

PROJETO TAMAR'S STATION IN UBATUBA (SÃO PAULO STATE, BRAZIL): SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION IN A FEEDING AREA

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Projeto TAMAR-IBAMA, the Brazilian Sea Turtle Conservation Program, was created in 1980 by IBAMA – the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, a federal government agency – and is co-managed by Fundação Pró-TAMAR, a NGO. TAMAR has now 21 stations, monitoring over 1000 km of the Brazilian coast and three oceanic islands.

After 10 years of monitoring the main Brazilian nesting beaches, in 1990 TAMAR decided to start working at feeding areas having high levels of incidental capture by local fishermen. The first station in a feeding area was created in Ubatuba, due to the availability of a sponsorship for an initial survey there. That survey made clear the great number of incidental captures in Ubatuba, mainly of juvenile green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), qualifying this area as an important conservation spot. Regular fieldwork started in January 1991. Ubatuba is currently TAMAR's most southern station.

Ubatuba is a municipality located on the northern coast of the State of São Paulo, in southeastern Brazil. Its coastline is about 100 km long. The city of Ubatuba is located at 23° 26' S, 45° 05' W, right on the Tropic of Capricorn. More than 70 beaches exist in

Ubatuba, some of them quite isolated. Many beaches are occupied by traditional communities for which artisanal fishing is the main income source. Ubatuba also harbors a small-scale commercial fishery, targeting mainly shrimp. Regularly both kinds of fisheries incidentally capture sea turtles. TAMAR works year round in Ubatuba, focusing mainly on the interaction between artisanal fishing (mostly fishing weirs) and sea turtles. Fishermen are regarded as partners in the conservation work.

From 1991 to 1998 the TAMAR station in Ubatuba recorded 2515 captures of sea turtles. Four species have been found there: the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*, n=2475 or 98.41% of total records), loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*, n=13 or 0.52%), hawksbills (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, n=23 or 0.91%) and the leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*, n=4 or 0.16%). In Ubatuba, green turtles are generally juveniles, and loggerheads are generally juveniles or sub-adults, although, for both species, there is a slight overlap between the observed range of curved carapace length in Ubatuba and that observed for nesting females in the Atlantic ocean. Hawksbills are juveniles, always smaller than nesting females in the Atlantic. Leatherbacks (all of them were found dead, stranded or floating near the coast) are sub-adult, except for one turtle which is well into the size-range observed for leatherbacks nesting in Brazil and elsewhere in the Atlantic.

This poster briefly describes the field methods employed by TAMAR in Ubatuba, presents an overview of the data collected between 1991 and 1998 and an assessment of the conservation status of sea turtles there. A complete report will be published elsewhere.

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