

Marine Turtle Newsletter

Second Record of a Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) Tagged in Brazil and Captured in Nicaragua

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A green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) bearing flipper tag BR7440 from the TAMAR Brazilian sea turtle project was captured in a turtle net off the central Caribbean coast of Nicaragua in late 2001. The turtle was originally double flipper tagged with monel tags and released on 8 June 1994, after incidental capture in a wooden fishing weir (“curral de pesca”) off Almofala Beach (2° 50’ S, 40° 09’ W), State of Ceará, Brazil. When originally tagged the turtle measured 98 cm curved carapace length (CCL, nuchal notch to posterior tip) and 88 cm maximum curved carapace width, and had several tumour like masses on the neck and all four flippers.

A legal green turtle fishery is conducted by several indigenous and ethnic groups in Nicaragua as a source of income and protein (Lagueux 1998). The turtle was captured by Donald Marti, a Miskitu fisher from the indigenous community of Walpa. Because Mr. Marti was not at home when one of us (CJL) visited the community we can only report that the turtle was captured in the general area of 13° 01’ N and 83° 24’ W and was dead by 16 December 2001, the date we received the tag from his wife.

The Almofala region is a foraging area for green turtles (Lima 2001) ranging in CCL from 27 to 132 cm, and there is an ongoing mark-recapture study in the area in collaboration with fishers. Tag recoveries both in and away from this site reveal some of the complexity of the interactions among different breeding populations. This is the second record of a green turtle tagged at Almofala, Brazil and subsequently captured off the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua (Lima et al. 1999), and another green turtle tagged at Almofala was recovered in Trinidad (Lum et al. 1998). Green turtles tagged while nesting at Ascension Island and Suriname have been recovered in the Almofala region and elsewhere in northeastern Brazil (Carr 1975; Mortimer & Carr 1987; Pritchard 1973; Schulz 1975). Furthermore, a green turtle tagged in March 1999 on the nesting beach at Tortuguero, Costa Rica, and last seen on that beach in April 1999, was found dead in February 2001 in the municipality of Fortaleza, Ceará, about 200 km east of Almofala (Lima &

Troëng 2001). Together these data suggest a link between green turtle populations of the western South Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea.

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