



TURTUGARUBA

Turtugaruba is the local foundation that protects the sea turtles in and around Aruba.

Four species of sea turtles are found nesting on Aruba:

Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Hawksbill Sea Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*); Besides these four species an Olive Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) was found in the waters around Aruba. All Caribbean sea turtle species are “endangered” or “critically endangered” and are on the World Conservation Union (IUCN)

Red List of Threatened Species.

Marine turtle nests and eggs have been protected in Aruba by Law since 1980 and with the Nature Conservation Ordinance of 1995 the penalty for killing a marine turtle can be two years in prison and/or a fine of Afls 100.000 (\$55.500). So you will not find turtle soup or a turtle steak on the menu any more. But on the Aruba of today we have to face other turtle threats like: loss of nesting habitats and feeding grounds due to coastal development and the problems of artificial lighting, driving on the beaches and pollution.

In 1993 a Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan (STRAP) was developed and published for Aruba under the auspices of WIDECAST and the UN Caribbean Environment Programme. With this STRAP as a guide line a group of volunteers worked ever since on the problems mentioned above.

The volunteers got organized in a foundation in September 2003. Turtugaruba is a NGO, a non profit organization that consists of a board, a field coordinator and about 25 volunteers. Turtugaruba is a member of WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network), the regional network that includes more than 40 different Caribbean States and territories.

What are the annual activities of Turtugaruba?

1. Education and public awareness.

Turtugaruba interacts with the local Press, gives lectures for Park Rangers, hotel personal, dive operators, schools and the public in general, participates in local “open days”, creates posters and flyers for sharing with both local people and tourists, assists school children and students preparing papers and lectures at school, and is always (24 hours, 7 days a week) available at the **Turtle Hotline** (+297)-**592 93 93**. Information can also be obtained via email: turtugaruba@hotmail.com

2. Fieldwork, protection and data collecting.

During the turtle season the nesting beaches are monitored every morning at daybreak. The highly developed hotel area at the west coast of the island is normally frequented by Leatherback Sea Turtles (2008 Febr – July: 72 nests, 9 different females). Eagle Beach is patrolled not only at dawn but also at night, whenever a female Leatherback is expected to return for her next nest (2 shifts: 22.00 – 24.00 and 0.00 – 2.00 AM). In addition to the beach patrols the turtle nests at the West Coast are protected “in situ” during incubation (60-70 days) and hatching. The data of the nests and turtles are registered.

3. Contact with the Government and local NGO's

Foundation Turtugaruba is invited by the Government to be present at the presentation of the major coastal development projects. The foundation supports the plans for the implementation of the Coastal Zone Management (CZM). Turtugaruba is a member of the AHATA Environmental Committee and works together with other nature organizations like Stimaruba, Fanapa, Rainbow Warriors and Parke Nacional Arikok. The volunteers of Turtugaruba (and their families!) participate every year in the Aruba Reef Care Project (ATA) and the AHATA Coastal Clean Up (but, of course, cleaning the beach is done every day on an individual base while monitoring for turtle tracks).

4. International contacts.

Turtugaruba is a Member of WIDECAST. Widecast Country Coordinators for Aruba are Edith and Richard van der Wal, also members of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group.

Almost every year Turtugaruba participates at the Widecast Annual General Meeting and represents Aruba at the International Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation and Biology .

5. Sponsoring.

Although the “normal” expenses (gasoline, office supplies, field materials, cell phone, etc), and all of the time and energy are a “volunteer affair”, some costs are too expensive to be paid by the volunteers themselves (e.g. organizing workshops with experts from abroad, building a retainer wall, printing of posters, flyers etc). So donations are very welcome and will be used for the protection and conservation of the sea turtles visiting Aruba. Aruba Bank account nr. 4006684. Thanks!