

Camping threatens turtle's nests ^[1]

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By Ricardo Cortés Chico / rcortes@elnuevodia.com ^[2] endi.com ^[3] Annual marine turtle nesting in beaches of the community La Puente in Añasco is in danger, because during the last months dozens of people have used the area camp, ignite bonfires and race cross country vehicles, in violation to the laws and regulations that protect the reproduction of these endangered species. The worse thing is that personnel of the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DRNA) knows of the situation, but does not assign the necessary personnel to monitor the zone, denounced several university students, participants of the Program of Conservation of the Marine Turtles. According to Elimelec Medina Rodriguez, Biology student of the Inter-American University in Aguadilla, the situation puts at risk the 150 nests of tinglares and sea turtles that have been identified in this zone during the current nesting season. "People come here, mount their tents, bring their cross country vehicles, and no one says anything", indicated Medina Rodriguez. During El Nuevo Dia's visit to beaches of the zone, it was possible to see more than the average dozen camping tents, inorganic bonfire signs and wastes in the areas where there are the nests. In fact, marks of motor vehicles were over one of the places where a tinglar nested, according to Medina Rodriguez. On the other hand, Raquel Mejías Cordero, one of the Biology students that alerted about the situation, showed that during the night of San Juan, she observed in the zone at least three ignited bonfires, while the personnel of the DRNA did nothing to correct the situation. However, it transcended that, when the secretary of the DRNA, Javier Vélez Arocho, found out of the presence of campers in the area and the inaction the DRNA personnel, he ordered the tents in the area to be removed immediately. Joseph Ramos, whose tent was removed after the instructions of Vélez Arocho, indicated that his family chose to camp in the zone to encamp due to the lack of safe and economic places to practice this type of activity. He assured that his camping in no way interfered with the marine turtles since it was located on the grass, which prevents the turtles to use it as a nest. "One wants have some peace and tranquility but there's always problems", indicated Ramos. The US Fish & Wild Life Service describes the hawksbill turtle as a species of marine turtle that can reach up to 38 inches in length and weigh 200 pounds. They have a shell formed coffee and yellow shell plates. Its head and fins are yellow with brown spots. Their hunting and the destruction of their habitat are the greatest threats against this endangered species. The tinglar, on the other hand, is the biggest species of marine turtle that exists. It can

measure up to seven feet of length and weigh 1.400 pounds. In Puerto Rico, it nests in the beaches of Mayagüez, Añasco, Rincon, Isabela, Arecibo, Cabo Rojo, Guánica, Piñones, Luquillo, Fajardo, Humacao, Culebra and the Island of Mona. The destruction of their nesting sites and vandalism are the greatest threat against them. It is also an endangered species.

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