

Project Update: January 2014

Hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) are critically endangered and hawksbills in the eastern Pacific Ocean (Mexico-Peru) are among the most endangered populations of sea turtles in the world. Less than 500 adult female hawksbills exist in the entire region, of which >40% nest in the Bahía de Jiquilisco in El Salvador.

We collected samples from 29 nesting hawksbills in the Bahía de Jiquilisco to determine baseline blood chemistry values and heavy metal concentrations, which surpassed our anticipated outcome of collecting samples from 20 individuals. We used this opportunity to strengthen the technical capacity of local students via participatory research. Nine biology and veterinary students at the University of El Salvador participated directly in sample collection and analysis. We hope to have the final results of our study by 31st January 2014, which will serve as an invaluable tool for guiding management and conservation efforts in the eastern Pacific Ocean.



Left: Local students collecting a blood sample from a nesting hawksbill turtle. Right: Nesting hawksbill turtle in Bahía de Jiquilisco, El Salvador.