



NEWSLETTER

REGIONAL NORTHWEST ATLANTIC LEATHERBACK ACTION PLAN (RAP) PROJECT

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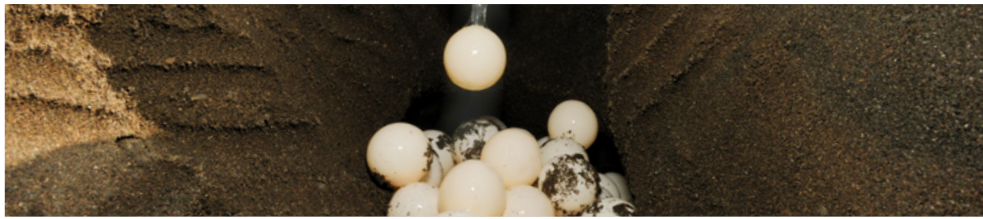
This newsletter provides our stakeholders with updates and the next steps of the Regional Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Action Plan (RAP) Project in the region, focusing on French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago.



UPDATES

MONTHLY WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

The working group continued to meet regularly regarding updates related to the RAP. The meetings were led by WWF-Guianas (Suriname and Guyana) with the representatives of the partner organizations, which are the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) in Trinidad and Tobago, the French Office of Biodiversity (OFB), WWF-France in French Guiana, the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST), and WWF-Netherlands.



COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS FRENCH GUIANA

COMMUNICATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



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Numerous public awareness-raising events have taken place in French Guiana in recent months, including World Cleanup Day, Green Days, and the Science Festival. Environmental education projects have been launched, including a podcast project featuring secondary school pupils on various species of sea turtles, as well as participation in two nationwide competitions: a bioscience competition focused on leatherback turtles and their migrations, and a video competition on the protection of sea turtles. Finally, the latest RTMG Newsletter will be released in February 2025, summarizing the actions carried out by French Guiana stakeholders in recent months.

NEW FEATURES FOR THE HATCHERY



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In 2024, the Kwata Association transplanted 14 leatherback nests and one olive ridley nest to the Kawana hatchery. To alleviate the heat of the dry season, part of the hatchery was covered with tarpaulins, promoting a higher rate of egg emergence. This system proved effective. Additionally, educational tools have been installed in the carbet, enabling numerous events to be organized.



NATIONAL DIALOGUE

The evaluation of the Sea Turtle National Action Plan (2014–2024) (NPA) was presented at a stakeholder meeting, providing an assessment of the actions carried out and prospects for improvement. Among the successes highlighted were the involvement of fishermen, the reduction of light pollution, and the establishment of the Kawana hatchery. However, the alarming decline in leatherback turtles and increasing threats, such as illegal fishing and poaching, indicate that conservation efforts remain insufficient. Workshops allowed network players to reflect on the improvements needed for a more effective future NPA. The conclusions of this assessment will soon be presented to the Conseil National de la Protection de la Nature (CNPN).



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2024 NESTING REPORT

SPECIES **TOTAL NEST LAID**

Leatherback <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	39
Green Turtle <i>Chelonia mydas</i>	1,301
Olive ridley <i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>	3,743

Green turtles laid a total of 1,301 nests in western French Guiana this year. However, only 39 leatherback turtle nests were recorded in Awala-Yalimapo, compared to 50,000 in 1992, illustrating a continued and precipitous population decline. Olive ridley turtles, on the other hand, have shown stable numbers, with 3,743 nests this year, confirming a resilience of the species. The overall assessment is therefore mixed, albeit with some alarming declines, particularly for leatherback turtles.



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COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS SURINAME

HATCHERY PILOT AT BRAAMSPUNT

Due to increased erosion and flooding at the Braamspunt nesting beach, a hatchery was piloted from June to September 2024. During this period, three nests (one leatherback and two green turtles) were relocated by the Nature Conservation Division in the Suriname Forest Service (LBB) of the Ministry of Land Policy and Forest Management (GMB) and a local tour guide, under the supervision of the Kwata Association of French Guiana. However, none of the nests produced live hatchlings, with the leatherback nest being the most developed.

