

Turtle Day Celebrations, 2010

In 2010, National Sea Turtle Day was celebrated at five sites around Gabon and a sample of the activities carried out is presented here:

In **Cap Esterias** over 130 students and local people were involved in a town and beach clean-up, culminating in the release of a juvenile green turtle that had been rescued from a Libreville bar. “Aquarhum”, named after the bar whose owners had saved the turtle from being sold as bushmeat, swam safely off into the sea to the cheers of the crowd. Two national newspaper reporters and a television news crew were present at this celebration.

In **Libreville**, a sea turtle information booth was set up in the courtyard of the French Cultural Centre. Young and old alike lined up to receive brochures, posters, and stickers. Life-sized leatherback and green turtle models were on display, and various costumes were available for children to dress up and act out part of the marine food chain.



Ndindi, in the south of Gabon near the border with the Republic of Congo, held its first ever Turtle Day event with over 200 participants. The day included football, art competitions, films and a visit from a life-sized leatherback turtle model - ‘Mama Turtle’.



Turtle release in Cap Esterias.

Events in **Mayumba**, the site of the original Turtle Day celebration from 2006, were well attended and supported again this year, with over 500 people taking part. ‘Mama Turtle’ made it back from Ndindi to oversee a town clean-up campaign, art contests, parades and film presentations. At one time the entire length of the Mayumba marketplace street was packed with people chanting “Protect Sea Turtles! Protect Sea Turtles!”.



Finally, **Gamba**, in central coastal Gabon, held a beach clean-up, an art competition for students and showed films and presentations. Over 100 people participated in the various activities and the winners of the art competition got to spend a weekend camping at a turtle research camp where they saw elephants, monkeys and baby turtles!

Training Field Technicians

Two training workshops were held in Pongara and Mayumba National Parks in the beginning of October 2009, attended by 21 and 24 participants, respectively. The goal of these workshops was to standardise data-gathering capacity among all the field technicians working on Gabon’s nesting beaches, in order to ensure rigorous scientific quality and application of consistent protocols between sites and seasons. In addition, the workshops helped to generate a strong team spirit and a shared sense of purpose and motivation for sea turtle conservation across the country. In addition to lectures on basic sea turtle biology and conservation, the turtle technicians also received practical training on tagging, measuring, GPS

use, nest analysis, sample collection, database use and compilation of datasheets. Many of these technicians played active roles during the Darwin Initiative deployment of satellite transmitters on nesting female leatherbacks.

