

## Project Update: April 2006

The results of the research on the nest and hatching success of leatherback nests on the study beach at Gamba are currently being analysed. Preliminary analysis using the monitored nests shows that the overall nest success was 54%. This means that 46% of the nests laid on the beach did not produce any hatchlings at all. Three main reasons for nest failure were identified. Ghost crabs were found to be voracious predators of leatherback nests and hatchlings making their way down to the sea. They destroyed over half of the nests. The other nests were either destroyed by inundation by the sea, or by invasive roots from vegetation at the back of the beach. The success of leatherback nests appears to be strongly linked to the position in which it is laid.

Out of the nests that did hatch, 67% of the eggs in the nest produced healthy hatchlings. Both the nest success and hatching success on Gamba beach is relatively high compared to other leatherback nesting beaches around the world, making it a high productivity beach, and important in terms of sea turtle conservation.

Data from the leatherback hatchery part of the research are currently being analysed. Preliminary results show no significant difference between the hatching success in the hatchery nests and the in-situ beach nests. This is a very positive outcome and highlights the importance of good egg translocation methods. This part of the research has recently been presented at the Annual International Symposium for Sea turtle Biology and Conservation in Crete and was received with much interest.

