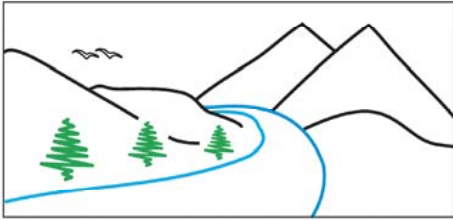


NRESi



"Our environment is our future"

Friday
Nov. 7, 2008

3:30 - 4:30

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UNBC UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM SERIES



Dr. Zoë Meletis

Outdoor Recreation &
Tourism Management Program
UNBC



Tourists & Turtles:

Tourist Perceptions of Turtle Tours in Tortuguero, Costa Rica

In this talk, I will present follow-up work on my dissertation work in Tortuguero, Costa Rica. Tortuguero is home to Tortuguero National Park, one of the oldest (est. 1975) and most visited parks in Costa Rica. Tortuguero is a renown and 'successful' turtle tourism destination that now receives over 116,751 tourists a year (ACTo 2007). As such, turtles feature prominently in the 1001 tourist surveys that I conducted (2003; 2004). Tourism and ecotourism are often seen as a desirable way to 'make nature pay for itself'—to combine conservation goals and efforts with new opportunities for so-called non-consumptive, non-extractive economies. Turtle tourism is also idealized as a replacement economy for turtle fishing and egg collecting. I will compare and contrast ideas presented about turtle tourism in: the turtle conservation literature; the tourism studies literature; turtle tourism advertising (e.g., that turtle tourism is a way to 'help' save sea turtles); and the tourist survey responses that I collected. I will discuss previous tourist responses (Meletis 2007) and those that I am currently in the process of analyzing (data collected in the summer of 2008), with the following questions in mind:

- Why do people want to view nesting sea turtles, and what do they 'get out of it'?
- Is turtle tourism 'helping' sea turtles?
- Is turtle tourism hurting sea turtles?
- Can there be too many tourists watching turtles at once?
- Can there be too much sea turtle tourism more generally?