

The conservation and management activities for sea turtles in Japan

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Loggerhead, green, and hawksbill sea turtles nest in Japan, and leatherback and olive ridley sea turtles are distributed around it. Conservation of these sea turtles has been focused on in recent years. The conservation activities by NGOs for sea turtles increased and became popular from the late 1980s. The government of Japan also involved in the conservation and management of sea turtles and promotes several activities on it. Among the government agencies, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, and the Fishery Agency involved in. For example, the Ministry of Environment promotes and encourages the activity of many NGOs. The research activities have been conducted by the Fishery Research Agency, Universities, Aquariums and NGOs.

In the nesting site in Japan, there are many conservation activities for sea turtles mainly conducted by NGO. Those are monitoring for the number of nesting female and eggs laid at each beach, and protection of eggs and sea turtles on the beaches. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport promote the creation of sand beach instead of the protection by tetra pod for the nesting sea turtles. Some research activities, including biological measurement for nesting females, tag and release and tracking by satellite, are conducted by research institutes, universities and NGOs. At the sea, monitoring by-catches by tuna longline fishery and experiment to mitigate sea turtle by-catch are conducted by the Fisheries Agency and the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries (NRIFSF) including comparative experiment of circle and conventional tuna hook for sea turtles indoor and fields. Research activities to track loggerhead turtles by satellite tag, and tag and release using conventional external and internal tag are also conducted by NRIFSF. Experiment for the modification of set net to release sea turtles from the gear is conducted by the Ishigaki branch of Seikai National Fisheries Research Institute.

Fishery Agency and NRIFSF jointly promote educational activities on the conservation of sea turtles. Under this activity, the Species ID Sheet for improve the accuracy of the logbook report and the Release Manual for sea turtle caught by tuna longline fishery to increase survivorship of sea turtles were distributed to the fishermen. The educational sessions for the fishermen on the conservation of sea turtles were held several places in Japan by collaboration with Government, NGO (Global Guardian Trust) and NRIFSF.

Regarding international cooperation, World Tuna Longline Fishery Conference (WTLFC) was held in Tokyo 26-27 August, 2003, and FAO Inter-governmental Consultation for the conservation of sea turtles will be held in Thailand in 2004 by the Japanese Trust fund.