

Sea Turtles Forever



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Punta Pargos Final Report: 2015/2016 Season.

The 2015/2016 marine turtle nesting season on Punta Pargos was less productive this season due to what we believe are conditions created by the extreme El Nino that affected the entire Eastern Pacific this year. Nesting for *Chelonia Mydas* was down by approximately 60% on Punta Pargos. We collaborate with Bibi Sandrini who monitors nesting north of us at Playa Nombre de Jesus and Cabuyal, nesting at those beaches was also down by over 60%. Reports from Luis Fonseca at Isle San Jose to the south of our project also reported to me that their nesting was down 70%. This could be due to a shortage of foraging material or disruption at the base of the marine food web, we do not have scientific data to pin-point why nesting was down for the entire region but due to the largest El Nino and warmest ocean temperatures ever recorded we believe there must be some correlation.

Our nightly beach nesting monitoring patrols started on 9/24/2015 and ran until 4/30/2016 which is a normal season for Punta Pargos. We tagged 14 new nesting female *Chelonia*, previous average is 34 new tagged turtles per season. We have just 4 encounters with previously tagged turtles, normal average is 10. This was the first season in 14 years that we did not have Leatherback nests on the project.

We had 89 secured nests for the season and a total of 93 nests laid, normal average would be 140 nests per season over the last decade.

Chelonia Mydas = 79 nests secured

Lepidochelys Olivacia = 9 nests secured

Dermochelys Coreacea = 0 nests secured

Eretmochelys Imbricata = 1 nest secured

Due to the nature of our conservation protocols we do not encounter every hatch. Our patrols run for 4-6 hours per night and sometimes if a nest hatches out of our designated patrol time which coincides with peak nesting (2 hours before until 2 hours after high tide) we may not encounter the hatch.

Observed hatchling numbers:

$C_m = 3173$

$L_o = 542$

$D_c = 0$

$E_i = 100$

We lost only 4% of our total nests to poaching during the season and therefore had a 96% saved nest record, this is actually a bit better than our average of approximately 95% for the last 10 years.

Sea Turtles Forever had a local team of 8 monitors that were paid for patrols during the 2015/2016 season. Top pay for patrol leaders was \$150 per week; less experienced patrol personnel were paid \$75 to \$100 per week.

Sea Turtles Forever also paid for environmental education at 7 local schools in the Punta Pargos area. We paid one of our experienced (7 years) local patrol leaders Domonic Rosales Ordonez who is a respected member of the community of Los Pargos to run the lectures and had a great response from all the children and faculty at all the areas schools including Los Pargos, 27th de Abril, Rio Seco, Junquiall, Venato, Pinella and Marbella.

Our administration and lead biologist all worked on a volunteer basis, although we did pay Biologist Luis Fonseca for some administration as a MINAE liaison.

We greatly appreciate our sponsors and supporters that made this work possible.

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Marc W. Ward