



**THE FIRST SEAFDEC MEETING ON
REGIONAL SEA TURTLE DATA MANAGEMENT**

Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia 20 – 21 November, 2000

**STATUS ON MARINE TURTLE STUDY AND
CONSERVATION IN VIETNAM SEA WATER**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ancestor of sea turtle is inland animal, in the development they adapt step by step to living under water. It explains why sea turtle females have to come back to coastal sand-banks to lay eggs in the nesting season. The incubating and hatching of eggs occur on land, the sea turtle juveniles will come into the sea by low intensity of sunlight of skyline. The sea turtle juveniles move to ocean water, in which they grow up. The distance from these habitats to the place that they were born can be thousands of kilometers. The females, when they are matured, they will also have to cross this distance back to the breeding grounds to lay eggs.

In Vietnam, sea turtle has been mentioned for long time. In “Van Dai Loai Ngu” the ninth volume of Le Quy Don (1777: 320) dealt with tortoise-shell, In “Gia Dinh Thanh Thong Chi” of Trinh Hoai Duc (1863: 74) shown 2 kinds of sea turtle. Then some French authors : Bocourt (1886), Tirant (1885) ... P. Chevay published some documents on sea turtle catching in Paracels (1926: 1 - 4). Dao Van Tien gave to the public a classification list of Vietnam sea turtle (1976), which shown 5 sea turtle in Vietnam. From 1997, sea turtle has officially been researched in Vietnam on resource, species composition, distribution, breeding grounds, tagging, ... at national level.

2. VIETNAM RESEARCHER ON MARINE TURTLE

- Survey on species composition and distribution areas.
 - Survey by interviewing people.
 - Field investigating.
 - Catch by net, dive to test in the fixed stations.
- Identify the nesting season.

3. SOME RESULTS OF MARINE TURTLE STUDY IN VIETNAM SEA WATER

3.1. Species composition and distribution

According to the research and statistical results show that there are 5 species of sea turtle belonging to 2 families, 3 genera. They are: Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*).



Table 1: Marine turtles species and their distribution in Vietnam sea water.

Area	Number of species	Scientific name	English name
Tonkin Gulf	4	Chelonia mydas Caretta caretta Dermochelys coriacea Eretmochelys imbricata	Green turtle Loggerhead turtle Leatherback turtle Hawksbill turtle
Central area	4	Chelonia mydas Caretta caretta Lepidochelys olivacea Eretmochelys imbricata	Green turtle Loggerhead turtle Olive ridley turtle Hawksbill turtle
Southeast area	4	Chelonia mydas Caretta caretta Lepidochelys olivacea Eretmochelys imbricata	Green turtle Loggerhead turtle Olive Ridley turtle Hawksbill turtle
Southwest area		Chelonia mydas Caretta caretta Eretmochelys imbricata	Green turtle Loggerhead turtle Hawksbill turtle
Hoang Sa (Paracels)	2	Caretta caretta Eretmochelys imbricata	Loggerhead turtle Hawksbill turtle
Truong Sa (Spratly)	2	Chelonia mydas Eretmochelys imbricata	Green turtle Hawksbill turtle

Source: Chu Tien Vinh and Pham Thuoc, 1998.

3.2. Nesting season and breeding grounds

Presently, we have not identified yet the breeding grounds of sea turtle in the North and the Central of Vietnam. However, through field investigating and sea turtle juvenile catching results we knew that the nesting season of sea turtle in the Northern area is about from February to June. In the Central there were some breeding grounds of sea turtle such as: Cam An – Hoi An, Tam Ky (Da Nang Province), however due to overexploiting the mother sea turtle and collecting eggs, and the tourism activities, there are rarely sea turtles come to breeding grounds.

The East-South area is the richest resource of sea turtle in Vietnam. In this area there are many breeding grounds of sea turtle, the great number of breeding grounds is in Con Dao Island (Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province). Each year there are thousands of sea turtles come to lay eggs, the majority species is green turtle, sometimes there is also Hawksbill and Loggerhead, but not many. Phu Quy Island (Binh Thuan Province) also has sea turtle lay eggs, but in this area there are no rescue stations, therefore, we could not monitor sea turtle mothers, eggs and juvenile.



In Con Dao, the nesting season is from April to November, concentrated in July and August. The number of egg in each giving birth time is ranging from 15 – 160 eggs, but normally is from 70 – 100 eggs. In a nesting season the sea turtle mother comes to the breeding ground from 2 – 5 times, the interesting is from 12 – 25 days. After long time of incubating (48 – 75 days), on average from 50 – 65 days, eggs will hatch.

Table 2: Monthly nesting of sea turtle at Con Dao Islands in 1998

Nesting Beach Months	Tai Beach (Con Dao Islands)	Bay Canh Beach (Con Dao Islands)	Hon Cau Beach (Con Dao Islands)	Tre Lon Beach (Con Dao Islands)
January				
February				
March		94		
April		734		92
May		3369		644
June	514	6440	1573	4049
July	756	5495	2332	6994
August	1188	3357	2140	5706
September	1695	1575	1171	3129
October	848	1217	838	736
November	225		209	461
December				
Total of eggs	5226	22281	8263	21811

4. THE SEA TURTLE STATUS IN VIETNAM

From 1980s and backward, the sea turtle resource in Vietnam was abundant not only in species composition but also in number. The desert sand-banks on the coastal islands and in the coastal areas, along the country, we always find sea turtle come to lay eggs. Recent years, because high pressure of population growth, tourism activities, food demand of human are the main reasons causing the serious deduction of sea turtle resource. Some sea turtle is being overexploited such as hawksbill for fine art, green turtle, loggerhead are exploited for meat. The breeding grounds were destroyed by tourism activities, eggs collecting and sea turtle mothers catching. Presently, in Phu Quy Island (Binh Thuan Province), there are still sea turtles come to lay eggs, but we have no rescue and protection methods. In Con Dao, there are many breeding grounds, this area is the national conservation area, hence the managing and rescue activities of sea turtle are in good situation, the biological research programmes are implementing in this area.



5. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT IN VIETNAM:

The sea turtle species in Vietnam were recorded in Red Data Book of Vietnam, the Vietnamese government pays more attention to the protection of sea turtle. The Vietnamese government passed the decrees on catching, trading wild animals. The marine conservation areas were established, sea turtle conservation is the priority. In the future, Vietnamese government will authorize to establish and extend the sea turtle conservation areas at national scale and cooperate with other international organizations as well as other countries in the region and all over the world.

6. REFERENCES

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