

# NEW TRACKING PROJECT PROVIDES INTERESTING DATA ON MIGRATORY BEHAVIOUR AND HABITAT USE OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN HAWKSBILL TURTLES



About the Presenting Author:  
Dr Emma Harrison is the Scientific Director of the Caribbean Conservation Corporation based in San José, Costa Rica

Emma Harrison<sup>1</sup>, Dan Evans<sup>2</sup>, Emile Lemuel Pemberton<sup>3</sup>, David Godfrey<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Caribbean Conservation Corporation, Apdo Postal 246-2050, San Pedro, Costa Rica

<sup>2</sup> Caribbean Conservation Corporation, 4424 NW 13th St., Suite B-11, Gainesville, FL 32609, USA

<sup>3</sup> Nevis Turtle Group, Department of Fisheries, Nevis

## SUMMARY

In 2006, the Caribbean Conservation Corporation (CCC) formed a partnership with the Nevis Turtle Group and the Four Seasons Resort Nevis to establish a research and conservation project to study the migratory behaviour of critically endangered hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) nesting on the Caribbean island of Nevis in the West Indies. This poster summarizes the project results to date.

## SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION ON NEVIS

Nevis lies in the North-Eastern Caribbean (See Figure 1), and despite threats including illegal take of nesting females and eggs, a seasonal turtle fishery based in neighbouring St Kitts, and habitat degradation from coastal development such as that proposed at the island's principal nesting beach (Lovers Beach), it manages to retain a significant hawksbill population.



Figure 1. Location of Nevis in the Caribbean



FOUR SEASONS RESORT  
Nevis, West Indies

The Nevis Turtle Group initiated a conservation and monitoring program in 2001. They have documented an increase in nesting density, with up to 200 nests deposited annually.

Most nesting occurs on the small, isolated beaches on the Caribbean side of the island, especially Lovers Beach and Mblah Beach (See Figure 2).

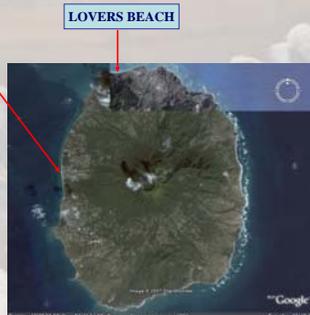


Figure 2. Nevis, showing location of the main turtle nesting beach



CCC Executive Director David Godfrey talks to staff and resort guests about the Nevis satellite tracking project



Figure 3. Migration routes of 'Nevis' (2006) and 'Ginger' (2007)

Two individuals remained within 100km of the nesting beach, settling in feeding grounds off St Bart's and Montserrat (See Figure 3).

The other two travelled more than 2,500km and remain in an area off the Miskito Coast of Nicaragua (See Figure 4).

All four turtles can be tracked on-line at [www.cccturtle.org](http://www.cccturtle.org).



Figure 4. Migration routes of 'Mango' (2006) and 'Calypto' (2007)

## RESULTS

Since 2006, four female hawksbill turtles have been tracked from Nevis to various foraging grounds across the Caribbean (See Figures 3 and 4).

Two distinct migratory behaviour patterns are apparent from the Nevis hawksbill population.

## CONCLUSIONS

The project results are significant because they;

- Highlight the extensive migrations of Caribbean hawksbills.
- Reveal novel hawksbill feeding sites in the Eastern Caribbean that warrant further investigation.
- Support findings from previous studies that Nicaragua's Miskito Cays are important foraging grounds for hawksbills from rookeries across the Wider Caribbean.

These findings will strengthen the case of conservationists working to develop regional strategies aimed at improving protection and enforcement at these vital hawksbill feeding areas.

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