

Project Update: April 2006

At the beginning of March 2006 we started our sea turtle mortality census and visited beaches, villages and dump-sites in 6 of the 15 monitoring areas. Up to now we found more than 150 carapaces, 53% of these being found buried in dump-sites. This is pretty negative sign as it indicates that sea turtle consumption is still high in the state of BCS. Furthermore more than 50% of the "consumed" carapaces have been identified as black turtles (*Chelonia mydas agassizii*). Black turtles are considered more "tasty" and have been a target species between the 50s and 80s, when sea turtle exploitation was still legal in Mexico. Another negative finding is that more than 70% of the turtle found dead were juveniles.

On the other hand, positive outputs came from the interviews and long talks with people from the communities. As preliminary conclusion it can be said that in general people are well informed about sea turtle status and the consumption of sea turtle meat, even if still high, is sharply declining, hypothesis supported by the fact that a lot of children have never eaten sea turtle meat.

We are currently working on fishing effort data to both analyze artisanal fishery/sea turtle mortality correlation and identify highly dangerous fishing gears.