

REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY OF THE GREEN TURTLE AT THE BIOLOGICAL RESERVE OF ATOL DAS ROCAS OFF NORTHEAST BRAZIL.

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Abstract:

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The Biological Reserve Atol das Rocas (03° 45'S, 33° 37'W), 144 miles off northeast Brazil, is one of the nesting sites of *Chelonia mydas* in the West Atlantic. We analysed reproductive data collected by the Projeto Tamar/IBAMA from 1990 to 2000. During the nesting season (December–June), 623 females were tagged reproducing in this area during the period. Reproductive activity peaked in March. The average of nests per female per season was 4,90 the most frequently recorded internesting period was eleven days (range 7-20 days). The clutch size ranged 50-193 (average 122,4 eggs) and the hatchling success was 73,39%. Incubation period ranged from 47 to 80 days (average 59 days). There was a clear preference for nesting in areas covered by vegetation and there was a statistically significant correlation between the size of the turtle and the nest site selection, larger turtles nesting mostly at vegetated sites. Half of the analysed females had a reproductive remigration interval of 3 years. The carapace length of green turtles nesting at the Atol das Rocas ranged from 1,0 to 1,34m (average 1,15m). Carapace length of reproductive turtles showed a statistically significant decrease ($b = -0,003$) from 1990 to 2000. We regard this length decrease as a possible recruitment of new reproductive females.

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