

Hawksbill turtle prefers Island of Mona's beaches ^[1]

Submitted on 16 July 2006 - 1:07am

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By Carlos E. Diez y Robert P. van Dam / Special El Nuevo Día [endi.com](#) ^[2] The hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) is the most abundant species of marine turtle in our beaches and coasts. Nevertheless it is classified as an endangered species by state and federal laws besides to be protected at the international level. One of the most important places in the Caribbean for the reproduction of this species is in the Island of Mona, Puerto Rico. The results of studies of nesting activity in the Island of Mona have demonstrated a significant increase in the numbers of hawksbill nests in the island during the past few years. In 2005 a total of 1,003 nests were counted in all beaches of Island of Mona during 116 days of monitoring, which is the greatest amount registered during any census in previous years (in 1994 there were 308 nests in 114 days). The emergence success for nests found to have emerged has varied per year, but it is generally between 70 and 80%. From 1984 to 2005 a total of 259 nesting female hawksbill turtles have been intercepted and marked in beaches of Island of Mona. The increase in the number of nests observed corresponds to a growth of the sea turtle's population using Island of Mona to reproduce and several other factors: the protection of nests from depredation by wild pigs, the prohibition on the international trade of the sea turtle, and the isolation and conditions of the island as a natural reserve. After Island of Mona, only three important nesting areas remain in Puerto Rico: Humacao, Caja de Muerto y Culebra. Even so, the numbers of nests counted in these areas (300 for the three areas in 2005) are smaller to the amount of nests reported for Island of Mona. The continuation of the conservation projects Island of Mona like: the monitoring of nesting activity, maintenance of isolating iron fences, and control of exotic fauna and flora are vital for the protection of this species. Whereas in Puerto Rico it is necessary to avoid unplanned development, promoting the environmental fitness of touristic and existing urban structures, as well as fighting illegal fishing of these Cheloniidae, to assure the recovery these populations of marine turtles.

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