

Project Update: August 2020

Despite the coronavirus putting a pause on most of the world, The Mexican Turtle Project and data collection have continued. The project leader has not been able to return to the field since August 2019 due to the virus. However, the local leader Felix and students have continued to monitor the six species of turtles as scheduled with a lot of success.

This year in Sonora it has been exceptionally dry, and instead of the June rains turning the canopy green, it is August and the forest canopy has barely started to turn green. Luckily for us, turtles still appear to be active. We have had continued success in monitoring and locating new and marked individuals of the Sinaloa thornscrub tortoise (*Gopherus evgoodei*), Mexican Mud Turtle (*Kinosternon integrum*), and Alamos Mud Turtle (*Kinosternon alamosae*). Additionally, we have experienced new success in locating the Mexican painted turtle (*Rhinoclemmys pulcherrima*; Photo 1 & 2). We have also begun to observe and record the Rio Fuerte slider (*Trachemys nebulosa*) in the Cuchujaqui river but have been unable to capture individuals with the basking traps we have constructed. Lastly, we have had less success locating individuals of the Sierra box turtle (*Terrapene nelsoni*), but this is mostly due to our inability to travel to our field site that is located at higher elevations in the pine-oak forest.

Since the last update, the title of this project has been changed from the Mexican Turtle Project to Students Conserving Nature. The previous name overlapped with an old project, the Mexican Tortoise Project. An additional accomplishment since the last update has been establishing a Mexican non-profit (called 'asociación civil' in Spanish) so that we can begin to attract funds for this project independently of the university. We have also had the first paper accepted for publication in the peer-reviewed journal Chelonian Conservation and Biology.



Photo 1. This Sierra box turtle (*Terrapene nelsoni*) on top, and two Painted wood turtles (*Rhinoclemmys pulcherrima*) on the bottom were found together in the same shelter in April 2020.



Photo 2. Scholarship student Esteban with three Painted wood turtles (*Rhinochlemmys pulcherrima*) that he found in a rock shelter during July 2020.