Turtle Excluder Device

As a quoted source in the article entitled “Sea Turtle Excluder Device” (Int J Stud Anim Prob 2(5):231-232, 1981), I would like to offer some corrections and also clarify one of my comments in the article.

I commend the Journal for the attention paid to the sea turtle excluder device (TED). The TED may well provide a technological solution to the problem of incidental capture and drowning of sea turtles in shrimp trawl nets. This is the real news. My statement concerning the reluctance of the shrimping community in the Southeast to adopt the device was not meant to downplay the successful aspects of the TED. The Center for Environmental Education (not “Council on,” as printed in the article) acknowledges the effectiveness of the device and is actively working to promote its adoption.

There were a few factual errors in the article that should be corrected. There are four species (not three as stated) of sea turtles that are incidentally caught in shrimp trawls in the southeastern United States. The leatherback sea turtle (Dermochelys coriacea) was not mentioned. Yet they are occasionally caught and drown. In the same section of the article, the green turtle is identified as “the most endangered species of sea turtle” by turtle conservationists. The Kemp’s Ridley has only one native nesting beach and is estimated to number less than 1,000 individuals.

Although a documented 2,085 sea turtle carcasses did wash ashore along the Gulf and South Atlantic coasts in 1980, they did not all appear “2-4 days after the completion of shrimping operations in the area” as indicated in the article. Instead, the turtles washed ashore throughout the spring and summer months during the shrimping season.

Also, the National Marine Fisheries Service is part of the Department of Commerce, not the Department of Interior as stated in the article.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.

James Sternberg
Sea Turtle Rescue Fund
Center for Environmental Education
Washington, DC 20006