Temperature data loggers have been ordered, and for the next season, flooding, erosion, and temperature will be monitored. The hatchery will also be temporarily shaded. The results were shared with the community in Commewijne on November 5, 2024, through a presentation, infographics, and a film documenting the experience.

On November 16, due to a spring tide, Braamspunt beach was completely flooded, and the education centre and game wardens' post were dismantled. In January 2025, an assessment was conducted to determine whether the beach remains suitable for nesting, and planning for the upcoming nesting season is now underway.





COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS | SURINAME

SEA TURTLE RECOVERY ACTION PLAN (STRAP) FOR SURINAME

WWF-Guianas has been collaborating with Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire (STCB) to secure funding for the regional project, entitled “Developing a Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan for the Dutch Caribbean,” which will produce a long-overdue [update to the 1992](#) original that was developed in partnership with the WIDECAST and published in the UNEP Caribbean Programme Technical Report series. This project, which also includes Suriname, commenced on May 1, 2024, and will conclude on December 31, 2025. For Suriname, the focus is on reviewing the 1993 [Suriname Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan](#) (STRAP), which was also developed in partnership with WIDECAST, and

aligning it to the Northwest Atlantic (NWA) Leatherback Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the Wider Caribbean. This comparison will lead to the development of a STRAP to support the long-term, civil society-driven conservation and recovery of Suriname’s sea turtle populations. In November 2024, a survey was sent to 34 stakeholders from 30 organizations to gather information on stakeholders and partners involved in sea turtle conservation and to support the revision of the 1993 STRAP. On December 4, 2024, a meeting was held with the local community of Galibi regarding the survey, attended by 12 representatives from five organizations. The first national workshop is planned for April 2025.

BYCATCH DATA COLLECTION FOR GILLNET FLEET

The marine turtle interaction monitoring program, funded through a grant from WWF-Guianas to the Fisheries Department in Suriname, was active until September 2024. Five captains in the driftnet fishery volunteered to record their catches, bycatches, and discards in an electronic format. The Fisheries Department decided to continue the monitoring program as part of the activities under the REBYC-III CLME+ project (Strategies, Technologies, and Social Solutions to Manage Bycatch in Tropical Large Marine Ecosystem Fisheries), which is implemented in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (UWI). By the end of November 2024, **936 hauls** had been conducted. A total of **21 marine turtles** were caught in **16 hauls**, including **seven leatherbacks**. Most of the bycatch consisted of sharks and rays .



EDUCATING CHILDREN ON SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION

In October 2024, WWF-Guianas had the privilege of taking over 80 children from the Bromki Fu Tamara Kids Club on an inspiring journey into the world of sea turtles. Through multiple sessions, the children were highly engaged, enthusiastically participating in the quiz, and marveling at real jellyfish, preserved baby sea turtles, and, of course, our mascot “Toti,” the leatherback turtle. These sessions, held in partnership with LBB / NATUURBEHEER, provided valuable education on the harmful effects of consuming sea turtle eggs, the threats turtles face, their crucial role in our ecosystem, and what we can do to help restore their populations.





COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS SURINAME

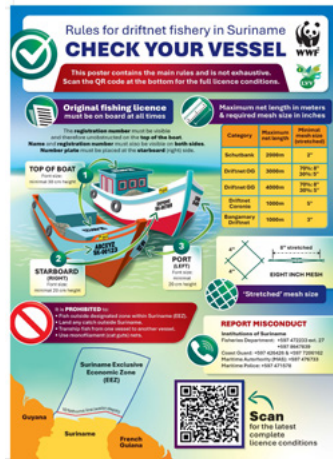
NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION (NPOA) ON IUU

With financial support from Oceans-5, a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, WWF-Guianas supported the Fisheries Department of Suriname in drafting the National Plan of Action (NPOA) on illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. After consultations with all stakeholders and an NPOA Validation Workshop held on August 20, the NPOA-IUU was finalized and submitted for ministerial approval in November 2024.



