

A report on the first 16 years of a long-term marine turtle conservation project in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights basic data collected over the first 16 years of a long-term marine turtle conservation project in the Chagar Hutang Turtle Sanctuary (5° 48.778' N and 103° 0.502' E) in Malaysia. Green turtles accounted for 98.2% (6947 clutches) of the total nesting observed while hawksbills accounted for the rest (126 clutches). Over 80 % of the clutches deposited have been incubated in-situ, with the production of 387,322 and 8094 live green turtle and hawksbill hatchlings respectively. The 16 -year average hatching and emergence success for green turtles and hawksbills were 81 and 78.5%; and 63.6 and 59.6% respectively. A total of 928 green turtles and 17 hawksbills were tagged. Annual average curved carapace length and width of green turtles ranged from 98.9-100.9 and 87.1-89 cm. In hawksbill turtles, these values ranged from 78.8-87.5 and 68.9-74.2 cm. A total of USD345,650 had been raised through public outreach projects over the last 11 years of the 16 year period. It is concluded that marine turtle conservation projects can be self-sustaining and that long-term egg protection is effective in rehabilitating marine turtle populations in decline.

Key words: green turtles, hawksbills, nesting, hatchlings, tagging.