The Georgia Jumper

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Georgia shrimper and TED designer

INTRODUCTION

Different countries have different laws and political situations, but many have similar fisheries and environmental concerns. Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) are one important solution to conservation concerns because trawls are essentially the same: gear can be built to fit any net in the world.

I began designing a device in 1968 to exclude bycatch from my nets. By the fall of 1969, I was pulling the excluders on my shrimp nets and noticing a huge reduction in bycatch, including jellyfish, finfish, horseshoe crabs, sea turtles, and many other species. Over the years, I have continued to improve the design of my TEDs to protect sea turtles and reduce unnecessary killing of all kinds of bycatch.

RATIONALE

100% of shrimpers in Georgia use TEDs and this is a major accomplishment. Think about it this way: fishermen are always told that if you have a hole in your net, patch it! Yet TEDs are designed as holes in your net; some old-timers never got used to it. However, no one wants to capture sea turtles or harm them for no reason. Bycatch makes work more difficult for fishermen because if your net is full of fish and other creatures, it is not full of shrimp. I can visualize it: the more bycatch you have, the more shrimp you lose.

More importantly, sea turtles are part of the natural ecosystem and you don't want to break that chain. If you break that chain, who is going to fill the gap?

For example, leatherback turtles are jellyfish eaters. If I caught and killed too many jellyfish in my net like we used to back in the 1960s, what would the leatherbacks eat? If you break the chain, you create a deadspot. You must keep the ecosystem balanced.

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

The TED I invented, called the ***Georgia Jumper***, was tested for its ability to exclude wild sea turtles. In November-December, 2004, thirty (30) turtles were recorded by an underwater camera as they were caught by 70-foot Mongoose style shrimp trawl nets pulled by a 73-foot boat. The bars of the TED were set at a 53 degree angle. In this experiment conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), a turtle was considered "captured" if it could not escape from the net in 10 minutes. A total of 25 tows were made with times ranging from 60 minutes to 268 minutes. All in all, 70 hours and 11 minutes of video documentation was recorded and reviewed.

RESULTS

No turtles were recorded as captured.

For a TED to be legal, it must be 97% effective at excluding turtles. In this test, the Georgia Jumper proved to be 100% effective. The longest time any turtle remained in the net was 1 minute and 20 seconds. Another turtle remained in the net for 1 minute and 10 seconds. Besides these two turtles, *all other turtles escaped in under a minute*. In fact, 50% of them escaped in 15 seconds or less.

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MAREX

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