COMMUNICATION MATERIAL TO SIMPLIFY THE LICENSING CONDITIONS FOR FISHERFOLK

WWF-Guianas held meetings with the Fisheries Department of Suriname to discuss simplifying the licensing system. We learned that fisherfolk had limited awareness of the licensing conditions. Therefore, we collaborated with the Suriname Fisheries Department to develop informational signs displaying the licensing conditions for 23 landing sites, as well as printed copies of the conditions to be distributed with license renewals.



BIODEV2030 PROJECT PHASE II: SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES THROUGH POLICY REFORM

On Wednesday, November 27, 2024, the [Inception Workshop: Supporting Sustainable Fisheries through Policy Reform in Suriname](#) was organized under Phase II of the BIODEV2030 project. BIODEV2030 is implemented by the IUCN and WWF-France, coordinated by Expertise France, and funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

For this inception workshop, 37 participants from 16 organizations collaborated through an existing working group, providing input on policy and legislative improvements. Stakeholders explored ways to better integrate biodiversity into fisheries policy and presented their findings, including the identification of unresolved bottlenecks.

[The first working group session](#) took place on January 22, 2025, in Suriname. This session is part of a series of four aimed at integrating biodiversity conservation into economic development strategies and policy, with a particular focus on sustainable fisheries in Suriname. During the meeting, four pre-shared policy briefs, prepared by the WWF-Guianas Oceans team with support from OSAEDA Ventures N.V. and represented by consultant Ms. Anushka Raghoebarsing, were discussed.





COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS | **GUYANA**

2024 NESTING DATA FOR THE SHELL BEACH PROTECTED AREA

SPECIES	TOTAL NEST	TOTAL NESTS RELOCATED	TOTAL EGGS HATCHED	TOTAL EGGS LAID
Leatherback <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	27	23	93	1969
Green Turtle <i>Chelonia mydas</i>	37	36	1548	4228
Hawksbill <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>	2	2	175	273

Shell Beach Protected Area (SBPA) Turtle Monitoring Season Ecological Monitoring Report-2024

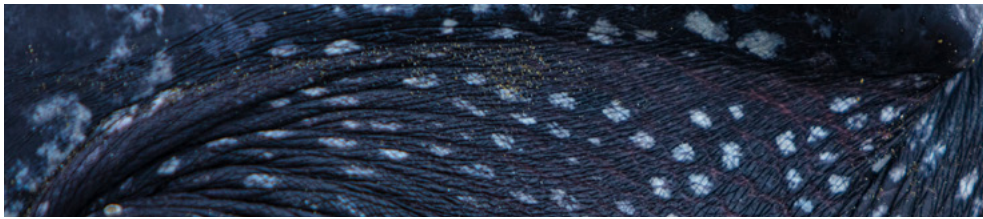
BIODEV2030 PHASE II PROJECT: SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES THROUGH PUBLIC SECTOR POLICY REFORM

Following the successful outcome of the inaugural National Dialogue, WWF-Guianas, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Fisheries Department, organized a second National Dialogue as part of phase 2 of the BIODEV2030 Project in Guyana. This technical working session represented a significant advancement in the commitment to integrating biodiversity considerations into sustainable fisheries practices through effective policy reform. The dialogue attracted a diverse

array of stakeholders, including representatives from the British High Commission, the Rosignol Fishermen’s Cooperative Society Limited, the Guyana Revenue Authority, the Maritime Administration Department, the University of Guyana, the Policy Forum, and the Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission. The presence of these varied organizations underscores the collective effort required to tackle the complexities of biodiversity and fisheries management.



The BIODEV 2030 project initiated a series of inception meetings with local fishing cooperatives and groups to promote sustainable fisheries in Guyana. The meetings were set up to gather critical insights from fisherfolk, recognized as the primary stakeholders in the fisheries sector. Meetings were held with Three Doors Fishermen Cooperative Society, Rosignol Fishermen Cooperative Society Limited and Albion Fishermen’s Group. The input garnered will be pivotal in developing finance-ready, nature-positive concept notes aligned with national development goals and conservation targets.



COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS **GUYANA**

FISHING FOR TOMORROW: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES TODAY

Funded by the British High Commission, Fishing for Tomorrow aims to strengthen the adoption of sustainable fishing practices through communication and awareness. This will be achieved through the production of a short film and other communication materials. The short film will showcase the practices of a model fisherfolk who have adopted and are implementing sustainable practices while highlighting the challenges and threats. Through a criterion, model fisherfolk have been identified, and production will commence in April and will be published in June at special screening sessions.



