

1 How many came home? Evaluating *ex-situ* conservation of green  
2 turtles in the Cayman Islands.

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**23 Abstract**

24 *Ex-situ* management is an important conservation tool that allows the preservation of  
25 biological diversity outside natural habitats while supporting survival in the wild. Captive  
26 breeding followed by reintroduction is a possible approach for endangered species  
27 conservation and preservation of genetic variability. The Cayman Turtle Centre Ltd was  
28 established in 1968 to market green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) meat and other products and  
29 replenish wild populations, thought to be locally extirpated, through captive breeding. We  
30 evaluated the effects of this reintroduction program using molecular markers (13  
31 microsatellites, 800bp D-loop and STR mtDNA sequences) from captive breeders (N=257) and  
32 wild nesting females (N=57) (sampling period: 2013-2015). We divided the captive breeders  
33 into three groups: founders (from the original stock), and then two subdivisions of F1  
34 individuals corresponding to two different management strategies, cohort 1995 (“C1995”) and  
35 multicohort F1 (“MCF1”). Loss of genetic variability and increased relatedness was observed  
36 in the captive stock over time. We found no significant differences in diversity among captive  
37 and wild groups, and similar or higher levels of haplotype variability when compared to other  
38 natural populations. Using parentage and sibship assignment, we determined that 90% of the  
39 wild individuals were related to the captive stock. Our results suggest a strong impact of the  
40 reintroduction program on the present recovery of the wild green turtle population nesting in  
41 the Cayman Islands. Moreover, genetic relatedness analyses of captive populations are  
42 necessary to improve future management actions to maintain genetic diversity in the long  
43 term and avoid inbreeding depression.

44

## 45 **Introduction**

46 Over the past two decades, biodiversity loss has become a pressing global issue (Barnosky et  
47 al., 2011; Dirzo & Raven, 2003; Hooper et al., 2012; Mora & Sale, 2011). Deforestation (Barlow  
48 et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2013; Turner, 1996), overexploitation (Coleman & Williams, 2002),  
49 agricultural expansion (Allan et al., 2015) and invasive species (Ceballos & Ehrlich, 2002;  
50 Doherty, Glen, Nimmo, Ritchie & Dickman, 2016) are some of the effects driving species and  
51 populations to experience severe decline and negatively influences the functionality of food  
52 webs (Dunne, Williams & Martinez, 2002) and ecosystem sustainability (Hooper et al., 2012;  
53 Worm et al., 2006).

54

55 *Ex-situ* strategies (i.e. conservation measures applied away from the natural habitat of the  
56 target species) such as captive breeding and reintroduction have become an important  
57 conservation tool used to combat biodiversity loss by recovering locally extinct populations  
58 (Fischer & Lindenmayer, 2000; Storfer, 1999). The release of captive-bred individuals into the  
59 wild has been identified as an instrument for conservation of threatened populations  
60 (reintroduction) and for the establishment of new ones (introduction) (IUCN 1987). Captive  
61 breeding programs followed by reintroductions, although controversial (Jule, Leaver & Lea,  
62 2008), are one of the most commonly used *ex-situ* conservation strategies (Fischer &  
63 Lindenmayer, 2000). Captive breeders may include local individuals and/or individuals  
64 belonging to other wild populations, depending on the status of the population to be  
65 recovered. Some species of conservation concern, such as the Przewalski horse (*Equuferus*  
66 *przewalskii*) in Mongolia or the Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrot (*Amazona barbadensis*) in  
67 Margarita Island (Venezuela) have successfully recovered to self-sustaining populations after

68 captive breeding and reintroduction programs (Sanz & Grajal, 1998; Van Dierendonck, Bandi,  
69 Batdorj, Dügerlham & Munkhtsog, 1996). Reintroductions from captive breeding programs  
70 may, however, produce individuals incapable of long-term survival in the wild due to feeding  
71 incompetence (i.e. incapacity of hunting or finding food resources in the natural habitat),  
72 unsuccessful predator/competitor avoidance and disease (Jule et al., 2008). During the 1990s,  
73 several studies highlighted the need for monitoring after the release of individuals (Armstrong,  
74 Soderquist & Southgate, 1994; Sarrazin & Barbault, 1996; Sutherland et al 2010), and that this  
75 monitoring should be driven by key questions to improve efficiency on active conservation  
76 (Nichols & Williams, 2006). Nonetheless, outcomes are still often unknown and causes of  
77 failures are rarely understood (Rees et al., 2016; Weeks et al., 2011) as a result of the paucity  
78 of monitoring and/or the time lag necessary to detect actual failure/success (Fischer &  
79 Lindenmayer, 2000).

