

Project Update: May 2017

January 2017 - we hosted groups from Colorado State University and Link school at the ASUPMATOMA sea turtle nesting centre. A total of five university professors, 32 university students, three high school teachers, and 12 high school students attended. As an activity of scientific tourism, ASUPMATOMA gained conservation funds (approx. £700). Students learned about sea turtle nesting, sustainable fishing practices, and helped analyse barnacles from nesting sea turtles for stable isotope analysis. We then took the CSU university students to monitor sea turtles in their foraging habitat to learn about fisheries impacts and levels of conservation in marine protected areas in Mexico. (Videos will be send as part of our final report in July 2017).



CSU students learning about nest collection data categories and effects of temperature and human manipulation on nesting success.

February 2017 - trained volunteers from La Ventana, a small fishing village on the Gulf of California, registered 26 dead stranded turtles and one live stranded turtle. Our Sea Turtle Ambassador, Mary Sim, measured each turtle, recorded coordinates, and collected barnacle, bone, and keratin samples of each turtle for later laboratory stable isotope analysis. The analysis will help us better understand the foraging areas used by each turtle that could potentially be a forensics method to quickly identify the area where sea turtles came from and if fishing is the cause of mortality, the analysis can be used as evidence in a legal setting in the future. Mary Sim also records sea turtle sightings via passive snorkel monitoring on a weekly basis with a GoPro camera on a 1 m extension pole. At a recent workshop in La Ventana, in front of 38 community attendees, we presented Mary with a book of the Sea Turtles of the Eastern Pacific to show our appreciation for her volunteer dedication to our project.



Link school students documenting a beach profile in sea turtle nesting habitat to understand physical factors for female nest site selection.

March and April 2017 - We were invited to go to the National Marine Park of Espiritu Santo with two high school groups from California and Santa Clara University. For the first time, we used kayaks and were able to count an average of 20 turtles within a 1 hour kayak excursion. While we were able to see sea turtles at their level, only videos we were able to obtain was from a vantage point on a boat with the motor turned off. (I will include the videos in my final report in July 2017).

We also learned of a marina close by where boaters have been spotting sea turtles. I took a local high school student interested in marine biology with me in a double kayak and we counted 12 turtles in the small marina. We also continued with planned workshops for boaters and tourism groups in various communities around the region totalling 60 community members and have increased our tourism company participation by five new companies. Following the workshops, we received new observations via email of mating turtles near Puerta Vallarta and Isla San Jose, further expanding our reach from our community-based sea turtle spotter programme.



Mating Pacific olive ridley turtles photographed from a sailboat



Stephanie J. Rouso at the beginning of a sailboat workshop presentation held during Bayfest 2017 in La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico (with onsite donation in hand, equivalent to 9 British pound).