

Honda ATVs Power Recovery of Endangered Sea Turtles

Sea turtles are among the earth's oldest surviving species. Their existence dates back nearly 90 million years to the time of the dinosaurs, but, today, sea turtles are losing their place in the world. Plagued by exploitation, human development, and habitat degradation, six of the world's seven

sea turtle species are federally listed as endangered in U.S. waters.

Honda's motorcycle division has responded to this situation by supporting recovery efforts of the single most endangered species of sea turtle—the

Ridley sea turtle. Joining a cooperative effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the government of Mexico, Honda donated 30 all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) earlier this year to the Ridley Sea Turtle Recovery Project, which has been underway since 1978.

Using Honda ATVs to patrol more than 90 miles of beaches in South Padre Island, Texas, and Rancho Nuevo, Mexico, project team members comb the beaches for nesting turtles, mark the sites, tag turtles, and collect eggs and relocate them to a protected

area away from poachers, both human and animal. Team members rely on their Honda ATVs to run patrols three to five times a day, and the ATV as a form of mobility provides much-needed agility and minimal environmental impact.

"Honda has come through for this recovery effort in a big way," says Pat Burchfield, U.S. Field Group Coordinator for the project. "It takes time to see the results of recovery efforts, but we are beginning to see a recovery of this species. Within the next three to five years, and with Honda's help, we hope to see the Ridley sea turtle de-listed as endangered."

In 1999, approximately 3,400 nests of Ridley sea turtles were identified in Mexico and about 20 were located along the south Texas coast. The current estimated population of nesting females is roughly 900, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service. Although nesting adults are concentrated in the Gulf of Mexico just off the coast of Texas and on the eastern edge of Mexico, mature turtles migrate throughout the Gulf of Mexico and up the Atlantic coast. The average Ridley Sea Turtle measures about two feet long and weighs between 70 and 95 pounds.



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