



CITES & LIVELIHOODS CASE STUDY 2019

Yellow-spotted River Turtle harvest and trade in Peru



SPECIES, USE AND TRADE

The Yellow-Spotted River Turtle (or “Taricaya”) is distributed widely throughout the Amazon and Orinoco river basins. It has declined across much of its range due to habitat loss and fragmentation and widespread uncontrolled harvest of eggs and adults for food.

In Peru, the species is now harvested through a pioneering sustainable use ranching programme that promotes its conservation while delivering local social benefits to indigenous and local communities. Eggs are collected from the wild (within or outside of protected

areas) and incubated in artificial, protected beaches by local villagers. Some hatchlings are released to the wild to help rebuild wild populations, while some are exported as pets (see Fig 1), mainly to Hong Kong SAR and mainland China. In 2017, almost 700,000 turtles were exported, with the communities being the main beneficiaries of this trade.

Most harvesters and turtle nest carers are women. Traditional knowledge on turtle behaviour and distribution is critical to successful implementation of the programme.



YELLOW-SPOTTED RIVER TURTLE
Podocnemis unifilis



APPENDIX II



VULNERABLE

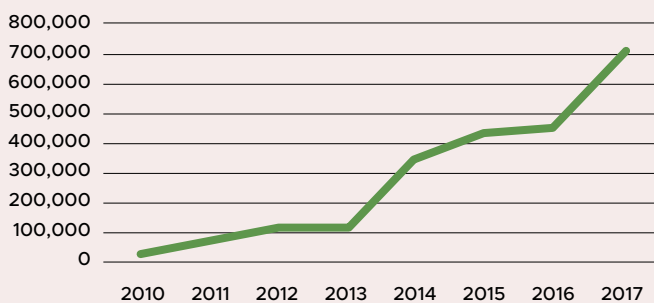


Fig 1. Exports of Yellow-spotted River Turtle from community management areas, 2010-2017

IMAGE: Indigenous Huambracocha man with the turtles before release. **Photo:** USAID Biodiversity & Forestry.



LIVELIHOOD BENEFITS

Over 1,000 families now benefit from this programme. Cash income is a key benefit, with communities gaining 31% of the export value of the turtles (the rest going to the exporting companies). In 2017, this amounted to a total of USD \$ 741,738 (Int\$ 1,176,396). For the Amazonian indigenous communities in particular, this is typically their only source of cash income, and is used to meet needs such as healthcare and education. The harvest

has additionally enabled small-scale tourism attractions in some areas.

The management capacities of the Amazonian communities have been built through technical assistance and training, and their institutional capacity for conservation has increased, and the security threat posed by intrusions by poachers and traffickers has been reduced.



CONSERVATION IMPACTS

The ranching programme has driven progressive increases in the yellow-spotted Amazon river turtle population, as indicated by nest counts. In one of the managed basins, Reserva Pacaya Samiria, for example, there were five times as many nests in 2017 as in the first year of monitoring (2012) (from 13,947 in 2012 to 68,979 in 2017; see Fig 2).

The turtle ranching programme has reduced poaching and illegal trade

(of turtles and other species), due to increased monitoring of the nesting beaches by communities, and data availability for management has improved. The livelihood benefits of the programme have been fundamental in gaining the support and engagement of the communities in conservation.

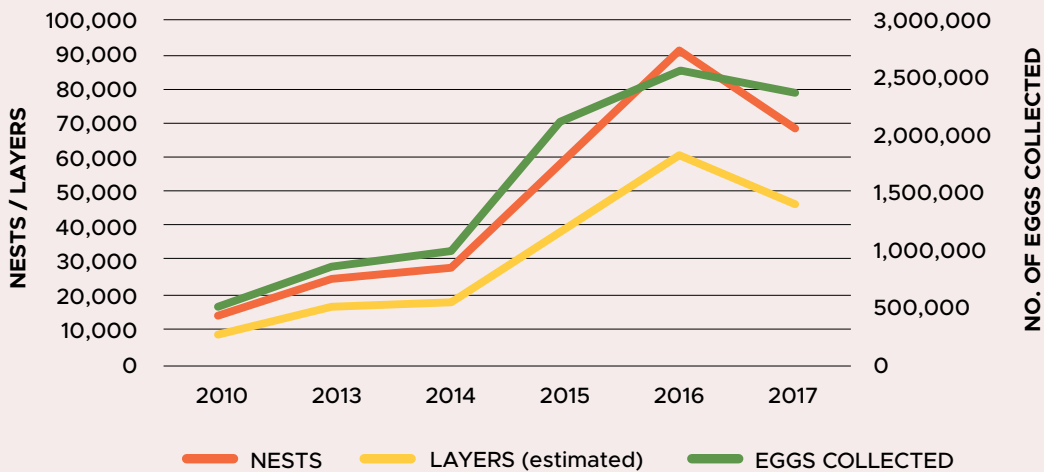


Fig 2. Number of nests, laying turtles and eggs collected in Pacaya Samiria Reserve, Peru, 2012-2017

LESSONS LEARNED AND DIRECTIONS

Trade in live turtles for pets has supported species recovery and reduced poaching and illegal trade.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS INCLUDE:

- Strong community governance
- Government support and capacity development
- Trust-building between government, communities, and researchers
- Prevention of over-exploitation through making of sound Non-Detriment Findings as required under CITES
- Integration of traditional knowledge.

KEY CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS INCLUDE:

- Communities often see CITES as unduly restrictive with few benefits. Effort could be made under CITES to incorporate mechanisms that reinforce a positive perception of CITES regulations
- Long-term economic viability could be threatened by increased production
- A key threat is the shift in some pet markets toward captive-bred sources of pets, which provide no conservation incentives or indigenous/local livelihood benefits.

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IMAGE: Yellow-spotted Amazon River Turtle hatching. **Photo:** Tony Chevalier.



IN COLLABORATION WITH:



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