



TURTLE TIMES



Turtle nest predation in Boa Vista comes in many forms as we saw recently in Lacacão Camp. One of rangers, “Rasta”, was conducting a morning census when he found a track from the previous night, with signs of nesting. Since it is the beginning of the season and turtle activity is still low he went back to camp to call Field Coordinator Gabriela to have a look. As they returned to the nest shortly after, they found a few eggs outside and signs of breakage into the nest. Upon further investigation, they concluded ravens were the culprit of egg robbery! Large bird tracks were found all over the nest and the damage to the eggs suggests the murder weapon was a bird’s bill! Ravens are highly intelligent animals and it should not be hard for them to identify turtle nests and the tasty snack inside. Since it’s a bit of hard work to get to the eggs, it is not their main food source but they are opportunistic and take advantage of food that is available. Sometimes turtles make very shallow nests with little camouflage and that contributes for higher predation. As seen in the photo, only a few eggs were damaged (the ones closer to the surface) and the nest was covered again and hopefully the rest of the eggs will hatch, but our team will keep an eye out for it.



Left: Nest attacked by ravens in the southern coastline of Boa Vista. The ravens dig a small whole to reach the eggs and empty eggshells can be see around the whole, with bird tracks all over it.

Right: Turtle track on the beach. The uptrack on the left side, and the down track on the right side. Photo taken from where the nest would be (the S like drag across the track was not made by the turtle). Photos by Gabriela Fernandes.



Nest predation its part of the ecosystem and a natural occurrence quite interesting and diverse all over the world. In Boa Vista, ghost crabs are the biggest nest raider recorded with parasites and diseases also to be taken in consideration. At a lesser extent, ravens and stray cats or dogs may also take chances on the eggs. However, loggerhead turtle nests in other parts of the world have a great variety of predators like foxes, ants, snakes, opossums, bears, rats, skunks, cats, dogs, lizards, raccoons and humans! Baby turtles are also very vulnerable in the earlier stages of life, and a large number dies to predators on the path from the nest to the ocean (sea birds take on the opportunity). The ones that manage to reach the ocean will face a completely new set of dangers between fish and other marine wildlife and chances of survival are very slim. But even if the odds don’t seem to run in their favour sea turtles have been around for millions of years and we hope it stays like that for many more



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Throughout the season we will be introducing you some of our Turtle Foundation Local Heroes, a tribute to individuals that have been working for turtle conservation with Turtle Foundation with such passion and dedication that we cannot talk about it without mentioning their names. Our first local hero is a known face all across Boa Vista, Cape Verde and overseas. It is of course, our proud leader, Euclides “Ukie” Resende. Ukie was born in Fogo Island and spent most of his youth there, with life taking him all the way to the USA, to the city of Boston. A few years later he returned to his home country and Ukie’s path crossed with the sea turtles and Turtle Foundation in 2010. While working as a guide for a German ecotour company in Boa Vista Ukie was invited to join and help Turtle Foundation for the nesting season of the loggerhead turtle. Two years later he joined the ranks in full to help fighting the massive killing happening in Boa Vista. His first time working in our camps was crucial and life changing and in his own words:

“I went to help the volunteer beach camps on Boa Vista for one summer but it changed me forever. The first time I saw a turtle laying eggs, I was overcome by its beauty and a sense of peace. My life has changed – my way of looking at nature – and I have grown more and more passionate about turtles. As a Cape Verdean, I’m proud to be contributing to my country.”



Since 2012 Ukie has been climbing the ladder of leadership inside Turtle Foundation, and 2018 will be his 3rd year as project director. It has been a path of challenges: from dealing with local communities, managing a team on a tight budget, running an NGO on remote location and even dealing with a hurricane that stormed the island and destroyed the camps in 2015! Ukie takes his role very serious and he is not afraid to put his hands to work and lead by example. Those who know him are well aware of his sense of humour and dedication to the cause, always ready to crack a joke or jump on a car to chase poachers. We are sure that his doing already made a big change for the turtles and communities in Boa Vista that it will not end here...