80

81 The origin and number of breeders in *ex-situ* conservation programs should be considered to  
82 reduce potential negative impacts during reintroductions, such as the generation of weak  
83 hybrid offspring as a consequence of outbreeding depression (Edmands, 2007; Weeks et al.,  
84 2011; Witzenberger & Hochkirch, 2011) or the loss of genetic variability and inbreeding  
85 depression due to a low number of founders (Hedrick & Fredrickson, 2008; Hedrick, Miller,  
86 Geffen & Wayne, 1997; Ralls & Ballou, 1986; Witzenberger & Hochkirch, 2011). Reintroduction  
87 programs may have a differential success, ranging from total failure to complete replacement  
88 by reintroduced individuals and extirpation of the wild local population (Sweeting, Beamish,  
89 Noakes & Neville, 2003; Sutherland et al., 2010).

90

91 Monitoring reintroduction programs can be challenging, in particular for species with high  
92 dispersal rates and long generation times (Canessa et al., 2016); therefore several  
93 methodologies, from tracking using electronic devices to the use of biological markers, have  
94 been adopted in different species. Telemetry was used to monitor dispersal patterns of an  
95 endangered freshwater fish (the trout cod *Maccullochella macquariensis*) in Australia (Ebner  
96 & Thiem, 2009), whilst growth rates and survival indices were used in the management of the  
97 reintroduced peninsular bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) in California (Ostermann, Deforge &  
98 Edge, 2001). Nuclear genetic markers, such as microsatellites, have been valuable for  
99 assessing the effectiveness of reintroduction programs and measuring their impact on natural  
100 populations (DeMay, Becker, Rachlow & Waits, 2017; Koelewijn et al., 2010; Stenglein, Waits,  
101 Ausband, Zager & Mack, 2010). Similarly, mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) has been successfully  
102 used to monitor reintroduction (Godoy, Negro, Hiraldo & Donazar, 2004) and captive breeding  
103 programs (Kitanishi et al., 2013). Moreover, combining different types of genetic markers is  
104 advantageous to obtain diverse and complementary information about the same sample set  
105 (Kim et al., 2011; Puckett et al., 2014).

106

107 To date the long term Cayman Turtle Farm (CTF) green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) reintroduction  
108 program has not been evaluated genetically. Green turtles play an important ecological role  
109 in the maintenance of seagrass beds, as grazing stimulates new growth (Aragones, Lawler,  
110 Foley & Marsh, 2006). The large nesting population of green turtles historically present in the  
111 Cayman Islands served as a key fishery resource (Aiken et al., 2001; Bass, Epperly & Braun-  
112 McNeill, 2006), and was exposed to massive anthropogenic perturbations by the commercial  
113 harvesting of nesting females for meat consumption. The decline of green turtle nesting

114 populations worldwide led this species to be listed as Endangered in 1975 by IUCN  
115 (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and its commercialization regulated by CITES  
116 (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ) (Aiken et  
117 al., 2001; Seminoff, 2004). In the 1980s several studies concluded that the green turtle nesting  
118 population of the Cayman Islands was extinct (King, 1982; Stoddart, 1980), although, the  
119 presence of some green turtles was reported in the waters surrounding the Islands (Brunt &  
120 Davies, 2012). In 1968 a private company, the Cayman Turtle Farm (up to 1983 known as  
121 Mariculture Ltd. and now called Cayman Turtle Centre Ltd), started a green turtle captive  
122 breeding program to restore a population nesting in the Cayman Islands whilst providing an  
123 alternative source of turtle meat to alleviate harvest from the wild population (Cayman Turtle  
124 Farm, 2002). The project consisted of importing adult turtles and eggs from other populations  
125 to breed in captivity, and raised future generations for the reintroduction and as a harvest  
126 resource. Individuals representing the  $F_1$  generation were typically grown in the farm up to  
127 4-6 years and then arbitrarily chosen to be part of the breeding stock, to be released or to be  
128 slaughtered for meat consumption. On the other hand, individuals of the  $F_2$  generation were  
129 only released or used as a source of meat, but not as part of the captive breeding stock.