COMMUNICATION MATERIAL TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE LICENSING IN ARTISANAL FISHERIES



WWF-Guianas held meetings with the Fisheries Department of Suriname to discuss simplifying the licensing system. We learned that fisherfolk had limited awareness of the licensing conditions. Therefore, we collaborated with the Suriname Fish WWF and the Fisheries Department in Guyana engaged artisanal (small-scale) fishers to promote licensing and sustainable fishing practices within the fishing industry. This was done through the distribution of communications materials. The primary goal of this exercise is to educate fishers about the importance of obtaining proper licenses and permits, and to inform them of the associated costs of the various permits required. The education and awareness posters were distributed and published at landing sites and to fisheries cooperatives across Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. These sites are pivotal to Guyana's fishing industry, hosting numerous artisanal fishers who rely on the sector for their livelihoods.

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COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

SEA TURTLE SENSITISATION AND AWARENESS

A Sea Turtle Sensitisation Session was conducted at the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) North Office in November 2024 for officers from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) Northern Division, the Forestry Division, and the EMA's Environmental Police Unit (EPU). This session focused on increasing awareness of sea turtle conservation laws and enforcement protocols to enhance protection efforts on nesting beaches.

Additionally, 11 new nesting beach signs are set to be installed at critical locations along Trinidad's coastline:

- Manzanilla Beach (4)
- Mayaro Beach (5)
- Yarra Beach (1)
- Damian's Bay (1)

These signs, part of an NSTTF-EMA initiative, aim to strengthen public awareness and compliance with regulations to protect nesting sea turtles.

NSTTF MEETINGS AND STRAP REVIEW

The 27th Meeting of the National Sea Turtle Task Force (NSTTF) was held on February 6, 2025, with the next meeting scheduled for April 24, 2025. The 2010 [Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan](#) (STRAP) underwent a review by the NSTTF on February 24, 2025, and is now being prepared for presentation at the Wider Caribbean

Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) annual meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis in March. The revised STRAP is expected to address management gaps and enhance conservation strategies for Trinidad and Tobago's five Environmentally Sensitive Species (ESS) sea turtle species.

REBYC-III PROJECT AND MEGAFUNA SURVEY

RESEARCH ON HATCHLING DENSITY AND NET ILLUMINATION TRIALS

Teal Guetschow is preparing to continue her third year of research on the effects of hatchling density on leatherback sea turtle emergence success at Grand Riviere, one of the most important nesting sites in the world for the species. Her study examines how variations in nest density, temperature, and other environmental factors influence hatchling success rates, providing critical insights for improving

conservation and management practices. Meanwhile, Dr. Bryan Wallace, with funding provided to WIDECAST by the U.S. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, is leading the next phase of net illumination trials. In partnership with fisher members of Future Fishers in Trinidad, the project aims to assess the effectiveness of green LED lights on gillnets in reducing sea turtle bycatch. Previous trials have shown promising

results, and further testing will explore cost-effective methods to support the broader adoption of this technology within Trinidad and Tobago's artisanal fisheries. These initiatives collectively aim to enhance sea turtle conservation, bycatch mitigation, and evidence-based management across Trinidad and Tobago.



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UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

WIDECAST ANNUAL MEETING

The Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) will convene its annual general meeting (AGM) on 15-18 March 2025 at St. Kitts Marriott Resort, Frigate Bay, St. Kitts. The aim of the meeting is to share information on national and regional-level sea turtle research, management, and outreach programs, to learn from peer experiences, to facilitate networking and partnerships, and to strengthen science-based

conservation programming. The agenda will include national reports, regional issue reviews, working groups, and technical presentations with related discussions. WIDECAST country coordinators, biologists, policymakers and educators from throughout the Wider Caribbean region attend. This year, there will be workshops focused on illegal trade, Earth Ranger, and sea turtle health and necropsy.



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IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS, PLEASE REACH OUT TO ONE OF OUR COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES

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