

# Supporting Turtle Foundation's conservation efforts for endangered loggerhead sea turtles in Boa Vista, Cabo Verde

Grantee: Turtle Foundation Liechtenstein

Location: Cabo Verde, Africa

Grant Cycle: 2024 - 2026

Type of Grant: two-year program support,

Animal Welfare & Protection

Website: [turtle-foundation.org](https://turtle-foundation.org)

Established in Germany in 2000, the Turtle Foundation is a network of seven national non-profit organizations, including affiliates in Liechtenstein, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as the project countries of Cabo Verde and Indonesia. The vision of the Turtle Foundation is a future in which sea turtles and their habitats are sustainably protected, healthy, and safe from threat of extinction and destruction. Its mission is to contribute to sea turtle conservation at designated project sites by cooperating with local communities to create a future where both sea turtles and people can thrive.

In Cabo Verde, the Turtle Foundation's conservation efforts on Boa Vista Island have led to a drastic reduction in the poaching of loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*). In 2007, over 30% of the annual nesting population, equivalent to approximately 1,200 turtles, was lost to poaching. Through sustained direct intervention and collaboration with local communities, this figure declined to less than 0.2% by 2023. Key to this success has been the employment of local community members as rangers, providing sustainable livelihoods. This community-based approach has cultivated enduring local support for conservation. The project has also implemented innovative monitoring technologies, including conservation detection dogs and drones, to enhance nest protection and surveillance.

Complementing these efforts are comprehensive environmental education programs, which have played a pivotal role in transforming local attitudes toward sea turtles and marine conservation.

The Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation (NaEPF), long committed to the animal welfare and the protection of endangered species, has supported the Turtle Foundation's conservation efforts for endangered loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in Boa Vista, Cabo Verde. This support has enabled an integrated approach that combines direct protection measures, community engagement, and capacity building to ensure long-term conservation impact.

Boa Vista Island, part of the Cabo Verde archipelago, hosts the third-largest nesting site globally for the endangered loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*). Approximately two-thirds of Cabo Verde's loggerhead nesting activity occurs on Boa Vista, with an estimated 5,000 to 30,000 female turtles coming ashore annually between June and October to lay their eggs. Loggerhead turtles have played a critical role in marine ecosystems for over 110 million years, contributing to ocean health and biodiversity. However, today they face significant threats, primarily resulting from human activities, including poaching, habitat degradation, tourism and habitat disturbance, and climate change.

Turtle Foundation aims to protect endangered sea turtles through direct conservation action, education, and community engagement. Since 2008, the Foundation has implemented a comprehensive monitoring and protection program that has led to a substantial reduction in poaching and enhanced nesting conditions across 30 kilometers of protected coastline. In addition to patrols and nest protection, the project addresses both natural and human-induced threats through beach clean-ups, public awareness campaigns, and the rescue and release of disoriented or stranded turtles.

Key activities of the project supported by the NaEPF include the regular implementation of beach patrols to monitor nesting activity and protect female loggerhead turtles from poaching. The project also conducts the relocation of nests at risk from erosion, flooding, or human disturbance to safer areas, significantly improving hatchling survival rates. Additionally, the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded or injured turtles is an essential component of the conservation strategy.

A central focus of the project is the training and empowerment of local rangers, who serve as the core operational force behind conservation efforts. These rangers receive specialized training in sea turtle biology, nest monitoring, data collection, and protection techniques, equipping them to carry out conservation activities effectively and sustainably. The project also engages in extensive community outreach, working closely with local residents to raise awareness about the ecological importance of sea turtles and the mutual benefits of conservation for both the environment and local livelihoods.

By safeguarding loggerhead turtles and their critical nesting habitats, the project contributes meaningfully to the long-term survival of this endangered species and aligns with global conservation priorities, including those outlined by the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group's action plans. These conservation efforts not only support the preservation of a species that has existed for million years, but also reinforce Cabo Verde's ecological integrity and enrich its cultural heritage, where sea turtles hold both environmental and symbolic significance.