

Conservation news

Community-based conservation: the key to protection of marine turtles on Maio Island, Cape Verde

Cape Verde has the third largest population of the Endangered loggerhead marine turtle *Caretta caretta*. Within the archipelago Maio Island is one of the three most important nesting sites for this species, with c. 500 females coming ashore to nest between June and October each year. In 2012 the island had the highest number of turtles killed and nests poached in the country. The island has not yet been influenced by development for tourism, and predation by people is the major threat to marine turtles on the island.

In 2013 the NGO Maio Biodiversity Foundation (www.maiococonservation.org), a Fauna & Flora International partner, received funding from the NOAA/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Marine Turtles Conservation Act and the British Government's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Flagship Species Fund to trial a new marine turtle conservation strategy on the island. In just one nesting season the total number of females killed (38) in 2013 was reduced by 75% on the protected beaches compared to the same area in 2012 (152 turtles killed), and only 2% of the nests were poached.

With a total area of 269 km², Maio has important nesting beaches all along its coast. In 2013 the Foundation's teams conducted patrols every night during the peak of the nesting season, from July to September. The presence of the teams on the beaches helped to reduce poaching of turtles and nests. In addition, the patrols facilitated collection of data on the nesting behaviour of the females. The eight patrol teams covered 20 beaches, resulting in almost 25 km of protected nesting sites.

One of the main strengths of the strategy was to base turtle conservation teams in eight coastal villages around the island. Teams consisted of a minimum of two local guards from Maio, a Cape Verdean team leader and national or international volunteers. The team members were hosted by local families. The integration of the teams in the local communities made the effort to protect marine turtles more visible in the coastal villages, and local men, women and, especially, young people had opportunities to observe and participate in turtle patrols, clean-up of nesting beaches and awareness-raising events. These activities opened the door to the turtle world and the threats these animals are facing, especially during the vulnerable nesting period. In addition, local host families received financial benefits for their hospitality. It seems that the combination of practical education and turtle-friendly income opportunities were key to the success of the Foundation's strategy.

More than 10 km of important nesting beaches, in proximity to three coastal villages, are still unprotected on Maio island. The Foundation, with the support of local and international partners, continues to fund-raise so that three more teams and three more villages can be included in the strategy during the nesting season of summer 2014.

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Guidance briefs launched for tree conservation

At least 8,000 of the world's tree species are threatened with extinction. These species face a number of threats, occupy a range of ecological niches, and vary in their capacity to tolerate and adapt to environmental change. As a result, conservation action for threatened trees often involves the use of specific techniques tailored to the needs of individual species. These techniques range from species identification (necessary to support monitoring and protection of wild populations) to species-specific methods for propagation and planting (necessary to support the recovery of small populations).

Techniques for tree conservation are used regularly by many organizations and individuals, ranging from botanic gardens to people with traditional ecological knowledge. However, these same skills are often lacking among other sections of the conservation community, including many with the opportunity to implement tree conservation. For example, in 2010 a survey of 63 nature reserves in southern China (a priority area for tree conservation) found that 80% of these reserves had little or no knowledge of their threatened trees or how to protect them. In Brazil's Araucaria forest lack of knowledge of the propagation requirements of threatened species has limited their inclusion in restoration projects. Of all the threatened species in this ecosystem only 17% have been grown by state nurseries.

The Global Trees Campaign, a joint initiative between Fauna & Flora International and Botanic Gardens Conservation International, is implementing a number of approaches to meet the technical capacity needs of individuals and organizations working for tree conservation. In 2013 290 people involved in protected areas or other land management in Belize, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia and Saint Lucia received training in a variety of technical skills. In China training has been complemented by a programme of cross-sectoral knowledge exchange between academic institutions, botanic gardens, forestry departments, NGOs and nature reserves, as well