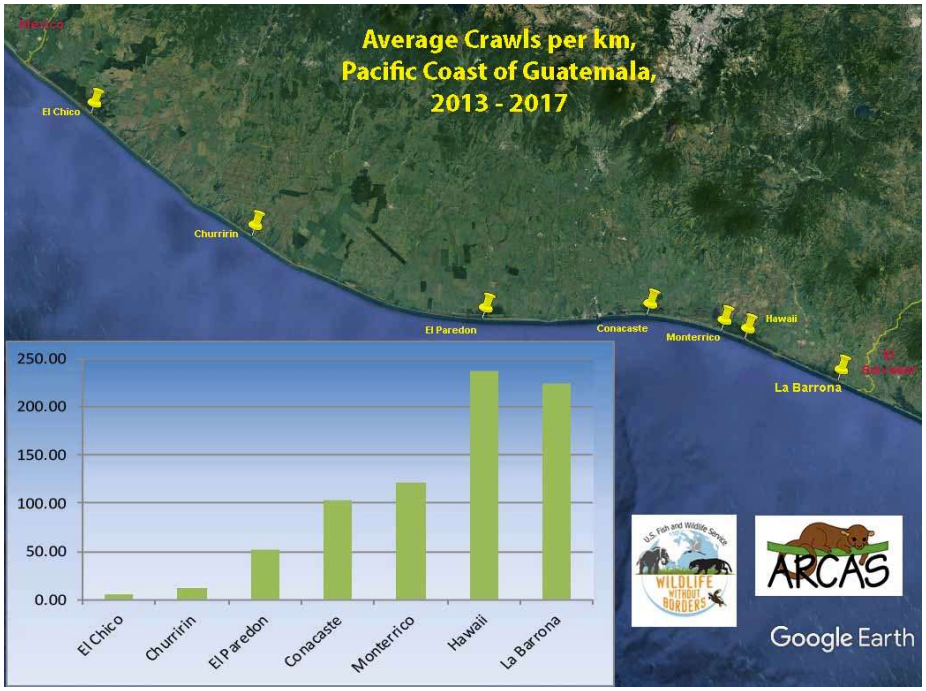
1. The olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivácea*) population trend on the Pacific coast of Guatemala continues to be positive. The ARCAS crawl count program has documented more than a doubling of nesting density in the last 15 years at the Hawaii site, with 906 crawls recorded in 2003 and 1,978 in 2018.



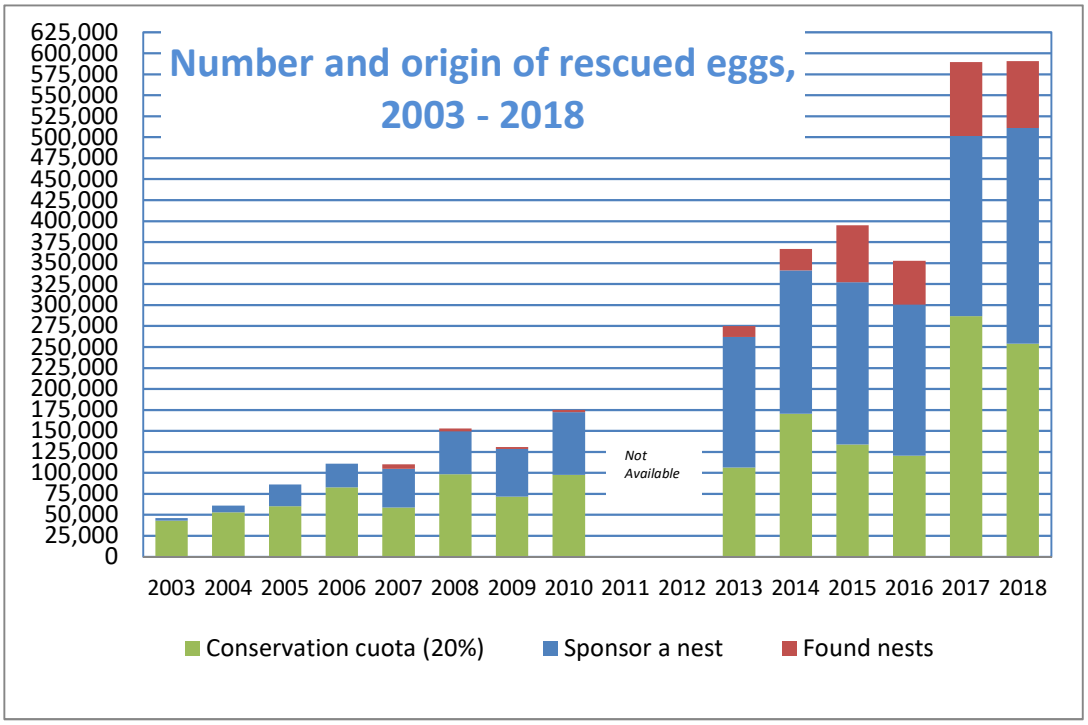
2. According to the crawl counts carried out at 7 index beaches, the populations in these beaches have increased by an average of 117% since 2013. 2016 saw a decline of 33% in nesting density relative to 2015, presumably due to El Niño (ENSO), but a strong recuperation in 2017.

