



NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-SEFSC-631

PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON SEA TURTLE BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION



10 to 16 April 2011
San Diego, California, USA

Compiled by:
T. Todd Jones & Bryan P. Wallace

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center
75 Virginia Beach Drive
Miami, Florida 33149

May 2012
(Updated November 2012)



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The President's Report may be found in its entirety in the Marine Turtle Newsletter 130:30-33, 2011 entitled 'President's Report for the 31st Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation 'The Next Generation of Research and Conservation', 10-16 April 2011, San Diego, California, USA.'

by Jeffrey Seminoff, President, ISTS

<http://www.seaturtle.org/mtn/archives/mtn130/mtn130p30.shtml>

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Proceedings of the 31st Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation

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East Asia Regional Meeting	Yoshimasa Matsuzawa
Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative (ICAPO) Meeting	Alexander Gaos, Ingrid Yañez
Indian Ocean & Southeast Asia Regional Meeting	Maggie Muurmans, Rahayu Zulfiki, SMA Rashid, Lalith Ekanayake
IOSEA Marine Turtle Meeting	Douglas Hykle
IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group Annual Meeting	Roderic Mast, Nicolas Pilcher, Brian Hutchinson
Mediterranean Regional Meeting	Paolo Casale
Pacific Islands Region and Partners Meeting	Irene Kelly
Pacific Leatherback Turtle Conservation Fund Meeting	Asuka Ishizaki
RETOMALA XVIII (Latin America) Meeting	Alan Zavala, Juanpablo Muñoz, Carlos Mario Orrego
Science of Advocacy Meeting	J. Nichols, Todd Steiner
WIDECAST (Caribbean) Regional Meeting	Karen Eckert
Freshwater Turtle & Tortoise Symposium	Chuck Shaffer
NMFS Scientific Research and Enhancement Permits	Amy Hapeman
3 rd Workshop on Data Analysis in Marine Turtle Research	Tomo Eguchi
3 rd Workshop on Sea Turtle Stable Isotope Research	Karen Arthur, Kim Reich, Bryan Wallace
Marine Turtle Conservation Fund (MTCF) - Grant Writing Workshop	Earl Possardt
Marine Turtles, Hooks, and Related Lesions Workshop	Mariluz Parga
Public Participation in Turtle Conservation Workshop	Samantha Burgess
San Diego Schoolchildren Education Workshop	Frances Kinney, Barbara Andrews
San Diego Teacher Education Workshop	Frances Kinney, Barbara Andrews
Sea Turtle Medicine Workshop	Heather Harris
Student Professional Development Workshop	Lisa Komoroske

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STUDENT AWARDS

There were 181 student presentations – 58 papers and 123 posters with \$5,500 US awarded to 12 recipients. The awards committee was composed of Lisa Campbell, Matthew Godfrey, and Jeanette Wyneken. Student judges: Karen Arthur, Larisa Avens, Ray Carthy, Paolo Casale, Emma Harrison, Craig Harms, Jennifer Keller, Mike James, Cynthia Lagueux, Kate Mansfield, Catherine McClellan, Zoe Meletis, Terry Norton, Dave Owens, Andrea Phillott, Nick Pilcher, Peter Pritchard, Kim Reich, Erin Seney, Kelly Stewart, Tony Tucker, Roldan Valverde, and Thane Wibbels. The awards were financed by the International Sea Turtle Society. (Note that as in previous years, the judges decided not to award prizes in certain categories, based on their ranking system)

Breeding Biology

Best Oral Presentation

Anthony Rafferty, Pilar Santidrián Tomillo, James Spotila, Frank Paladino, Richard Reina. Embryonic death is linked to maternal identity in the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*). (Monash Univeristy) \$500

Runner Up Oral Presentation

Jeanne Garner, Tomo Eguchi, Duncan MacKenzie, Scott Jacques. Evaluating steroid hormone data in association with reproductive parameters in a population of endangered leatherback sea turtles and the application to conservation and management. (Texas A&M University) \$250

Best Poster Presentation

Hannah B. Vander Zanden, Karen A. Bjorndal, Alan B. Bolten. Nutrient transport by green turtles. (University of Florida) \$500

Conservation through Social, Economic, Cultural, & Legal Pathways

Best Oral Presentation

Courtney Shephard. Optimizing U.S. Endangered Species Act protection by integrating recovery planning, Section 7 Consultations, and incidental take authorizations: A sea turtle case study. (Duke University). \$500

Foraging, Physiology, & Movements

Best Oral Presentation

Simona Ceriani, James D. Roth, Daniel Evans, Llewellyn M. Ehrhart. Satellite tracking confirms the use of stable isotopes to infer foraging grounds of loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) nesting on Florida's East coast. (University of Central Florida). \$500

Runner Up Oral Presentation

Alexander R. Gaos, Rebecca L. Lewison, Ingrid L. Yañez, Wallace J. Nichols, Andres Baquero, Michael Liles, Mauricio Vasquez, Jose Urteaga, Bryan Wallace, Jeffrey A. Seminoff. Satellite telemetry reveals novel insights into the biology and conservation of hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochely imbricata*) in the eastern Tropical Pacific. (San Diego State Univeristy). \$250

Foraging, Physiology, & Movements

Best Poster Presentation

Morgan Young, Michael Salmon, Richard Forward. Visual wavelength discrimination by the loggerhead turtle. (Florida Atlantic University). \$500

