

Project Update: December 2006

After two months of very intensive sea turtle strandings in the area of Bahia Magdalena, it seems that the situation has now become normal again. A few necropsies have been realized on fresh stranded turtles by specialists come from Mexico City, as in Baja California Sur we do not have the necessary equipment. Preliminary results showed a high rate of cadmium (Cd) in sea turtle tissues. The cadmium is naturally present at high rates in Baja California beaches on rocky shores, it is evident that with the erosion process most of this cadmium is transferred to the beaches and can be easily washed away during special climatic events (like the hurricane John). In animals and human beings cadmium is considered as highly toxic and is known to bioaccumulate.

Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the cadmium was present in all the stranded animals. At present the most probable hypothesis is that these strandings are due to interaction with fishing vessels operating in international waters. We are now trying to get a metal detector to verify the presence of hooks in sea turtle stomachs.

Other activities that have been organized during the month of November and December are:

- a meeting with the EcoAmigos of Mulegé during which we planned some activities that will be carry on during the next year that include a field trip to Saint Ines Island, which is known to be a fishing camp for illegal sea turtle hunters. The field trip has been planned for the month of February but it will depend on climatic conditions;
- we monitored the beaches of Arroyo Hondo, El Mojon, Punta Chivato, Cuenca de los Delfines jointly with the EcoAmigos of Mulegé;
- we monitored beaches on the south part of the state of Baja California Sur from Todos Santos to Los Cabos and up again to Cabo Pulmo. No stranded turtles have been found in this area which is a known nesting site;
- we monitored the north Pacific area from Guerrero Negro to San Juanico, where we found some 20 sea turtle carapaces.

We are now preparing a presentation for the 9th Annual Meeting of the Sea Turtle Network of Las Californias that will take place in Loreto at the end of January.



