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Punta Cana conducts sustainable tourism programs

'An unusual human scream, mixed with stupor and joy, broke the calm of the quiet dawn.' Sea turtles surface on the sand

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PUNTA CANA, La Altagracia.- Employees and tourists were suddenly woken and ran to the area of the beach to enjoy a fascinating spectacle: several young sea turtles surfaced on the fine white sand and headed calmly toward the warm and waters of the Caribbean.

"It was something incredible, wonderful. All those of us who saw the birth of these little turtles were impressed because many many years ago in this zone nobody observed an event like this, and less even, so near the hotel, at so few meters from the beach," said Jake Kheel, son of Punta Cana founder Theodore Kheel.



Jake Kheel plants mangroves

The young of turtles (Green Tortoise), a species in danger of extinction, is conserved in a safe place, under the care of technicians who work in the marine coast protection project of the Foundation Punta Cana.

It is expected that within 20 years, if the conditions are favorable in the same beach where they were born, the turtles return to lay their eggs to preserve the species.

Kheel, who heads the Foundation's environmental program, is convinced that the birth of the turtles in a beach at the hotel is closely linked with the works being done to improve the conditions of the beach that began to erode, the quality of the water in the coastal zone and especially to the care and the health of the reefs that for decades have been severely damaged by fishermen.

The coastal protection program is one of most important currently being conducted and encompasses 8 kilometers of reefs.

In order to insure its success, a team of experts was contract, large concrete walls have been erected in the zone of reefs, where the corals and other marine species had disappeared and an area of the coast is being replanted with red mangroves that when grown improve the ecosystem, since they are natural estuaries and protect species against predators.

The Punta Cana Foundation, seeking to promote sustainable tourism, currently has interchanges with ten prestigious universities of the United States to develop education, and research programs to develop voluntary service programs.

Students and professors come to the country to study the flora and fauna, from Miami, Harvard, Columbia,

Cornell, Virginia Tech, Rutgers, Stevens Institute of Technology, Millikin and Leiden University of Holland and the University of Puerto Rico, in addition to various agreements of cooperation with Dominican official and private institutions.

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