

## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EPIBIONTS ON THE PELAGIC AND MATURE FEMALE LOGGERHEAD TURTLES ON THE CANARY AND CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

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### Abstract

Marine turtles commonly carry diverse forms of epizoa on their shells. The occurrence of a particular species may ultimately help to clarify certain questions about sea turtle natural life history. This paper gives a detailed and comparative list of epizoic species found on two populations of macaronesian loggerheads: pelagic and juveniles living around the Canary Islands and mature females nesting in Boavista Island, Cabo Verde. For the epizoic flora, the most important genera founded is *Polysiphonia* (Rhodophyceae); *P. caretta* for the pelagics and *Polysiphonia sp.* for the nesting animals. Another genera founded only in the pelagic turtles was the Phaeophyceae, *Hinckia mitchelliae*; one small and filamentous algae who was considered to be one of the primary colonizers. The most represented group of fauna is the Crustaceae: two species of Cirripedia (*Lepas anatifera* and *Conchoderma virgatum*) are very abundant in both populations. One species of Balaniadae (*Chelonibia testudinaria*), is not very important in the pelagic turtles but very representative in the nesting females. We found huge quantities of organisms of the order Amphipode (Caprelliadae, Gammaridae) in both populations, and a very important number of Isopodes, mainly in the nesting turtles. There are other Orders of epizoics in sea turtles like Hidroidea, represented mainly by *Obelia geniculata*, most important in nesting females of Cabo Verde than in pelagic and juvenile turtles. The order Tanaidacea is only found in the nesting females. A new record of nudibranchia, *Fiona pinnata* was found in the pelagic and juveniles loggerheads from the Canary Islands.