LOGGERHEAD NESTING TREND IN THREE BEACHES OF BOAVISTA, CAPE VERDE ARQUIPIELAGO

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Abstract

Nesting beach surveys are the most widely implemented monitoring tool in use by the global sea turtle community and are an important component of a comprehensive program to assess and monitor the status of sea turtle populations. These assessments are necessary to evaluate the effects of recovery and conservation activities that are being implemented at all life history stages. Monitoring techniques employed on nesting beaches range from highly structured standardized sampling to "snapshots" of nesting activity within a nesting season. Very long-term nest counts data (more than twenty years) were analyzed for some turtle populations. These studies show that ten years period is not sufficient to reveal trends within turtle populations because different trends have been observed every 10-11 years. But some of these trends demonstrate also that long-term conservation efforts can reverse nesting declines and offers hope that adequate management can result in recuperation of endangered sea turtle species. In Cape Verde, loggerhead turtles have been hunted since too many years ago. Monitoring and conservation programs of loggerhead population began in 1998, in the south-eastern area of the island of Boa Vista (Reserva Natural das Tartarugas). This area houses the 80% of the total nests of the Cape Verde archipelago, making it the hotspot of this loggerhead population. The long-term efforts carried out in the area provide an excellent opportunity to evaluate the success of this sea turtle conservation action and policies. Nest transect surveys, to record loggerhead turtle nests deposited the previous night, have been conducted daily along three beaches of the south-eastern hotspot of Boa Vista island since 2001. We analyzed 10-year time series (2001-2010) nest-count data of the three beaches (Ervatao, Ponta Cosme and Calheta de Pau) of Boavista Island. The analysis shows annual fluctuation and, in general, an increase in the number of nests during this period. We consider different ecological aspects that may be influencing the results of this population.