

## 25 April 2010 - Final Blog

The end of the turtle research season has coincided with the start of the tourist season at Gnaraloo. April has seen a decline in the number of nests and number of hatchlings observed. April has yielded 422 hatchlings out of 9 nests, this compared to March where 28 nests were observed hatching with nearly double the amount of hatchlings. Since the middle of the month no hatchling activity has been recorded and there are very few potential nests left in the research area. This has as much to do with the enormous high tides that we have been experiencing, as it has with the end of hatching season approaching. In the final research section the majority of the nest stakes have been washed clear of the beach by waves, taking with them entire clutches of eggs, and leaving us to find nest stakes hundreds of meters away from their original position days later. Only further research will tell whether this is a regular phenomenon or an isolated incident.

For the tourists they have arrived at the wrong time of the year to observe hatchlings. Although the chances of seeing a hatchling are always small as their emergence is highly unpredictable, this by the middle of this month there were very few nests left that had the possibility of hatching for the number of tourists who were keen to spend a few hours on the beach waiting for an emergence. We had several disappointed Western Australians who waited for several hours in the increasingly inclement conditions.

By the end of the week our research will be completed and all there is for now is to start writing up a lengthy report on our findings this season. Just recap on some simple figures we found for the season;

- 285 nests were observed; of which only 48 hatched
- 1547 hatchlings were seen emerging, all of which were loggerheads
- Predation, by both Ghost Crabs and feral foxes was seen at just over 12%
- The average incubation time for nests was 67.25 days

A full report will be released by the middle of the year and this will be taken to sea turtle conferences nationally and globally to present our findings, as well as being released to DEC so they can continue to observe our work and findings.

As this is the final blog, this is goodbye from the turtle team and we hope you follow our progress nest research next season.