

**Onshore Preservation of Hawksbill Turtle Eggs through Community Participation,
IRAN (IRA-G52-2003, 2004 & 2007-024(IRA98G52))**

Community Based Turtle Conservation in Qeshm Island

Turtles

The hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) is a critically endangered sea turtle with two Atlantic and Pacific subspecies, which the pacific subspecies lives in Persian gulf and comes to its islands and mostly to Qeshm for laying eggs .

Qeshm

Qeshm is an island situated in the Strait of Hormuz off the south coast of Iran and east of the Persian Gulf (26°50'N, 56°0'E). Khouran Strait separates mainland Iran from Qeshm Island. It is the Persian Gulf's largest island. It has an area of 1500 km² and almost 136 kilometers length. Qeshm Island is also a free trade zone, which has made the island an important economical zone.



Qeshm Island and the location of Shib Deraz Village and the turtles nesting areas

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Shib-Deraz Village and the Turtles nesting sites

Shibderaz Village is Located in the Central Southern part of the Qeshm Island with a sandy coast line perfect for Hawksbill Turtles to lay eggs, the preservation of the turtle eggs came from the Qeshm free Zone Environment Bureau, and the need for communities participation strongly felt and it strengthened when SGP joined the effort to Save the turtles through Shib-Deraz Village community participation, most of the work carried out by locals with an Slight Technical support, and for the first time ever a community based approach for Conservation of Endangered Species launched in Iran practically, and most of the project aspects even scientific monitoring a data collecting on turtles carried out through the community members, even participatory they reached to methods how to monitor turtles in different year, all happened and all they did, make them proud that they helped 67300 baby turtles to hatch and go to the sea, which with all the threats that will face their lives, a few thousands of them will get back to Shib-Deraz again as mothers to lay eggs, but the great thing is that the project has finished but just started in the heart of the Community.



Sandy coast line near Shib-Deraz Village which is a perfect place for Hawksbill turtles nesting

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Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) is a critically endangered sea turtle which comes to Southern sandy shores of Qeshm Island for laying eggs



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A mother turtle while she is digging the beach and laying her eggs, near Shib-Deraz Village in southern coast of Qeshm Island



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Mr. Darehshoori (Bureau of Environment, Qeshm Free Zone Area) and locals are putting identification numbers, weighting and measuring the turtles



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Shibderaz villagers are participating in collecting the turtle eggs to place them in a safe area



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A turtle trail on the sands in a beach with human activities, which is a threat to turtle eggs, alongside the predators such as foxes, mongooses and birds, and also direct turtle egg collecting of some locals as a food source, made the locals to build a safe area for turtle eggs hatching



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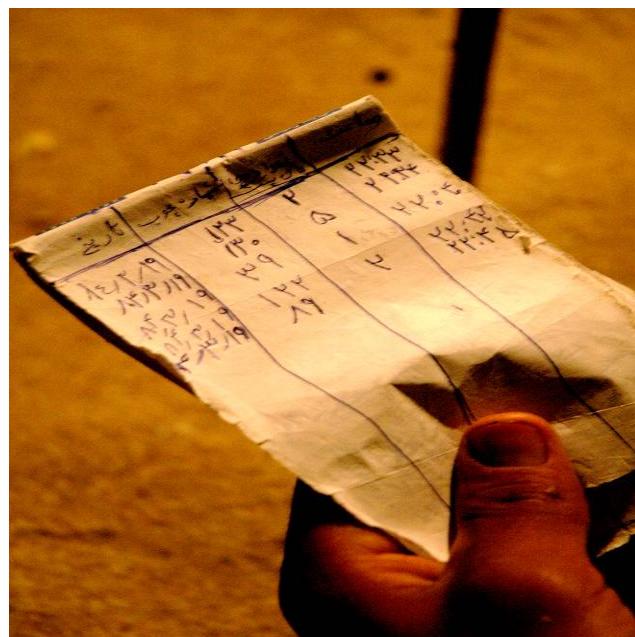
Setting up the safe place for turtle eggs hatching, with the tents that local participants in the project stay and do the constant checking on the area and patrolling the beach for newly laid eggs, the pictures in this page shows their efforts in the first year, but because the mortality rate was high, they reached to an Idea to set up roof for the safe area



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Community's involvement in all stages and community based constant monitoring



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The locals and authorities of the project decided to make the turtle's safe area roofed in the next years for better protection from all kind of predators and for keeping the areas temperature relatively stable for hatching to reach a better hatching rate



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For identifying the individual mother turtles, instead of marking them with paint and numbers, Qeshm Free Zone Environment Bureau representatives and local communities, reach to a better solution, which was tagging each turtle that comes to the island for nesting, in this case they can totally observe and record how many times per year an in what different years that specific turtles comes back to Island to lay eggs. Tags prepared by a separate fund from the Australian embassy in Tehran.



