

Project Update: August 2012

At this moment, we are finishing the 4th year working on this challenge of Sea Turtle Community based conservation. Proyecto Help Colombia – Community Based Sea Turtle Conservation Program in the Colombian Caribbean is the consolidation of a process begun while working with the government in 2007 and realises the real solution was within the community. It took 4 years to see what we are witnessing now at biological and at social level but we knew this is a long process.

The biological results are better than expected. Taking into account this is an area harvested for more than 40 years and where we don't have accurate data, the information generated during this 4 years is important and not bad at all.

During 2010 the nesting season was not fully monitored, only 50% of the nests were protected and the other 50% was stolen by fishermen from others beaches.

The 2011 season was amazing. Monitored from March to September, every night, the field team protected 100% of the nest (nine nests), all of them of *Dermochelys coriacea*, (Leatherback sea turtle). No females were tagged. The hatching success was between 0 and 70, 49%, which are results expected for the specie within the Great Caribbean Region.

The 2012 season has been really good. We are still monitoring since March, every night. There were seven nests of *Dermochelys coriacea*, the team protected four, one was protected by other person on the beach, and two were stolen. This year we were able to tag the first female on the beach, and it was recaptured four more times, generating important information about nesting intervals and number of nest per females. We also have three nests for *Eretmochelys imbricata* and one for *Caretta caretta*, until now. This year we have eight false craws, two for leatherback turtle.

The environmental education programme had interesting and amazing results. The children are developing an important feeling with the environment and with their social network. The activities generated nice products, like a beautiful mural with the four sea turtle species nesting in the Colombian Caribbean or lovely billboards showing how much they have learned. They enjoy a lot the cinema afternoon, where they assist movies with natural and social messages.



The “paper office” is now a reality and the women and the young enjoy making little books, paper boxes, photo albums and other things they are selling to the tourists visiting the area. They have improved a lot the quality of the products and now they know they can make articles helping the environment and earning some money for their families.

