

Conservation + management + research

Tagging Hawksbill Turtles

One of the world's longest running studies of juvenile sea turtles.



Project Objectives

To conserve sea turtles through research and education.

Photos courtesy of Tim Hasselbring and Alison Copeland

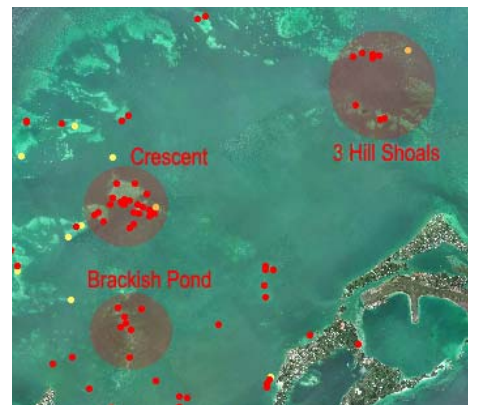
Summary

Hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) are one of the most endangered sea turtles in the world, but yet they are the second most common turtle on the Bermuda Platform. Unlike Green Turtles, which are found on the seagrass meadows around Bermuda, Hawksbills live on coral reefs where they feed mostly upon sponges.

The research objectives for this species in Bermuda are identical to that for Green Turtles; namely to examine the genetic identity, growth rates, degree of site fidelity and long distance migration patterns of Bermuda's resident Hawksbills and to describe the size structure, sex ratio, and causes of mortality to this population.

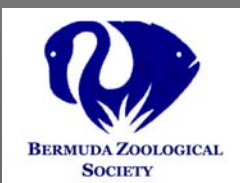
Over the last few decades wild Hawksbills have been hand caught at a variety of reef locations across the Platform, but in 2008 the Bermuda Turtle Project established three separate study sites for long-term monitoring and increased the sample effort at these locations.

All of the Hawksbills that have been captured are juvenile, while the genetic results so far indicate that most of the Hawksbills resident in Bermuda come from nesting populations in Cuba, the US Virgin islands, Costa Rica, and Puerto Rico. No adults have been found to be resident in Bermuda's territorial waters, and no nesting activity has been observed on Bermuda's beaches.



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