

Project Update: November 2018

From August to October 2018 the turtle team at Varela region, composed of 28 collaborators and two field coordinators from the local communities has monitored the nesting activities of sea turtles at seven beaches, covering an extension of over 20 km of nesting habitat. A total of 142 green turtle nests have been identified at five nesting beaches, and are being monitored until hatching. This confirms the importance of this shoreline for green turtles, and with the current results we aim to establish a long-term monitoring and protection project.

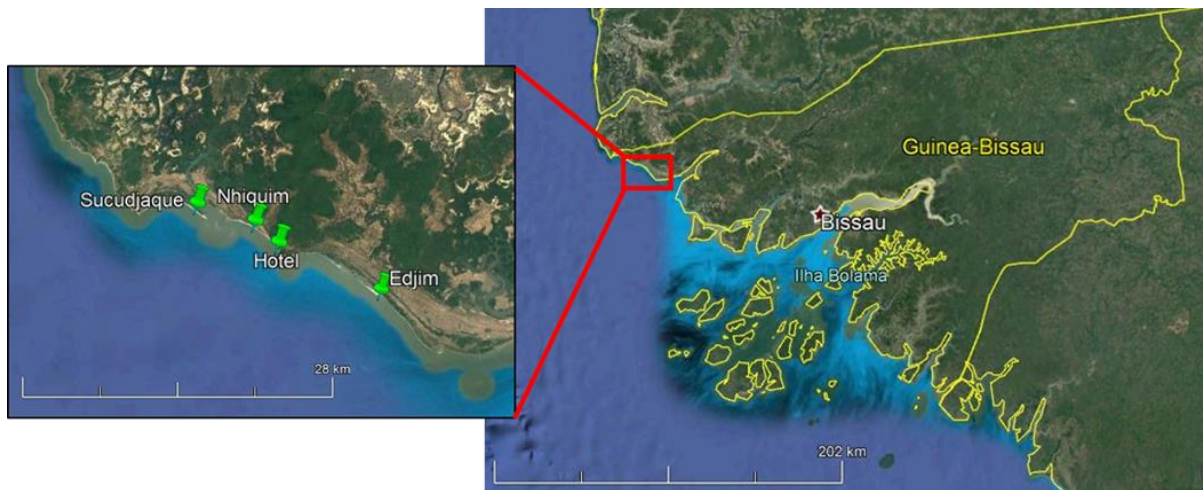


Figure 1. Map of the region of Varela showing the five nesting beaches for green sea turtles

