



Retail Sales Help Communities and Sea Turtles in Brazil

Founded in 1980, Projeto TAMAR is a strategic alliance of Brazilian government, nonprofit, and private-sector partners, as well as numerous local communities—all committed to the common purpose of promoting the wise use and protection of sea turtles in Brazil and internationally.

When their first research and conservation field stations were established nearly three decades ago, TAMAR's founders were faced with the challenges of finding viable economic alternatives for low-income coastal residents who, for decades, had survived by collecting turtle eggs and consuming nesting turtles. TAMAR researchers and volunteers worked directly with local citizens to accumulate detailed knowledge of community economics and to identify specific market opportunities that use turtles non-consumptively.

At first, TAMAR hired turtle poachers, paying them wages to protect rather than exploit the turtle population. Later, the poachers' wives, children, and other families became involved as well. The TAMAR effort now serves dozens of coastal communities in northeastern Brazil by providing employment and other public benefits to local residents.

TAMAR's visitor centers provide a variety of attractions for tourists such as museums, tanks and aquaria, educational exhibitions, video and multimedia auditoriums, cafeterias, and bars. A network of 13 TAMAR shops located at visitor centers and in airports and shopping malls throughout eastern Brazil are another fundamental part of TAMAR's self-sustainability and community interaction programs.

TAMAR shops are the exclusive sales points for a line of products including T-shirts, caps, local handicrafts, and other souvenirs. Revenue from retail sales pays for approximately one-third of TAMAR's annual budget. The souvenirs are inspired by TAMAR's principal objectives of sea turtle protection and research; thus, in addition to generating fiscal profits, the shops fill education and outreach roles.

The manufacturing of TAMAR souvenirs generates employment for hundreds of people and is a considerable stimulus to the local economy. The first cottage industry producing T-shirts was created in 1990 in Regência, Espírito Santo. Since then, both product quality and commercial sales have improved, thus inspiring the creation of a similar operation in Pirambu, Sergipe. TAMAR's social production chain provides local jobs from the acquisition of raw materials through to the production and delivery of goods and services, and it ensures a regular flow of supplies and products among TAMAR's several field stations, shops, and visitor centers. Communities close to the field stations and those in areas with limited potential for tourism are all involved. Presently, more than 1,200 jobs are maintained through TAMAR's social production chain.

Ecotourism and the retail sale of locally produced souvenirs help not only to fund research and conservation of sea turtles in Brazil, but also to fulfill critical environmental education and outreach objectives and to boost local economies that once depended on the unsustainable use of sea turtles. Moreover, TAMAR's social production chain has helped to create a heightened sense of social inclusion and pride among involved community members. This reconciliation of conservation and turtle-friendly economic activities for community members is one of TAMAR's most notable achievements.

***Guy Marcovaldi** is an oceanographer, Director of Projeto TAMAR-ICMBio, the federal government agency responsible for the Brazilian Sea Turtle Conservation Program, and member of the board of Fundação Pró TAMAR. **Neca Marcovaldi** is an oceanographer, President of Fundação Pró TAMAR, the nongovernment organization that co-manages the Brazilian Sea Turtle Conservation Program, and Vice Chair of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group for the Western South Atlantic region. **Joca Thomé** is an oceanographer, Regional Coordinator of Projeto TAMAR-ICMBio, Vice Chair of the Marine Turtle Specialist Group for the Western South Atlantic region, and member of the board of Fundação Pró TAMAR.*

THIS PAGE: Revenues from TAMAR products support sea turtle research, conservation, education, and outreach in Brazil. © PROJETO TAMAR AT LEFT: Various bycatch mitigation measures are used in fisheries around the world to reduce incidental capture of seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles. Bycatch is a major hazard for those marine animal populations and can also be detrimental to the livelihoods of fishermen. © DAVID DOUBILET