



# Community-based conservation of river turtles in the Mamiraua Sustainable Development Reserve, Amazonas, Brazil

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## BIO

Cassia is a PhD candidate in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at the University of Florida. Her work focuses on ecology and conservation of freshwater turtles in the Brazilian Amazon. She acts as a research collaborator for the Mamiraua Sustainable Development Institute, located in Tefe-AM, Brazil and is co-PI of a Disney Conservation Fund-funded UF project with Dr. Steve Johnson (UF/WEC) entitled "Community-based conservation of river turtles". Cassia completed her Master's degree in Applied Zoology at Universidade Estadual de Santa Cruz, in Ilheus-BA, Brazil and the undergraduate in Biology at Universidade Catolica Dom Bosco, in Campo Grande-MS, Brazil.

## PRESENTATION SUMMARY

In the Amazon, turtles are an important food resource for local people, especially Giant South American (*Podocnemis expansa*), Yellow-spotted (*P. unifilis*) and Six-tubercled (*P. sextuberculata*) River turtles. Over harvest of *P. expansa* in the 19th Century resulted in a drastic population decline in the area of the current Mamiraua Sustainable Development Reserve (MSDR). The decline of *P. expansa* increased hunting pressure on the other two species and a recent assessment by the IUCN considered *P. expansa* critically endangered, *P. unifilis* endangered, and *P. sextuberculata* vulnerable (TTWG 2014). Although many *Podocnemis* nesting areas are located within boundaries of the MSDR, enforcement of laws protecting turtles is often insufficient. To minimize poaching by outsiders in the MSDR, local villagers are recruited to protect turtle nesting sites. And enhanced protection of turtles and nests depends on greater engagement of volunteers from local villages. The Mamiraua Institute has supported this initiative since the early 1990's. It strives to ensure conservation of females, eggs and hatchlings during the breeding season when persecution is worst. The Institute provides technical support, and with the help of local volunteers documents the number of protected nests annually. This presentation will be an overview of the community-based conservation of river turtles in MSDR.

**TUE, MAR 26**

**12:45 - 1:45**

**Grinter 376**

Tropilunch is a weekly seminar run by graduate students from the Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD) Program. It provides a forum for a range of discussions and presentations related to TCD work and research. Special guests, visiting scholars and practitioners also participate. It happens every Tuesday @ 12:45 – 1:45 p.m. in Grinter Hall, Room 376.

Tropilunch presentations are recorded and posted weekly on TCD's YouTube Channel.