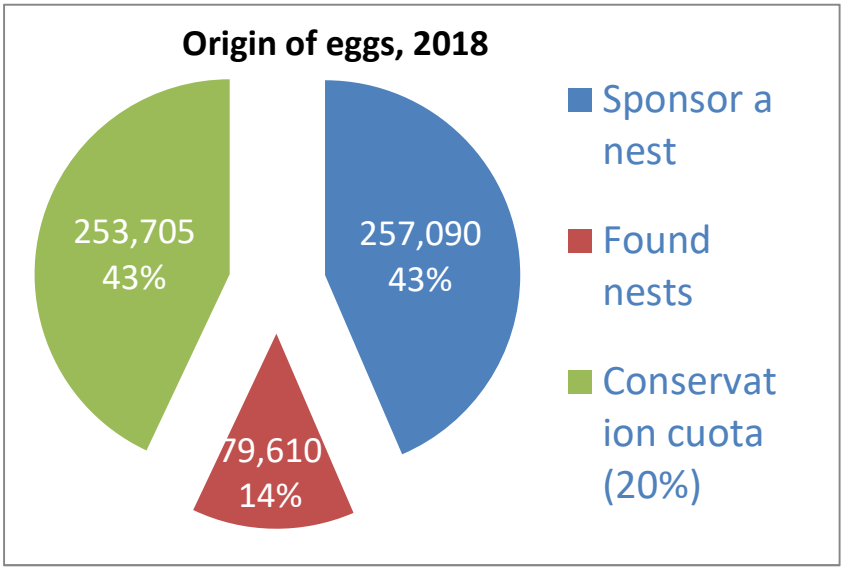



3. Olive ridley nesting density is much higher in the southeast than in the southwest, with the peak area being Hawaii, closely followed by La Barrona. Leatherback and green nesting, is also concentrated in the east, as are strandings.

