

Caribbean cruisers in the Kingdom: ecology and protection of sea turtles

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Around the six islands that form the Dutch Caribbean are some of the most important nesting and foraging areas of sea turtles. Since the time of Columbus their numbers have fallen sharply due to human activity. Now international treaties have been concluded for the protection of the sea turtles. The Netherlands is therefore subject to both national and international obligations to protect the populations of sea turtles in the Dutch Caribbean. This requires knowledge about the migration routes, their population structures and habitat use. Via ecological experiments, satellite transmitters and with the help of new molecular analyses the researchers will map the populations before Columbus and the current status of the populations as well as the migration patterns. They will also examine threats to the populations and the effects of climate change on the habitats. The research results will contribute to a responsible conservation policy for the sea turtles in the Dutch Caribbean that is based on scientific evidence.