

Status of leatherback turtles in the French Territories of West Indian Ocean: Reunion Island, Mayotte and Iles Eparses

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1. The legal protection status for leatherback turtles

1.1 Overview

Marine turtles including leatherback turtles are protected by a Ministry Text of November 2000. This is a legally binding text that protects marine turtles and their eggs from use, killing and/or direct capture in all French Territories.

1.2 Management agency responsible for marine turtle conservation in the French Territories of West Indian Ocean

Name of agency: Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development (MoESD)*

Type of agency: Governmental

* The MoESD is one of the French Government ministries, not specifically for French territories of Indian Ocean but for all French territories.

2. Nesting populations

2.1 & 2.2) Overview and details of leatherback turtle nesting populations

leatherback turtles have not been recorded nesting in any of the French Territories of the west Indian Ocean: La Reunion Island, Mayotte and Iles Eparses (Rolland and Boulet 2005 and Ciccione et al. in press).

3. Foraging populations

3.1) Details of leatherback turtle foraging areas census or tagging results such as tag recovery data.

From August 1996 to October 1999 logbooks were filled in by fishermen and then used by the Institut Français pour l'Etude et l'Exploitation des MERs (IFREMER - French institute for seas survey and exploitation for its scientific research which included an assessment of the accidental capture of marine turtles: leatherback represent 52% of marine turtles bycatch (40 turtles from august 1996 to October 1999), and 92% of these turtles were released alive Poisson (2001). These turtles were caught across the Economic Exclusive Zone of all Indian Ocean French Territories, however most captures came from the French ZEE in Mozambique Channel.

3.2) Seasonality of leatherback turtles caught or seen in foraging areas

No available data

3.3) Approximate size range of leatherback turtles caught or seen in foraging areas

No available data

3.4) Information on the diet of leatherback turtles

No available data

3.5) Other biological studies conducted on leatherback turtles in foraging areas

No other biological studies have been conducted on leatherback turtles in any of the French Territories of the west Indian Ocean.

3.6) Threats to foraging populations of leatherback turtles

Threats at this site/area	Current occurrence	Historical occurrence & year
Exploitation of live animals at sea	No accounts of it occurring	
Incidental capture in fisheries	Less than 10 per year [*]	40 turtles from August 1996 to October 1999 ⁺
Boat strikes	No accounts of it occurring	
Plastics (at sea)	No accounts of it occurring	
Industrial effluent	No accounts of it occurring	
Inshore oil pollution	No accounts of it occurring	
Natural threats/predation	No accounts of it occurring	
Other (type in):	None	

* = CTOI 2004 [data from 2003] and IFREMER (2005)

+ = Poisson (2001).

3.7) Fisheries bycatch of leatherback turtles and the fisheries involved

Type of fishery	Season of operation	Approx number of boats/operators	Impact – low, medium or high
Long Line Fishing	Not known	30	LOW ⁺

* = CTOI 2004 [data from 2003] and IFREMER (2005)

+ = Poisson (2001).

3.8) Other activities being undertaken to improve the conservation of leatherback turtle foraging populations

- Fisheries bycatch monitoring and reduction efforts were carried out and a bycatch survey was conducted between August 1996 and October 1999
- Nesting beach surveys have been conducted since 1984 on Europa, Juan de Nova, Glorieuses and Tromelin, since 1986 on La Réunion, since 1994 on Mayotte.
- Education programs: since 1985 in La Réunion and 1998 in Mayotte
Also see section 3.8

4. References

- Ciccione S, Rolland R, Quillard M (in press) 'Les tortues marines de Mayotte.' Bilan et perspectives. CTOI (2004) Scientific report of CTOI (Indian Ocean Tuna Commission) 2004, data 2003.
IFREMER (2005) Data base 2005, IFREMER of La Reunion Island.
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Rolland R, Boulet V (2005) 'Mayotte, Biodiversité et Evaluation Patrimoniale.' Contribution à la mise en oeuvre de l'inventaire ZNIEFF.