

SEA TURTLE NESTING IN YALA NATIONAL PARK
BLOCK I FOR THE YEARS 1981-1984 and 1988*

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In the interest of obtaining information which would help in the management and conservation of Sri Lanka's marine turtles the National Sea Turtle Survey (NSTS) of the National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA) instituted a research programme in 1988 on turtle nesting in the Yala National Park (Block I) in collaboration with the officers of the Dept. of Wild Life. This area had in the past proved to be the principal nesting ground of the leather-back turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*.) It is also used for nesting by two other turtle species - the Green (*Chelonia mydas*) and the Olive-ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*). Results previously obtained during the years 1981 - 1984 are presented. These results indicate that the period May to July was the peak nesting season and that leather-backs were the major nesting species. Subsequent observations made indicated a radical change in the observed nesting behavior with disappointingly few turtles nesting on the beaches in the May to August period. Possible reasons for this include, decimation of some of the populations; rough seas, resulting in wave action reaching the base of the sand dune; a steep incline from the dunes to the water's edge and the fisheries' harbour completed at Kirinde in 1984.

The leather back turtle still appears to be the major nesting species.

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+ On the basis that Dr. RAVI PEREIRA, formerly coordinator NSTS of NARA and at present attached to the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board, has edited this paper, his name is also included as co-author.