

How to know open sea stages behaviour of marine turtles: working hand on hand with fishermen in La Réunion

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Sea turtles are under pressure from a number of natural and anthropogenic factors, both in the terrestrial phase of their life cycle as well as in the marine environment. Conservation efforts will only succeed if the major threats can be managed, and fisheries interactions with sea turtles constitute one of these.

However incidental by-catch could also be of great interest if scientist and fishermen work together. Even if locally, the marine turtle behaviour is well known during the feeding and the reproduction time, the lack of global vision of the displacement between the successive habitats or during an open sea stages cannot permit to take appropriated measures of conservation at the regional level. And open sea by-catch by long liner allows scientist to study this open sea behaviour.

Since September 2008 and for a period of 3 years, a program lead from La reunion started in cooperation with some French drifting longliners. By catch are kept onboard by fishermen, recover in the Kelonia health centre, and released by the longliner with a location/depth recorder satellite tag. In order to produce public awareness, each release is sponsored by a school and displacement of the turtle followed up weekly via Internet. For the moment, 3 marine turtles were released.

This project is part of the French sea turtle component of the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project (SWIOFP) related to the study of the open sea displacement of marine turtles between successive habitats or during an open sea stages and its interactions with fisheries within an ecosystem approach.



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How to know open sea stages behavior of marine turtles: working flipper on hand with fishermen in La Réunion

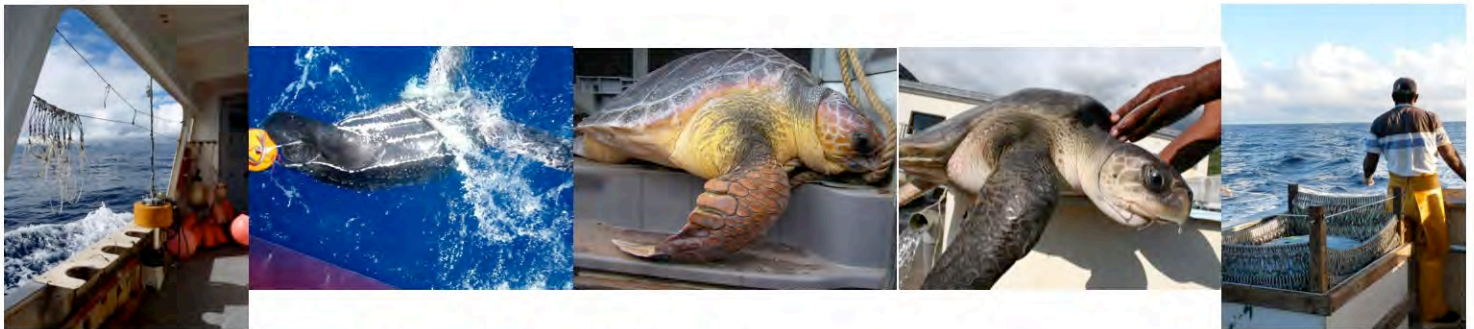
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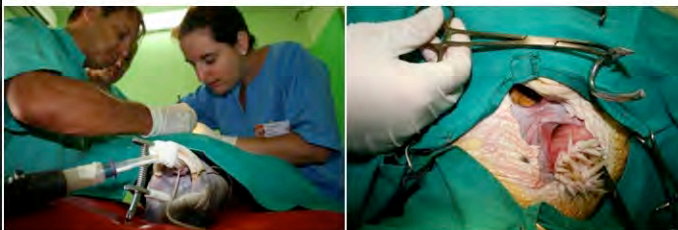


Sea turtles are under pressure from a number of natural and anthropogenic factors, both in the terrestrial phase of their life as well as in marine environment. Conservation efforts will only succeed if the major threats can be managed, and fisheries interactions constitute one of these. To reduce the interactions between sea turtles and fisheries, it's necessary to know the biology of these species during the pelagic stages of their cycle of life.



Cooperation with fishermen for research and best practice

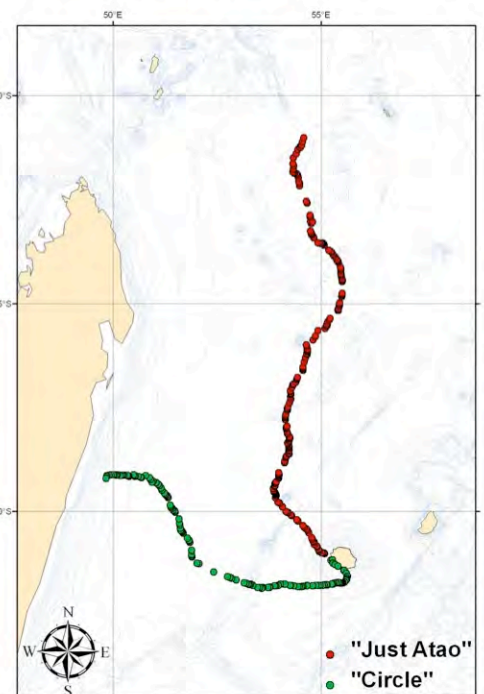
Sea turtle by-catch impact could be mitigated if scientists and fishermen work together. The mortality of sea turtle can be significantly reduced, when the turtle are released without hook in the esophagus. And data collected during the by-catch (position, capture's hour, weight, length, genetic sample) or after the release with satellite tag (displacement and diving behavior) allows to better understand the biology of marine turtles.



Chirurgical operation under anaesthesia

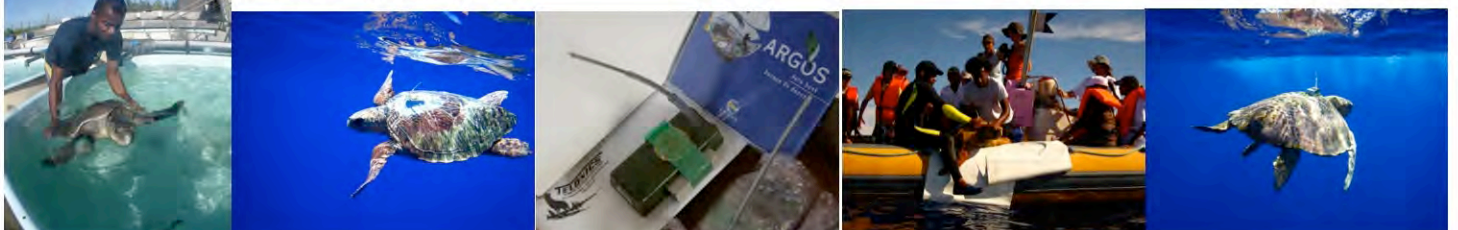
Since september 2008 and for a period of 3 years, a program lead from La Réunion started in cooperation with volunteer reunionese drifting longliners. By-catch turtles are kept onboard by fishermen, recover in Kelonia health centre, after having to withdraw the hook. Turtles are released with a location/depth recorder satellite tag, to study the open sea behavior,

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One month long travel of *Caretta caretta*, in october (red) and in march (green)

Each released turtle is "sponsored" by school that follows weekly via internet her displacement.



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