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On the Presence of *Lepidochelys olivacea* (Eschscholtz, 1829) in the Cape Verde Archipelago

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The olive ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea* Eschscholtz, 1829) is known to inhabit the western Atlantic Ocean, between 34° S and 21° N (Fretey 1999a). However, the distribution and nesting locations for this species along the Atlantic African coast are less well known (Fretey 2001). This species nests along the Atlantic coast of the African continent, from Sierra Leona to Angola (Carr & Campbell 1995; Catry *et al.* 2010; Fretey 1999b; Fretey *et al.* 2005; Fretey & Malaussena 1991; Gómez pers. comm.; Pauwels & Fretey 2008; Segniagbeto *et al.* in press), as well as in the Gulf of Guinea islands (Fretey *et al.* 2001; Tomás *et al.* 2001) except Príncipe. The northern limit of the distribution range could be Nouadhibou in Mauritania (Carr 1957), and its presence was recently confirmed in this country by Mint Hama *et al.* (in press).

In the Cape Verde archipelago, López-Jurado (pers. comm. in Fretey 2001) described olive ridley carapaces displayed in gift shops in Sal, and mentioned stranded in Sal and São Nicoláu. Fretey (2001) reported six carapaces or remains of dead turtles in Maio, Santa Luzia, Santiago and Boavista; and also a live entangled individual in Boavista. During the following years several olive ridleys have been observed by fishermen, tourists, and local people. In some of these cases, pictures were taken, so the staff of the NGOs working there (Cabo Verde Natura 2000 and SOS Tartaruga) could identify the species (Table 1).

	Date	Location	Island	CCL	CCW	Condition	Source
1	22 August 1999	Praia Gonçal	Maio	47	48	C	Varo-Cruz et al. 1999 ^a
2	20 October 1999	Praia do Castelo	Santa Luzia	nd	nd	C	Fretey 2001
3	01 December 1999	Ponta do Sol	Boavista	66	68	D	Fretey 2001
4	02 December 1999	Praia Atalanta	Boavista	nd	nd	A	Fretey 2001
5	08 April 2000	Praia de Galeo	Boavista	60	64	C	Fretey 2001
6	09 April 2000	Baía Pedra Alvim	Boavista	71	71.5	C	Fretey 2001
7	16 April 2000	Praia	Santiago	20	nd	C	Fretey 2001
8	04 November 2004	Praia Atalanta	Boavista	nd	nd	A	this paper
9	26 January 2010	Baía Grande	Boavista	nd	nd	A	this paper
10	27 November 2010	Praia Santa Maria	Sal	nd	nd	A	this paper
11	28 March 2011	Praia Atalanta	Boavista	nd	nd	A	this paper

Table 1. Record list of the individuals or remains of *Lepidochelys olivacea* found in Cape Verde. Top seven

rows were compiled by Fretey (2001), others are cited by the first time in this paper. CCL: curve carapace length in cm, CCW: curve carapace width in cm, A: alive, D: dead, C: carapace or remains), nd: no data. ^aAlso in Fretey (2001).

For the carapaces and remains found into private houses, we cannot be definitive that they were captured or found in Cape Verde. It should be noted that these were immature individuals, which is unusual in the records of western Africa.

When analyzing the records from Fretey (2001) and the new data presented in this paper it is noteworthy that all the individuals found in the nearshore were entangled, in poor health or dead. One turtle captured in Santa Maria, Sal (27 November 2010, Table 1) demonstrated marked deformity. This turtle had a pronounced hump and an atypical layout of the dorsal plates.

These records of the species proves its presence in Cape Verde, but it does not appear to be related with nesting activity. Since 1998 intensive surveys have been conducted on some of the island of Boavista beaches, and no single nesting event of *L. olivacea* has been recorded. We therefore suggest alternative hypotheses -not mutually exclusive- to explain the presence of this species on the archipelago.

Firstly, the beaches on the Bijagos Archipelago, Guinea Bissau (Cstry *et al.* 2010), Sierra Leona (Fretey & Malaussena 1991), or Liberia (Stuart & Adams 1989), where olive ridleys breed, are not far away from Cape Verde. It may be that individuals in the neritic of this region would drift to the nearshore of Cape Verde when incapacitated. On the other hand, some individuals may demonstrate oceanic behavior, as previously observed in the Pacific Ocean (Plotkin 2003; 2010) again, reaching nearshore waters of Cape Verde if incapacitated.

Finally, another hypothesis predicts an American origin for *L. olivacea*, where there are important nesting populations (Brazil, Marcovaldi 2001; French Guiana, or Surinam; Kelle *et al.* 2009). We recommend expanding the genetic characterization to all Atlantic nesting population, especially in western Africa. This, together with the implementation of telemetry studies, will enable to know the origin of strandings occurring in Cape Verde and to understand the role of this archipelago for the species.

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