

Sea turtle conservation management plan Phra Thong island, Thailand

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Marine turtle populations in Asia have been depleted through long-term harvest of eggs and adults, and as by-catch in the ever-growing trawl fisheries (Shanker and Pilcher, 2003). Since turtles are indicators of the health of various and diverse marine ecosystems, their losses reflect a void in mankind's ability to sustain the present health of the ocean (Shanker and Pilcher, 2003). Conserving adult females turtles and their nesting and feeding habitats merits top priority in any conservation strategy (Demetropoulos, 2000).

At Phra Thong (PT) island and surroundings, although applying different methodologies, surveys were carried out by the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) since 1985 and in 1996 the Sea Turtle Project (STP) was started at PT island aiming to collect scientific data on the nesting population, to carry out an education program in the local schools and to conduct conservation awareness activities among tourists visiting the island.

Due to its high concentration value as an important sea turtle nesting and foraging area, a comprehensive conservation management plan is herein presented to address the conservation need of PT island. Data collected concerning sea turtles provides a baseline that allow to design a Sea Turtle Conservation Management Plan (STCMP) which should be integrated in a wider conservation approach such as an Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

The STCMP provides an assessment of the conservation status of the species and their habitats and synthesises marine turtles information collected and recommended measures to address threats that the information has highlighted.

Threats are described and recommendations are given to each of them; in addition, general recommendations are proposed in order to ensure and to guide future conservation activities.