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SEA TURTLE TAGGING IN THE MARIANA ISLANDS TRAINING AND TESTING (MITT)

UPDATE ON FIELD RESEARCH

PREPARED FOR THE U.S. PACIFIC FLEET ENVIRONMENTAL READINESS OFFICE

Under Interagency Agreement NMFS-PIC-15-008

PREPARED BY:

**NOAA FISHERIES
MARINE TURTLE BIOLOGY AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
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14. ABSTRACT <p>This report summarizes field research activities conducted in November 2015 by the PIFSC Marine Turtle Biology and Assessment Program (MTBAP), in collaboration with local partners on Saipan and Guam. In-water snorkel surveys were conducted in 5 locations across 3 islands on 6 days from November 12 to November 19. Survey effort consisted of 29.8 hours of research vessel time (boat hours) and 10 hours of underwater visual transect search time (dive hours) conducted by a team of 2-4 free divers. Survey locations included new areas not previously surveyed by this team – the southwest corner of Tinian, Lao Lao Bay in southeast Saipan, and Agat Bay in Guam. In Guam, the team successfully conducted operations from Agat Marina for the first time; all previous research was based out of Apra Harbor.</p> <p>A total of 68 turtles were observed, 21 were captured and brought to the boat, and 16 were equipped with Wildlife Computers SPLASH satellite tags. The majority of observations and captures were of green turtles, and all satellite tag deployments were on green turtles. One hawksbill turtle was observed on Tinian, one was observed on Saipan, and one was captured on Guam but was too small for a satellite tag. Of the 21 total captures, 8 occurred on Tinian, 9 on Saipan, and 4 on Guam. Full morphometric measurements were made of all captured turtles. Turtles received Inconel metal flipper tags on the trailing edge of the fore flippers and microchips (PIT tags) inter-digitally in the rear flippers. For the 16 satellite tags, 6 were deployed on Tinian, 7 on Saipan, and 3 on Guam. All 16 satellite tags are transmitting at the time of this report. Analysis of the data is in progress and cumulative analysis from the 2013, 2014, and 2015 research is forthcoming in the 2016 Annual Report.</p>		

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Table 1. Summary of field research survey effort, turtle observations, turtle captures, and satellite tag deployments from November 2015. *Cm* = *Chelonia mydas* (green turtle). *Ei* = *Eretmochelys imbricata* (hawksbill turtle). *Unid.* = unidentified species of turtle (green or hawksbill). SW = southwest part of the island, SE = southeast part of the island.

Date	Island	Location	Boat Hours	Dive Hours	Observed			Captured		Sat. tagged	
					<i>Cm</i>	<i>Ei</i>	<i>Unid.</i>	<i>Cm</i>	<i>Ei</i>	<i>Cm</i>	<i>Ei</i>
11/12/15	Tinian	Red Wall (SW)	8.2	1.4	12	1	2	8	0	6	0
11/13/15	Saipan	Lao Lao Bay (SE)	7.0	1.5	7	1	8	6	0	5	0
11/14/15	Saipan	Chalan Kanoa (SW)	4.3	0.9	3	0	7	3	0	2	0
11/17/15	Guam	Agat Bay, Dadi (SW)	6.0	3.5	4	1	10	1	1	1	0
11/18/15	Guam	Dadi Beach (SW)	3.0	1.9	5	0	7	2	0	2	0
11/19/15	Guam	Agat Bay (SW)	1.3	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6 days	3 Islands	5 locations	29.8	10	31	3	34	20	1	16	0
Total:					68			21		16	

Figure 1. Maps of survey effort, turtle observations, and turtle captures in November 2015. *Bottom left:* southern Mariana Islands with survey areas highlighted (orange = Guam, blue = Tinian, green = Saipan). *Top left:* Guam – Agat Bay. *Top right:* Saipan – Chalan Kanoa (west) and Lao Lao Bay (east). *Bottom right:* Tinian – Red Wall (southwest).

