

## **Project Update: July 2002**

The survey, which lasted from April 2000 to April 2001, was the first specialised study on sea turtles in Liberia. It established that five species of sea turtles are found within the territorial waters of Liberia. Four of these (*Dermochelys coriacea*, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, *Chelonia mydas*) are established to nest; data on the fifth (*Caretta caretta*) only indicated that it is found within the territorial waters of Liberia.

Local inhabitants reported a decline in the population of nesting sea turtles. They attributed the decline to the crude exploitative method of egg harvesting, hunting and incidental catch. Due to the migratory nature of sea turtles, overexploitation of the species in Liberia could lead to population decline throughout the region. It is therefore important that efforts be made to immediately begin implementation of the team's recommendations:

- a) that further baseline surveys be conducted along the coast;
- b) that local and national workshops be facilitated to develop a community management plan for the conservation of turtles;
- c) that pilot monitoring and research programmes be initiated in communities with notable abundance or diversity of turtles;
- d) that international experts be called on for assistance in developing and implementing the sea