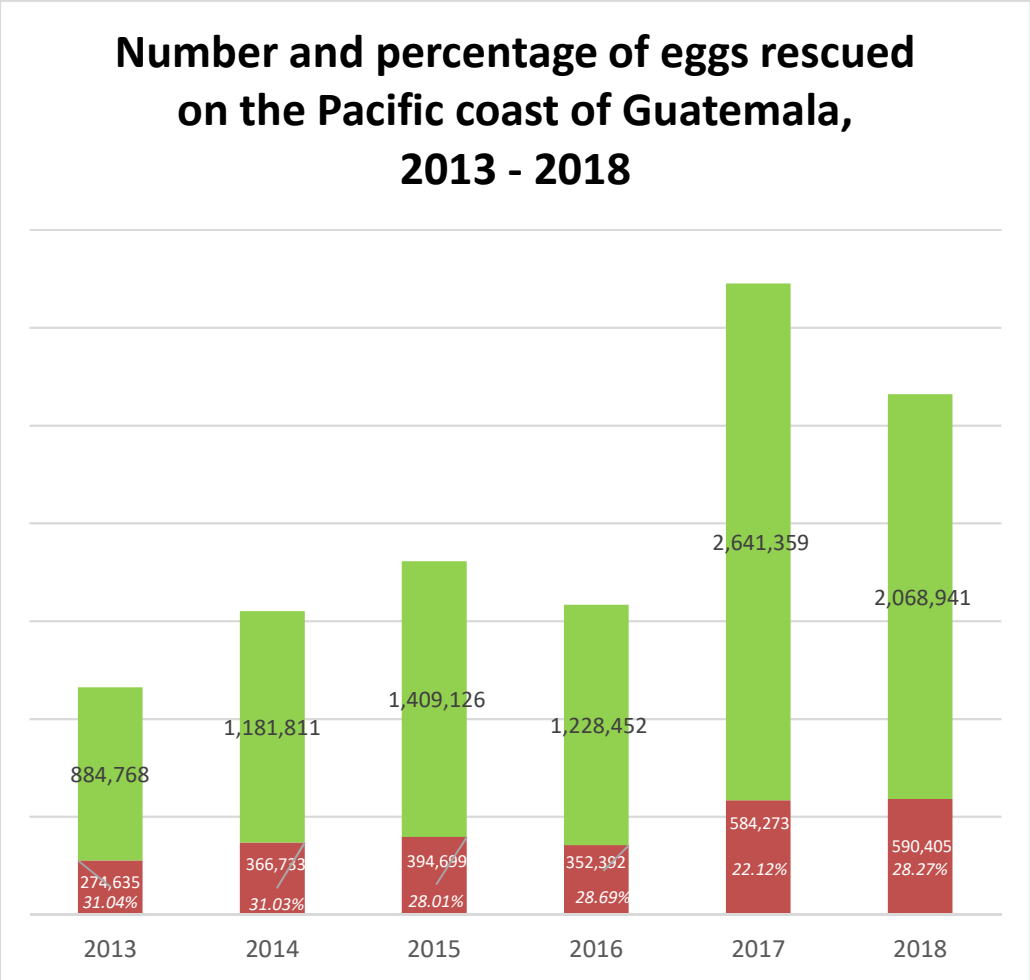


4. The number of sea turtle eggs rescued and incubated on a national scale has increased from 46,000 in 2003 to 590,405 in 2018. This increase is mainly due to sponsor-a-nest programs operated by the private sector: hatcheries, hotels and vacation home owners. In 2018, 57% of all eggs rescued were sponsored or found on the beach, mainly by the private sector.



5. In 2018, 22,328 successful nests (minus 9.67% of false crawls) were laid on the Pacific coast of Guatemala for a total of 2,068,941 eggs. Of these, 584,849 eggs were rescued and incubated at 34 hatcheries, representing 28.27% of the total number of eggs laid.

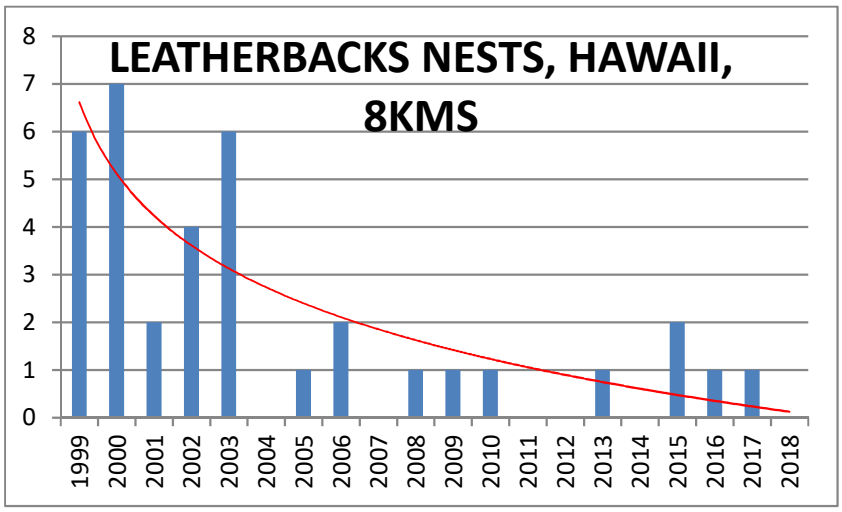



In general, although the percentage of rescued eggs has declined over the past 6 years, as the nesting density has increased, the number of eggs incubated in hatcheries has also increased. This shows an increase in capacity in the Guatemalan conservation community to manage growing numbers of eggs.

6. For the first time in Guatemala, on July 22, 2018, the nesting of a hawksbill sea turtle was documented in the village of Madre Vieja, Taxisco, Chiquimulilla. According to flipper tags, the turtle was tagged on June, 2014 in Bahia Jiquilisco, El Salvador, 300kms away! For more information on this case follow this link: http://www.seaturtle.org/mtn/PDF/MTN158.pdf

7. In 2018, the economic value on the beach (wholesale price) of the market in olive ridley eggs on the Pacific coast of Guatemala was Q 2,461,279 or US$328,170. If we take into consideration the supply chain from collector, to buyer, to wholesaler and then consumer, the retail value of the sea turtle egg trade was Q9,930,912, or US$1,324,122.

8. The population tendency for leatherbacks continues to decline, and in 2018, only three nests were reported on the 254kms of the Pacific coast of Guatemala, and no nests reported for the area of Hawaii. In addition, in the last five years, there have been alarming reports of very low hatching success rates in leatherback nests.




This sixth update of the original Situational Analysis was prepared by Colum Muccio of ARCAS, with the support of the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Columbus Zoo. If you have any questions, or if you want the full Spanish report, please contact us at cmuccio@arcasguatemala.org, +502 7830-1374 or visit our website at www.arcasguatemala.org.

Sincerely,

Colum Muccio

ARCAS Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Association

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Gobierno de Guatemala Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas CONAP

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