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Building the traditional temporary houses (Kapar) "which can be used instead of tents" for the project participants who are staying beside the turtle eggs safe area and use it as a station which they stay there while patrolling the shores during days and nights to collect the turtle eggs and bring them to the safe area,



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Kapars have multiple social usages and roles, there are a hang out place for elders and youngsters so they get more familiar with the project and they also been used as a base for all the gatherings and workshops of the project



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First baby turtles which are hatching and finding their way out of the sands



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Environmentalists and locals are monitoring the effectiveness of the turtle eggs safe area on the hatching rate



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Baby turtles are hatching and the community members are watching and hearing the explanation



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Local children and their first ecology experience and celebration of baby turtles birth with a cake, it all shows how they are happy of their hard work result



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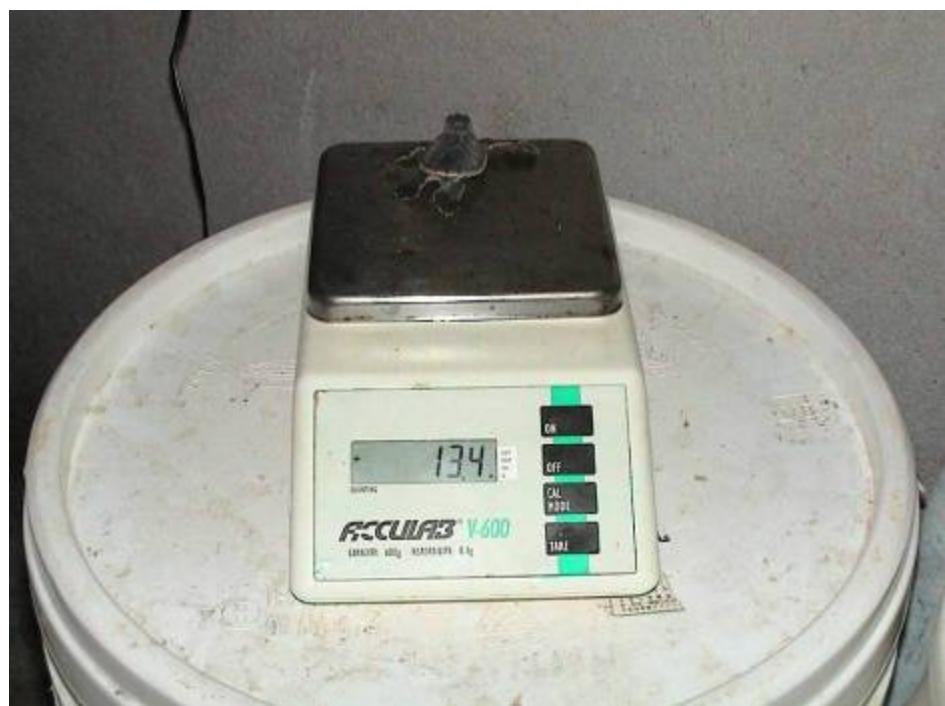
Environmentalists and locals are celebrating their success



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Baby turtles must be released in the sea before their food reserve on their stomach finishes, but before that it's a very good time for collecting data, which can be always helpful as a database



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Baby turtles are taken back to the sea, in a number that was impossible without the efforts of local people alongside the SGP and Qeshm free zone support.

Mostly the mortality rate of baby turtles before and after reaching the sea is really high, but with what started in the Qeshm Island, they are going back to the sea in a very good number, to go face their life battles



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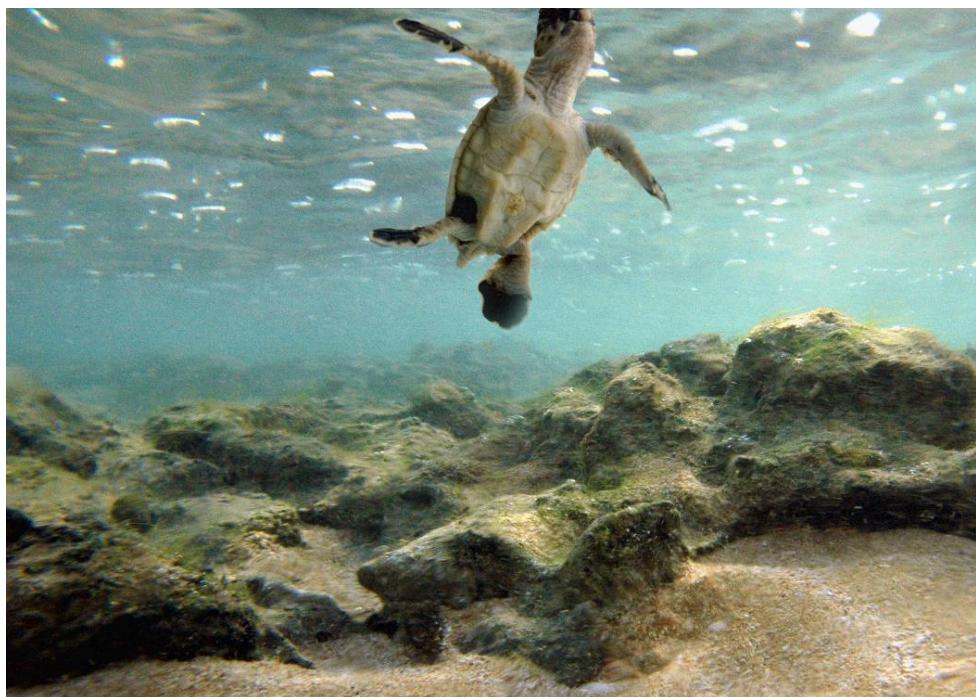
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Baby turtles and their journey of life in the ocean



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As the Qeshm indigenous man is looking at the shore, and what the community has settled to protect the turtle eggs, this thought comes to one mind that how was the situation before, how it improved and what it gained. above all that it should be mentioned that when something become a custom in a community it will find its ways through generations to stay forever, so as the turtle conservation among the Shibderaz villagers, and this can be the heart and soul of community based conservation, that as a concerned conservationist or a conservation organization, you recognize the threat , prepare the ground for the communities participation, you support and they feel and get the ownership and it can assure your conservation idea's sustainability through generation, because it will become a community driven act, not a fancy statement from outside, that's what SGP has been trying to promote in the different parts of Iran from its first days.

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