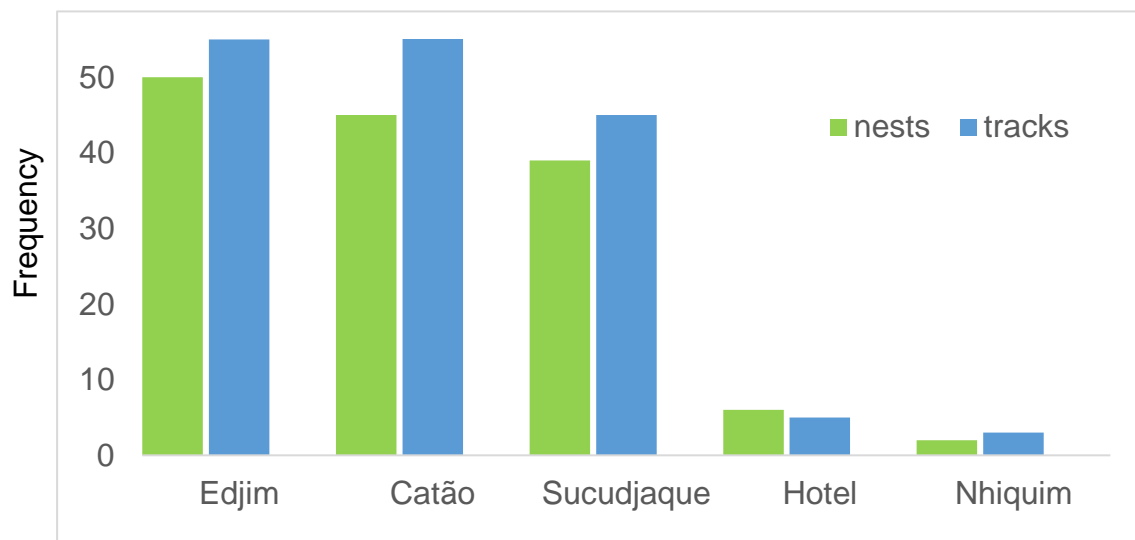


Figure 2. Nesting activity at five beaches in the region of Varela, north of Guinea-Bissau

Two intensive field work campaigns were conducted in September 2018, during the peak of nesting activity, at Edjim and Sucudjaque beaches. During these 1-week campaigns the teams camped at the nesting beach and patrolled the area through the night, enhancing protection and collecting useful data about the nesting turtles.



Figure 3. Green turtle returning to sea after nesting at Edjim beach.

And we have already our first hatched nests of the season! We are keeping track of these and exhuming nest contents (egg shells, dead eggs, hatchlings) to be able to estimate hatching success.



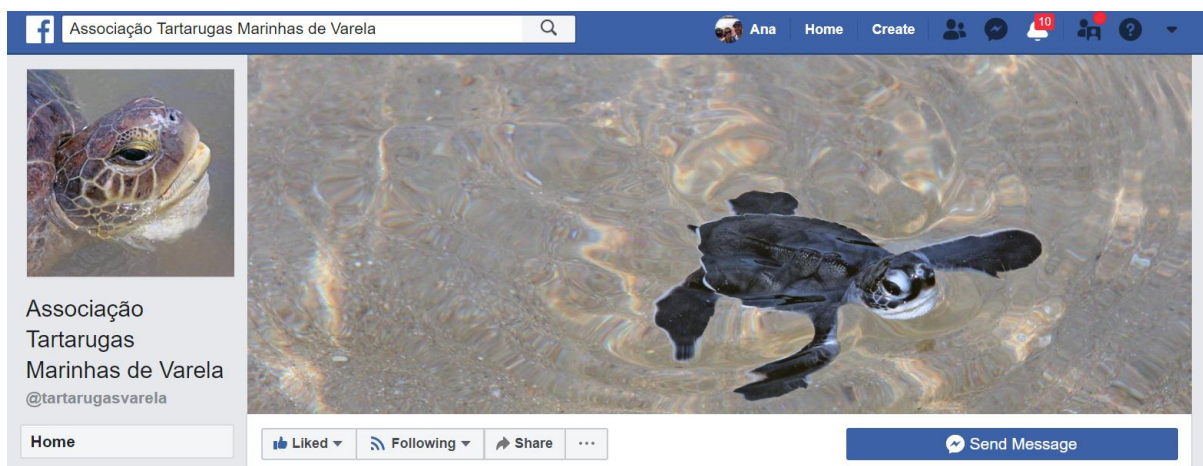
Figure 4. Green turtle hatchlings at Varela region.

Unfortunately we also found a dead juvenile with several fibropapilloma tumours. This is an important finding, the first report of this disease in the region. In the future we hope to be able to monitor also the foraging aggregations of juveniles to learn about their status.



Figure 5. Juvenile green turtle found dead at Varela, afflicted with several fibropapillomas.

We have created a Facebook page for the Association for sea turtle conservation in Varela, check it for more news on our project: <https://www.facebook.com/tartarugasvarela/>



Last but not least, a film crew composed by Pedro Canavilhas from the film producer B'Lizard (<http://b-lizard.pt/>) and Madalena Boto (<https://madalenaboto.com/>) have been at the Bijagós collecting spectacular footage and interviews for the creation of five micro-movies and one short documentary to broadcast the marine turtle conservation work conducted by the Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP), and its partners, in Guinea-Bissau.



Figure 6. Film producers/directors filming the IBAP approaching an illegal fishing vessel at the National Marine Park of João Vieira and Poilão.