

Ecology and Conservation of Sea Turtles in Peru

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Abstract

Some of the key elements to assess the status of any wildlife population in a given geographical area are the levels of recruitment, survival and mortality. Whilst most of the information on marine turtles has been obtained from nesting sites, turtles spend most of their lives at sea.

The conservation status of marine turtles in the southeast Pacific is poorly documented. This is particularly true for countries like Peru, where nesting events are very rare, although five species of turtles from populations from all over the Pacific basin, use these waters as foraging grounds. Little information exists on the threats to turtle populations in foraging areas or the magnitude of these impacts.

Small-scale fisheries are a globally important economic activity serving as a source of food and employment for *ca.* 1 billion people; however we show that they also have serious impacts on marine turtle populations from all over the Pacific basin in the form of incidentally captured marine turtles.

The five chapters that constitute this thesis are intended to increase our understanding of small-scale fisheries impacts on this taxon during their aquatic life stages. This work focuses on describing these fisheries, their impacts on marine turtles and proposes methodologies to monitor and assess the level of bycatch from small-scale fisheries. We also discuss alternative ways to prevent fisheries interactions and promote the involvement of artisanal fishermen in the southeast Pacific in implementing conservation solutions.

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