

Project Update: August 2018

This summer has yielded exciting results of our Sea Turtle Spotter programme. Divers have recently been reporting sea turtles in El Bajo, a seamount in the southwestern portion of the Gulf of California. They are going to this area because of recent sightings of giant mantas who have not been seen for years in this spot. While mantas are the tourism target, divers are also reporting sea turtles to us (Alianza Keloni) and mantas to Manta Trust in a joint citizen science programme. Photos are so clear and professional that we can identify individual turtles. We also gained new contacts and shared information about our Sea Turtle Spotter programme at the first anniversary party of the Association of Marine Scientists. We made new friends who we are now collaborating with to develop a scientific tourism programme for sea turtles with fishermen along the coast of Baja California Sur. This programme ideally will financially support our research and continue to expand our Sea Turtle Spotter programme in more remote fishing camps.

One drawback in our project that we are working on solving is the cost of a drone. We can buy a drone for the budget we proposed, however it may not be appropriate for overwater. The drone that can work overwater and can land in water costs £1350, which is £550 over budget. We are talking with a potential sponsor to support the difference. We have also lost more money than anticipated on the exchange rate. Unfortunately, it was not the better option to choose a Mexican bank over a US bank. So, I am looking into transferring the remaining funds to a new account. I wonder if this is an issue with many Rufford projects, the exchange rate from pounds to local currency and think it would be a good topic for the conferences.



Citizen science example of SCUBA divers reporting sightings of turtle with accompanying photos for identification. ©Alex Double



Example of a recent Facebook submission of a green turtle submitted to Sea Turtle Spotter program by citizen scientists who know about our program.



Intern Jon Ehrenberg from the University of Hawaii assisting with a workshop talking about Sea Turtle Spotter citizen science program.