

Project Update: December 2019

In August 2019, we initiated this project by selecting and awarding scholarships to three middle school students and one high school student in the small village of Sabinito Sur, Sonora. These students are now in charge of helping the local leader, Felix Garcia, sample and monitor the six species of turtle in the Sierra de Alamos on a weekly basis. So far, this team has located or trapped 132 Mexican mud turtles (*Kinosternon integrum*), 34 Alamos mud turtles (*Kinosternon alamosae*), 18 painted wood turtles (*Rhinoclemmys pulcherrima*), 55 sierra box turtles (*Terrapene nelsoni*), and 34 Goode's thorn scrub tortoises (*Gopherus evgoodei*). They have not yet been successful in trapping the Rio Fuerte slider (*Trachemys nebulosa*) in the Rio Cuchujaqui, yet the success with other five species has provided the opportunity for each student to learn how to measure and mark turtles, write daily journals, and how to record unique natural history observations. Currently, students are going to the field twice per week with Felix and are required to write daily journals and record at least one significant natural history observation per week. At the end of each month, Felix reviews these journals and observations before giving each student their monthly scholarship.



The current team of The Mexican Turtle Project including the four scholarship students (left: Alfredo, middle-top: Ivan, right-top: Darey, right bottom: Esteban), the project leader (middle: Taggart Butterfield) with Pyxi the Beagle who has been trained to help locate turtles, and the Local Leader (far right: Felix Garcia).

The website of this project, now named The Mexican Turtle Project (mexicanturtleproject.net), has been created to share the data that the turtle team is continuously recording. Although this website is still under construction, we hope that by the end of January 2019 we will be able to make all of the data collected by the scholarship students available on this website. Making these data open source will allow any scientists or turtle enthusiast to explore the population metrics of the turtles in Sonora. This will also ensure that these data are available for future conservation purposes.