Understanding Local Bahamians’ Knowledge and Attitudes towards Sea Turtles and Sea Turtle Conservation

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Introduction

Sea turtles in The Bahamas have been overfished and their habitats are being destroyed due to human development that dredges out mangroves and creeks. Sea turtles are important because:

- Sea turtle grazing promotes healthy growth of sea grass
- Sea turtles are considered a keystone species (Eckert & Hemphill, 2005)

There are seven types of sea turtles found across the world, and four are mainly found in The Bahamas: Loggerhead, leatherback, green, and hawksbill. Green sea turtles are the most common. They flock here to feed on sea grass and to mate in the shallow waters.

Methods

Interviews

- Semi-formal interviews
- 12 questions of both open and close type questions
- For this study, the sample population was 69 interviews within 9 settlements throughout South Eleuthera (Figure 7)
- Qualitative and quantitative data has been collected

Examples Questions

- “Have you seen a sea turtle in the Bahamas? If so, where have you seen a sea turtle?”
- “What is your opinion of the Bahamas-wide ban on the harvest of sea turtles?”

Abundance Surveys

- These abundance surveys were in correspondence with the sea turtle program at the Cape Eleuthera Institute
- Each survey lasted 30 minutes long and each sea turtle spotted was marked using GPS tracking
- The purpose of the abundance surveys was to see if there were any relationships where the interviewees had seen sea turtles and how many turtles are spotted during these abundance surveys

Results

In this study, there were a total of 69 interviews conducted. 14 interviews were female, 55 were male. Interviews were conducted in a total of 9 study site locations in South Eleuthera, The Bahamas.

Purpose & Objectives

- Gain information regarding local Bahamians’ knowledge and attitudes towards sea turtles in Eleuthera

Objectives:

- Understand locals’ knowledge and attitudes towards sea turtles and the 2009 ban
- Assess differences across varying demographics
- Identify the relationship between sea turtle abundance and local sightings

Discussion

- More people that were aware of the ban saw an increase in amount of turtles than those unaware of the ban because they were more cognizant of sea turtle population.
- Additionally, a possible source of error could be that the interviewees were influenced in answering that they saw an increase because of the fear of being ignorant (Figure 8).
- Occupation was not a contributing factor to determine whether or not the ban contributed to healthy marine ecosystems. This alludes to the fact that overall education is needed (Figure 9).
- More females were interested in protecting sea turtles because research has shown that women have been more interested and invested in healthy marine ecosystems. This alludes to a need for education on sea turtle species (Figure 12).

Citations

- Fishery Conservation and Management, 2001

Acknowledgements & Citations

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