



# TURTLE TIMES



August 13th 2012 marks the birth of Fundação Tartaruga. It was day it was registered as NGO in Cabo Verde, therefore becoming independent from Turtle Foundation (Germany NGO, who started the work in Boavista in 2008). Every year we celebrate the date with a big party with everyone that is part of the family, staff and volunteers. We chose the 18<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, for the big day and Boa Esperança Camp, the location. It requires a lot of preparation and logistic coordination and the office started to plan and organize it a couple of weeks in advance (even if nothing goes to plan when the time comes!). Between our five camps and office team, around 75 people got together in Boa Esperança from mid-morning for the “little” get together. Our camp’s chefs worked non-stop since the day before to prepare the feast: chicken, fish, several salads and of course, the traditional cachupa, the national dish of Cabo Verde. It was a very hot and sunny day and with the ocean right there next to camp most people sat on the beach and went for dip in the sea while watching the traditional football games between the camps. It is always a special time where everyone that works hard with FT gets the opportunity to meet and share experiences and with every year our family grows bigger, and turtles become safer. By 4 o’clock, it was time to get back to the respective camps and prepare for the evening’s work, but not before we hear the speech from FT director Ukie, and cut the cake! This year the honour belonged to a very special person that for years has been doing an amazing job for both sea turtles and the communities in Boavista: Joana Nicolau, our project manager, kindly known as Joaninha. After everyone enjoyed the yummy cake, we were surprised with an amazing sighting: a turtle coming to the beach right by the camp. It was a mesmerizing moment where everyone stood still and quiet watching this amazing animal coming out in the heat of the day. It did not stayed long, just enough for everyone to appreciate its beauty, before going back to the water. We can say it came to help sing happy birthday to FT, but also that it appeared to remind everyone why we do what we do.

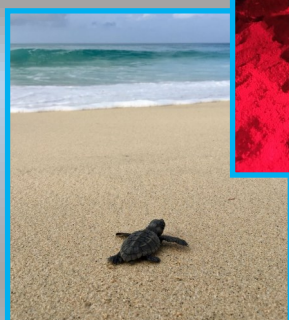
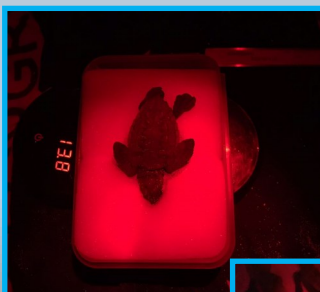




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A beach does not always mean endless white sand and ocean: there are rocks, cliffs, vegetation and so on so on. Sea turtles do not always have the same perception of their surroundings (maybe because they are so short!) and sight is not the best of their senses. Although they can see shapes and avoid objects, it gets difficult when it comes to the terrain itself. Sometimes they crawl to a wall rock and, not having where to go, return to the water. Sometimes they go up high dunes and sand surf all the way down. And sometimes, they fail to see holes or even worse, gaps between the rocks. This is especially true in places like Boa Esperança, where the turtles need to go around and over rocky areas to find suitable nesting spots. The problem is that they cannot see these holes in the rocks and only realise when they fall inside! Sometimes the gap is large and sandy at the bottom and they make their way out but the problem is when it is a very narrow gap and the turtle is stuck! The team in BE camp is always on the lookout for situations like this and one of our rangers, Almeida, came up with a very delicate situation one of this days. He found the turtle stuck head down in a narrow gap between the rocks, luckily still alive. It was a delicate operation that required dexterity and strength to pull the poor animal out and guide it safely back to sea. This scenario happens almost every day and our team saves many turtles every season. Each year erosion on the beaches removes sand and exposes more rocks leaving the turtles even more vulnerable to this situation but unfortunately there's little more we can do besides aiding them when it happens.



We already talked about the use of hatcheries in some of our beaches and on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, our first relocated nest of the season hatched in Lacacão! It was relocated on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June and it took a bit more than the average 55 days to hatch but 64 out of 98 baby turtles made their way to the surface and, after some scientific contribution from some of them, off they went to the ocean. It is common that the eggs do not hatch all at the same time and sometimes we see a couple of turtles before the big batch, as well as some coming out after. Other factors such as natural causes and unfertilized eggs also contribute for not having a 100% egg hatch in every nest. The team will later do an exhumation of the nest and find out more about the eggs that did not hatch. Meanwhile, a few hundred nests await to hatch over the next couple of months.

Photos: Almeida Gomes, Camilo Carrasco, Gabriela Fernandes