Health & Rehabilitation

Best Poster Presentation

Virginie Plot, Jean-Patrice Robin, Thomas Jenkins, Sabrina Fossette, Jean-Yves Georges. Physiological state and condition in nesting leatherback turtles in French Guiana. (Université Strasbourg) \$500

Population Assessment

Best Oral Presentation

Brian M. Shamblin, Mark G. Dodd, Kristina L. Williams, Michael G. Frick, Terry M. Norton, Stephanie Ouellette, Rebecca Bell, Douglas M. Hoffman, Debra Barnard-Keinath, Gale G. Bishop, Scott Coleman, Stacia Hendricks, Tammy Smith, Campbell J. Naim. Genetic mark-recapture of the female loggerhead population nesting in Georgian 2008-2009: Abundance, nest site fidelity, and relatedness. (University of Georgia). \$500

Best Poster Presentation

Vanessa Bezy, Roldan A. Valverde. Comparison of methodologies for estimating the nest density of olive ridley arribadas at Ostional, Costa Rica. (UNC – Wilmington). \$500

Threats

Best Oral Presentation

Qamar Schuyler, Kathy A. Townsend, Justin Marshall. To eat or not to eat? The roles of choice and vision in ingestion of marine debris by sea turtles. (University of Queensland). \$500

Best Poster Presentation

Leigh Ann Harden, Amanda S. Williard. Using spatially explicit predator-prey model to investigate bycatch risk of terrapins in crab pots. (UNC – Wilmington). \$500

ISTS AWARDS 2011

Award certificates were designed by Dawn Witherington.

President's Award

Margie Stinson

Ed Drane Award for Volunteerism (new award)

Ed Drane

Life Time Achievement Award

Sally Murphy

Karen Bjorndal

Peter Pritchard

Champions Awards

Jepson Prince

Sinkey Boone

Colum Muccio

Grass Roots Awards (new award)

Ingrid Yañez

KEYNOTE PRESENTERS

Peter C. H. Pritchard

The Eastern Pacific: Where the Turtles are all Different

Karen A. Bjorndal

Planning Our Future: Expanding the Known, Learning the Unknown, and Minimizing the Unknowable

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS - WILD AND SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL

Your Unknown Killings

Jayesh Shirakhane

Port of San Diego, NOAA Project

Barbara Moreno

The Heartbreak Turtle Today

Sea Turtle Restoration Project, presented by Carole Allen

The Jurassic Journey

John Dutton

Between the Harvest

Scott Drucker

Saving Sea Turtles of Sri Lanka

Thushan Kapurusinghe

Kurma

Arun Krishna

Sanctuary in the Sea: a Gulf of the Farallones Experience

Bob Talbot

Sea Turtle Conservation with Grupo Tortuguero

Roger Roth, presented by Wallace J. Nichols

NEAR-SHORE DISPERSAL OF PAPUAN LEATHERBACK HATCHLINGS USING ACOUSTIC TELEMETRY

Geoffrey Gearheart¹, Adi Maturbongs², Ricardo Tapilatu^{2,3}, Peter Dutton⁴, Janet Sprintall¹, and Gerald Kooyman¹

¹ Scripps Institution of Oceanography, La Jolla, California, USA

² Universitas Negeri Papua, West-Papua, Indonesia

³ University of Alabama-Birmingham, USA

⁴ NOAA-SWFSC, La Jolla, California, USA

As part of a multi-year effort to study the oceanic dispersal of leatherback hatchlings departing the nesting beaches of Papua's Bird's Head Peninsula (Indonesia), a pilot study was carried out to determine the most efficient tracking method and yield preliminary data on near-shore dispersal. Both acoustic and VHF (radio) tags were tested in the field, using stationary buoys and live hatchlings. The results show the superiority of acoustic tags in terms of directionality, the most important parameter when tracking small organisms at sea. This led to the development of an optimum setup for acoustic tracking and the first recorded tracks of western Pacific leatherback hatchlings. Fifteen trajectories with lengths of up to 7 km and 6 hours duration show the feasibility of the method and provide preliminary information on swimming behavior and surface currents that mediate dispersal. The high temporal resolution of the data enabled us to measure the impact of (1) the drag of the tracking set (bobber and transmitter) and (2) the influence of age at release (time elapsed between natural emergence and release for tracking) on displacement speed and swimming direction (offshore bearing). The results suggest that the tracking set slows down the displacement speed of the hatchlings by 38 %, however, when entrained in a Westward surface current, there was no difference in displacement speed of turtles dragging the tracking set vs. turtles swimming freely. Overall, hatchlings' swimming direction was not affected by the tracking set. The same results were obtained when comparing the displacement speed of turtles that emerged naturally from their nests vs. hatchlings dug up from hatched/predated nests ("stragglers"). Refining the analysis to take into account the age at release on displacement speed, it was found that hatchlings less than 24 hrs old swam significantly faster than hatchlings of 48 hours or more. Interestingly, "stragglers" performed better than 48+ hatchlings. The results suggest that when entrained in currents matching or exceeding their sustained maximum swimming speed, the tracking set did not influence hatchlings' swimming behavior. These findings furthermore suggest that hatchling dispersal is primarily influenced by their initial ability to become entrained in the strong near-shore current. Conversely, in calm waters, hydrodynamic drag becomes an issue. The impact of the hatchling's age on displacement speed provides additional evidence supporting the immediate release of hatchery turtles.

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