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TITLE: Are we working towards global research priorities for management and conservation of sea turtles?

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ABSTRACT:

In 2010, an international group of 35 sea turtle researchers refined an initial list of more than 200 research questions into 20 metaquestions that were considered key for management and conservation of sea turtles. These were classified under 5 categories: reproductive biology, biogeography, population ecology, threats and conservation strategies. To obtain a picture of how research is being focused towards these key questions, we undertook a systematic review of the peer-reviewed literature (2014 and 2015) attributing papers to the original 20 questions. In total, we reviewed 605 articles in full and from these 355 (59%) were judged to substantively address the 20 key questions, with others focusing on basic science and monitoring. Progress to answering the 20 questions was not uniform, and there were biases regarding focal turtle species, geographic scope and publication outlet. Whilst it offers some meaningful indications as to effort, quantifying peer-reviewed literature output is obviously not the only, and possibly not the best, metric for understanding progress towards informing key conservation and management goals. Along with the literature review, an international group based on the original project consortium was assigned to critically summarise recent progress towards answering each of the 20 questions. We found that significant research is being expended towards global priorities for management and conservation of sea turtles. Although highly variable, there has been significant progress in all the key questions identified in 2010. Undertaking this critical review has highlighted that it may be timely to undertake one or more new prioritizing exercises. For this to have maximal benefit we make a range of recommendations for its execution. These include a far greater engagement with social sciences, widening the pool of contributors and focussing the questions, perhaps disaggregating ecology and conservation.

SOURCE: Endangered species research

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