



TURTLE TIMES



Hatcheries are used in turtle conservation all over the world, and Turtle Foundation is no exception. We use it in two of our beaches and for two very different reasons, although connected, to an extent. In Lacacão beach, sea turtles, nesting females and hatchlings both, suffer from human impact. The presence of hotels right in the middle of the beach as a devastating effect: where there's people, there's lights. Turtles rely on light colours such as the waves crashing and the reflection of the moon and stars on the water to get back to the ocean, so you can imagine what effect artificial lights have. During our night patrols we often encounter disorientated females wandering around after nesting, unable to find the sea again, and we stay with them until they do so. Unfortunately we are not able to do that to hatching nests as there are too many and too spread out, and that is one of the reasons we relocate them from Lacacão to the very close by Ponta Pesqueira, the other being the fact the the beach floods often with the tides drowning the eggs. Even there the lights affect the hatchlings so our team needs to present to guide them back to the ocean. As conservation and research work hand in hand, some of those nest are use to collect scientific data that will help improve future conservation hatchery. The babies are counted, and 30 of them are measured and weighted randomly, before being released back to the ocean. Photos by: Joana Nicolau & Camilo Carrasco



On the northern beaches of Boa Esperança, our hatchery serves a different purpose. The high rates of ghost crab predation combined with the low numbers and endangered status of the loggerhead turtle made us act and start a hatchery program, in order to increase the success rate of nests during the season. It's a step we hope not be needed in the future but for now, after data analysis of the past few years, we decided we had to do more for the preservation of the species. Threats to turtle population (specially human) make crab predation a critical situation instead of what would otherwise be a natural selection process. A study is also being conducted on how sediment preferences affect the rates of crab predation, done by one of our volunteers, so hopefully we can get a closer insight to help the project! Boa Esperança beach faces a big problem with litter, and we spent almost a whole day clearing the small patch where we had it built, and even now micro plastic fibbers be still be found around. When a nest is relocated, another one is dug at the hatchery, as similar as possible to the original one, and it will be hard work for our rangers and volunteers to dig through plastic, and even more for the little hatchlings to fight their way through it to reach the ocean.



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Over the last weeks there were a few world events worth reminding as they directly relate to our cause. It started on the 17th of May with the International Recycling Day and there is no better timing to alert for the critical situation in Boa Vista. With a yearly population growth rate of around 30%, the island's infrastructures cannot cope with the waste produces. There is virtually no recycling happening in Boa Vista and everything is buried and burned, when not left spread all over the island. It's imperative that recycling reaches Cape Verde and Boa Vista so that all the rubbish produced starts to be reused, instead of finding it's end in the ocean.



The next day: the World Turtle Day, very special for us here at Turtle Foundation, and a great opportunity to remind the world of the work we do, and why we do it. Turtles have been around for millions of years and our mission is that they can thrive for many more to come. On the 6th of June everyone got together for the World Environment Day with the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, giving the example "...the message is simple: say no to disposable plastic. Refuse to use what can't be recycled. Together we plan a path for a cleaner and greener world". Plastic is one of the biggest threats to the environment, not only on the Oceans, but also on land, and we urge everyone for a more sustainable way of living, before it's too late. Finally, to end this series of important events, we had the World's Ocean Day, on the 8th of June. This year's motto was to "stop plastic waste and encourage solutions for a healthier sea". In Boa Vista we had a March for the Oceans in Sal Rei, promoted by our partners MarAlliance to create awareness to protect such valuable resource as the Ocean.



Then, on the 22nd, we celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity and Boa Vista is a very special place, a true biological paradise. There are thousands of species living in the area and making the island a marine wildlife hotspot. This includes more than 706 species of fish (including tuna, wahoo, silver grouper and much more), 4 species of dolphins, 15 species of sharks (including the gentle giant of the seas: the whale shark), 5 species of lobster, 7 species of moray eel, the magical manta ray, 11 species of whales that return the waters of Boa Vista to breed every year, more than 21 species of birds and of course, 5 species of turtles including the 3rd world's largest nesting site for the loggerhead turtle. Some of this species are endemic, meaning they cannot be found anywhere else in the world, and that contributes to make this island a very special place that needs protection and preservation, so that future generations can also enjoy the wonders of Boa Vista.

