



3d colloquium of the "Groupe Tortues Marines France" (GTMF) La Rochelle, november 12-16, 2018¹

Workshop on Sea Turtle Identification² november 15, 9H00-12H30

RESTITUTION & RECOMMENDATIONS

After having made the inventory of various identification techniques, shared experiences and discussed at length the advantages and disadvantages of these techniques on this information base,

THE "GROUPE TORTUES MARINES FRANCE" recommends:

1) the complete stop of the identification by external tags (plastic rings or metal) of sea turtles on the French territory for the following reasons:

- Many losses: big investment compared to the profit;
- Very intrusive: during installation and hurtful on the "long" term;
- Entry point of bacteria or virus (fibropapillomatosis): no disinfectant strong enough against viruses;
- To a lesser, extend, predator attraction (Barracuda).

The only positive points reported was that external tags:

- can be easily read by anyone and then reported to scientists as recapture events
- may have a deterrent effect on fishermen and poachers.

2) to replace with less invasive techniques:

- Internal Tags: Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) (training recommended before using this technique) ;
- Photo ID (rather for phases in water than during egg laying because of light conditions and sand obstructions) ;
- By coupling several techniques: internal tagging + photo ID to maintain long term identification.

The choice will depend on the objectives targeted, the kind of monitoring or research planned, the developmental stages and species of the turtles, the context (nesting population size on beaches, foraging area accessibility...), and also on the human and financial resources available.

Furthermore, GTMF Participants agreed:

3) to draft reference guidelines and an ethics charter for the GTMF stakeholders. Identification protocols will also specify the precautions for the installation of Argos tags (possible harmful effects of epoxy resin, weight, shape etc.);

4) to settle a dedicated technical working group on identification which will act as the referent for the GTMF about standardizing techniques and procedures.

¹ <http://gtmf.mnhn.fr/descriptifs-des-ateliers-et-sessions/>

² http://gtmf.mnhn.fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2018/10/At3-Identification_CJean_2610.pdf

ANNEX 1: presentation and agenda of the workshop

Chairs : Claire Jean, Kelonia ; Jacques Fretey, Chélonée

Invitees : Damien Chevallier, IPHC-CNRS ; Alexandre Girard, Rastoma ; Katia Ballorain, CEDTM ; Caroline Rinaldi, Association Evasion Tropicale ; Marc Girondot, Université Paris sud

General presentation

Any field project on marine turtles intending to tag must first ask the question: "Why tag? ". Tagging is not an insignificant act. It can be expensive, require a lot of energy for the project actors, and cause significant injuries to tagged turtles. Individual identification is however essential for any population assessment and study of individual behaviour. Several techniques, more or less invasive, have been developed and used over time throughout the world. Their choice depends not only on the targeted objectives, but also on the available means (logistic and financial), and the environmental and biological context. Some techniques can also be combined to maximize the chances of recapture or resighting in the long term and allow rapid identification in the short term. This workshop aims at providing keys to guide researchers towards the most appropriate techniques according to their project and their means, based on international recommendations and through feedback from the field. The final objective is to produce a simplified identification guide listing the advantages and limitations of each technique as well as the recommended brand or software models and addresses for hardware orders.

Agenda

09H00: Inventory of existing identification techniques, applications, advantages and known limits C. Jean and J. Fretey

09h45: Feedback from field experience through presentations: Comparison of PIT and metal tags - D. Chevallier; Advantages and disadvantages of Monel and Titanium tags - K. Ballorain; Tagging and fibropapillomatosis - A. Girard; Photo identification - C. Rinaldi; Population size assessment and tag loss - Mr. Girondot

11:15: Discussions and sharing of complementary experiences (list of techniques used in each territory, problems encountered ...)

11:35: Data management (field registration, classic errors related to field conditions, banking ...)

11h50: Identification and animal ethics (towards the drafting and implementation of an official ethics charter for all research and conservation projects in the French territories)

12h10: Update of benefits and limitations for each technique, or at least identification of the most common and recommended techniques, addition of templates and addresses

Expected from the workshop

1) Technical document (table form) referent for all French-speaking projects with description of "good practise " identification techniques, recommendations depending on the case (site, species, budget ...)

2) Establishment of a working group