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Green Turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, with Fused Carapacial Scutes Nesting at Atol das Rocas, Brazil

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Atol das Rocas has a total area of 7.2 km² and is located 270 km off the northeast coast of Brazil (3°52'S, 33°49'W). It is the second most important nesting area for green turtles in Brazil (Bellini et al., 1996). Since 1981 personnel from Projeto TAMAR (National Program for Conservation and Management of Brazilian Marine Turtles/IBAMA) have monitored this area during the nesting season (end of December until July).

On 29 April 1994 a female green turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, was observed nesting for the first time. Its curved carapace length was 112 cm. The carapacial vertebral and costal scutes were all fused without visible sulci (Fig. 1). Marginal scutes were present as were head scales. Sulci were not obscured by algae. There were no areas of exposed bone or scarring to suggest injury.

This turtle was observed nesting on 3 subsequent occasions during the season. Its first nest, containing 114

eggs, was monitored. After 64 days, 78 hatchlings emerged (68.4% hatch rate). There were no signs of abnormalities in the embryos, eggs, or hatchlings.

Abnormally shaped or supernumerary scutes are seen quite often in sea turtles, but reports of such major fusions of scutes are rare. Deraniyagala (1939) reported on a green turtle with no carapacial sulci. This is the only turtle with fused scutes that we have noted out of 456 nesting female tagged between 1990 and 1994 at Atol das Rocas (Bellini et al., 1996).

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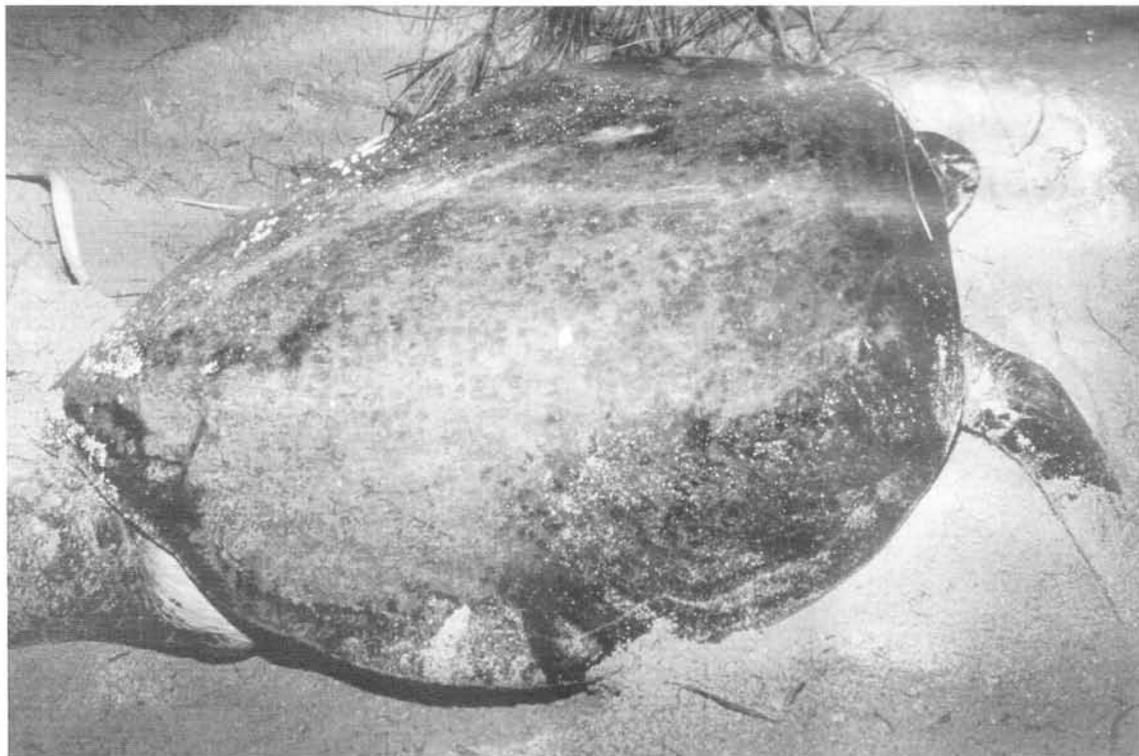


Figure 1. Female *Chelonia mydas* with fused carapacial scutes nesting at Atol das Rocas, Brazil.