

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

JOINT SPC-NMFS WORKSHOP ON MARINE TURTLES
IN THE TROPICAL PACIFIC ISLANDS
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 11 - 14 December 1979)

TURTLE FISHING AND MARKETING REGULATIONS IN FORCE IN
NEW CALEDONIA

1. No special study on turtles has ever been carried out in New Caledonia, except for the brief survey conducted late in 1970 by Professor H.F. Hirth, FAO consultant, on behalf of the South Pacific Islands Fisheries Development Agency (SPIFDA). In his report "South Pacific Islands, Turtle Resources. FAO.FI:SF/SOP/REG/102/2. 1971", Professor Hirth made the following recommendations:

- "(i) A thorough study of nesting populations on the islets off Ile Ouen is recommended during December and January.
- (ii) A survey of Ile Ouen and Ile Surprise near Récifs d'Entrecasteaux should be carried out since there are numerous reports of turtles nesting there. Sites of concentrated nesting should be followed up with a tagging programme.
- (iii) Turtle questionnaires should be distributed among fishermen. This would provide the groundwork for future indepth studies."

2. In order to restrict turtle catches as much as possible, the following legislation (Ordinance No. 220 of 3 August 1977) was adopted by the New Caledonia Territorial Assembly.

ARTICLE 1 - The capturing of turtles of any species, by any means whatsoever, is prohibited during the months of November, December, January, February and March of each year.

ARTICLE 2 - The following are prohibited at all times, throughout the Territory of New Caledonia and Dependencies:

- Marketing of turtle meat of any species.
- Collecting of turtle eggs.
- Sale of mounted turtles and of turtle shells.

The last mentioned measure will come into force six months after the date of publication of the present Ordinance.

ARTICLE 3 - The provisions of Article 1 may be waived by the Merchant Marine Service, upon an application stating reasons, for Melanesian traditional feasts and ceremonies or for scientific purposes.

ARTICLE 4 - For scientific purposes, and in particular with a view to stock renewal, turtle egg collection may be authorised.

ARTICLE 5 - Persons failing to comply with the present regulations shall be liable to a fine of 60 to 360 FF. Second offenders shall be liable to a fine of 1,000 FF and/or to a term of imprisonment ranging from 1 to 10 days.

In addition, turtles captured in disregard of the provisions of Article 1 shall be confiscated by the officers reporting the offence and donated to social or charitable institutions.

ARTICLE 6 - The Head of the Merchant Marine and Sea Fisheries Service has been directed to enforce the present Ordinance in co-operation with any other services or departments entitled to police fisheries.

3. Since the Ordinance came into force, special authorisations to capture turtles during the closed season have been delivered on the occasion of Melanesian traditional feasts for a total of 77 animals. No other figure is available as regards the number of turtles caught yearly for personal consumption in the waters of New Caledonia and Dependencies.

4. The turtle species inventoried to date are as follows:

Green turtle : Chelonia mydas

Hawksbill turtle : Eretmochelys imbricata

Loggerhead turtle : Caretta caretta

Trunkback or leatherback turtle : Derموchelys coriacea

5. The nesting season of the green turtles runs from November to February-March. Egg laying occurs on the secluded beaches of many islets.
