

Conservation dogs and drones: new methods to protect loggerhead sea turtles on the island of Boa Vista

Pays	Cape Verde
Bénéficiaire	Fundação Tartaruga
Montant total du projet	69 143 €
Montant de la subvention	31 887 €
Partenaires financiers	Stiftung Temperatio, Turtle Foundation Switzerland, Lotex Foundation
Durée du projet	12 mois
Signature de la convention	19/02/2020

CONTEXT

Boa Vista (620 km²) is the island situated further east of Cape Verde, only 455 km away from the African coast. Long sandy beaches are characteristic of Boa Vista. Between June and October, female sea turtles (*Caretta Caretta*, VU) come to these beaches at night to lay their eggs. In total, there are 65 km of nesting beaches on the island. Between 3 000 and 13 000 sea turtles come to the coast to lay their eggs every year, meaning between 12 000 and 52 000 nests with about 100 eggs each. Unfortunately, cases of poaching increased again in recent years (from below 100 documented cases to more than 200 in 2016 and 2017).

Currently, the Fundação Tartaruga protects nine nesting beaches with a total length of 33 km. In addition, 12 km of beaches are monitored by two community-based projects financed and supervised by Fundação Tartaruga. In the east of the island the remaining 20 km of beaches with particularly high nesting activity are covered by two other nature conservation organizations (Cabo Verde Natura 2000 and BIOS.CV).

Although the number of patrols has increased continuously, it is impossible to protect the entire length of the nesting beaches in Boa Vista at all times. In addition, the question that must be taken into account is how sustainable this protection is, considering the high logistical and salary costs of deploying patrol teams on all beaches.

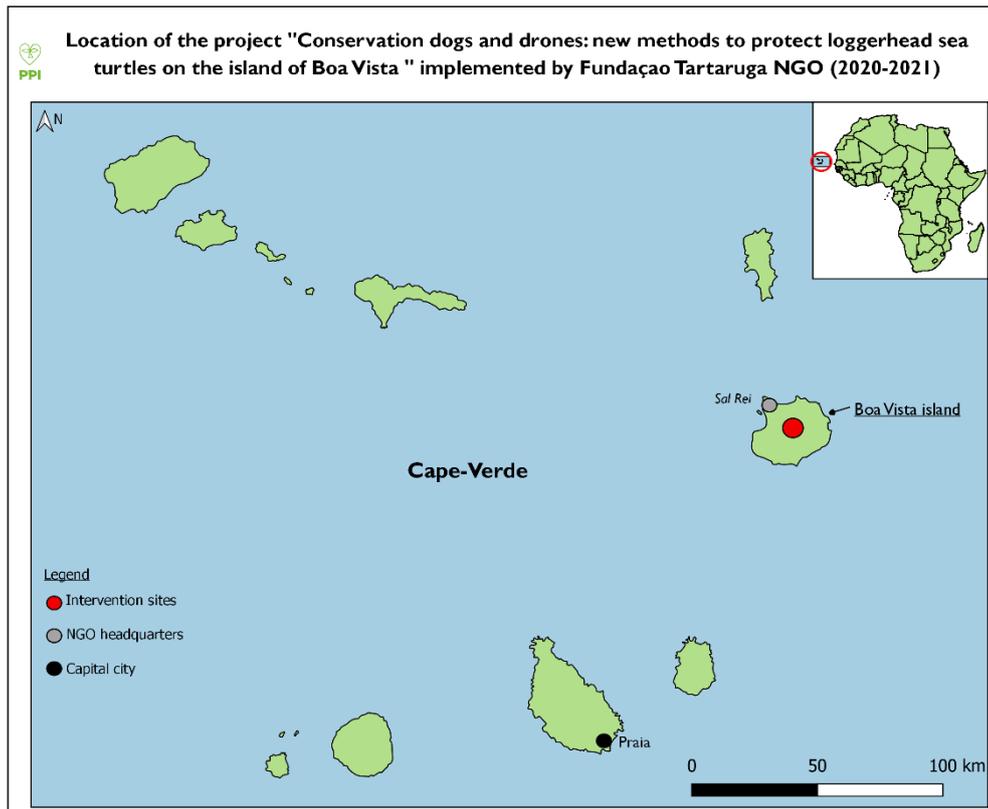
PURPOSE

The main objective of the project is to reduce the poaching of endangered sea turtles in Boa Vista by developing and implementing two new techniques based on conservation dogs and night vision drones.

This will allow to capture poachers in the act and/or obtain evidence in the form of photographs, video footage, etc., which will lead to their arrest and prosecution. As there are only a few dozen people actively hunting in Boa Vista, we hope that this project will soon lead to a significant reduction in poaching mortality among sea turtles.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- 2 dogs and their handlers are trained and are patrolling 3 times a week during the nesting season totalling 60 missions;
- 2 drone operators are trained and 24 missions are done per month;
- Organize test control of meat traffic at Boa Vista airport and ports is organized;
- Cooperation between the organization and the local police is enhanced to produce a protocol.



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