

MASSIVE CAPTURE OF NESTING FEMALES IS SEVERELY THREATENING THE CABOVERDIAN LOGGERHEAD POPULATION

Adolfo Marco¹, Elena Abella¹, Oscar López², Nuria Varo², Samir Martins^{3,1}, Paula Sanz¹,
and Luis F. López-Jurado²

1 Estación Biológica de Doñana, CSIC, Sevilla, Spain

2 Instituto Canario de Ciencias del Mar, Las Palmas, Spain

3 ISECMAR, Sao Vicente, Cape Verde

Abstract

The loggerhead population from Cape Verde is one of the most important in the world. Turtles nest on several islands from this archipelago but around 90% are using the island of Boavista. In 2000 the estimation of annual nesting females in Boavista was around 5000 individuals. However, the capture of nesting females for human consumption is a widespread practice in the local populations that could be killing more than 25% of nesting females every year. The decline of turtle abundance in other islands is now increasing the hunting pressure on individuals that nest on Boavista. During the 2007 nesting season we have estimated that only 3000 females have nested on the island and more than 800 have been killed in unprotected beaches. To this severe mortality we have to add the capture of females at sea. On protected beaches the number of nests remained stable during the nesting season. However, on non-protected beaches and due to the strong nesting site fidelity within the season, the number of nests drastically decreased during the second half of the nesting season. Unfortunately, some females that nest on the protected beaches will use unprotected ones during future nesting seasons. Thus, it is not possible to guarantee the survival of any female by protecting only some of the nesting beaches. Demographic models are being calculated in order to predict the population dynamics, their risk of extinction in the next decades and the conservation criteria needed to reverse the current trends.