

Project Update: October 2015

In October 2015, Allie Abraham, graduate student from Canada, joined us for a week at the sea turtle research centre. Allie is doing a master's thesis project on how tourism affects sea turtle conservation, both positive and negative. At the centre, Allie joined a tourism group and a local school group. She was able to evaluate the participation and reactions of both groups and patrol with the local biologists to learn more about the threats from tourism development along the coast. We are excited to read her thesis when she is finished and hope to incorporate her information as a reference in the Model for Conservation Tourism for Sea Turtle Conservation.

Also in October, Stephanie gave a presentation about the issues of driving on nesting beach to a group of "snow-birds": Americans and Canadians who spend the winter in a small coastal area. Many come for 4-6 months every year, leave their car in the driveway, and take out their ATV to get places, using the beach as a highway. While we have not had much success with the large ATV tourism groups, we are hoping to make a positive cumulative impact with several small coastal snowbird towns where nesting is sporadic but constant and private ATV use is increasing. Most people reacted positively when they understood the impact of their actions to endangered sea turtle species however asked why the government was not doing anything. Very few refused to comply and continue to drive on the beach despite our efforts and laws protecting nesting beaches. We hope that future years, we can continue to enlist community members to help spread the word and make more beach signs.



Allie Abraham after a 12-hour night patrol that resulted in 18 nests relocated and protected from ATV use, poachers, and tourism developments.



Local school group listening to a presentation about sea turtles and participating in a hatchling release on the beach.



Mary Simmons, a permanent resident from La Ventana showing a restored sea turtle to help “snowbirds” understand the legalities and impacts of ATV use on sea turtle nesting beaches.