130

131 Adult turtles and eggs were collected from the nesting populations of Costa Rica, Suriname,  
132 Guyana, Ascension Island and Mexico and from the foraging area of Nicaragua between 1968  
133 and 1978 to form the founder stock of the CTF (Figure 1; see Supplementary Table S1 and S2).  
134 Given that individuals imported to the farm were gathered from widely separated areas, they  
135 likely belonged to genetically different populations, as shown by a recent study (Naro-Maciel  
136 et al., 2014). Between 1980 and 2001 the CTF released ~30,000 captive-raised hatchlings and

137 yearlings as part of the reintroduction program (Bell et al., 2005). Between 1982 and 1983,  
138 the farm reduced the size of the founder breeding stock by 46% (Supplementary Table S3) to  
139 decrease management costs (Cayman Turtle Farm, 2002). In 2001, Hurricane Michelle caused  
140 major damages to the CTF further decreasing the number of founder breeders with the loss  
141 of 81% of individuals, which either died or escaped (Supplementary Table S3).

142  
143 The reintroduction of marine turtles into the wild is based on the premise that they exhibit  
144 natal philopatry. This behavior is described as the return of individuals to their natal site to  
145 reproduce (Cury, 1994; Greenwood, 1980; Mayr, 1963). Newborn hatchlings are thought to  
146 memorize different chemical and magnetic cues from the nesting beaches where they hatch  
147 and use this information in adulthood to find their natal nesting beaches to reproduce (Meylan,  
148 Bowen & Avise, 1990; Lohmann, Witherington, Lohmann & Salmon, 1997; Lohmann, Lohmann,  
149 Brothers & Putman, 2013). Natal philopatry leads to genetic distinctiveness of populations,  
150 thus geographically distant groups might have limited genetic exchange (Chesser, 1991; Lee,  
151 Luschi & Hays, 2007). For this reason, the natural recovery of isolated populations on the verge  
152 of extinction may be difficult, as little migration would be expected from other populations to  
153 increase the number of mating adults. This philopatric behavior, both in females and males  
154 (Clusa et al., 2018), is the basis for a rapid colonization of new potential nesting areas after  
155 the first arrival of marine turtles (Carreras et al., 2018).

156  
157 Philopatry is also the basis of the success of the reintroduction program of Kemp's ridley sea  
158 turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*) in Texas, through a headstarting program started in 1978  
159 (Fontaine, 2005). Headstarting consists of the rearing of the offspring in captivity up to a

160 certain size before their release, to prevent high rates of mortality typical of the early stages  
161 of life (Heppell, Crowder & Crouse, 1996; Mitrus, 2005). However, headstarting, as a  
162 conservation measure, has been questioned over the last 20 years because of the expected  
163 poor survival of the released turtles. They have been found to have nutritional deficiencies  
164 and behavioral modifications resulting from factors associated with captivity, including  
165 insufficient exercise, lack of stimuli or lack of feeding skills (Heppell, 1998; Heppell et al., 1996;  
166 Moll & Moll, 2000). Furthermore, the probability of surviving to adulthood increases  
167 exponentially with age, and therefore the population dynamics of organisms such as turtles  
168 are driven more strongly by changes in annual juvenile survival than by survival in their first  
169 year of life (Heppell et al., 1996).

170

171 The headstarting reintroduction program of the Cayman Turtle Farm has also raised some  
172 concerns about its utility and possible negative impacts. Some of these concerns are related  
173 to human health, animal welfare and conservation activities (Warwick, Arena & Steedman,  
174 2013). Moreover, reintroduction programs have also possible genetic consequences such as  
175 the alteration of genetic variability of natural populations caused by the introduction of  
176 hatchery bred individuals (Horreo, de la Hoz, Pola, Machado-Schiaffino & Garcia-Vazquez,  
177 2012). Farm releases in the Caribbean region of individuals hatched from a founder stock that  
178 includes South Atlantic genetic material are thus a potential source of outbreeding depression  
179 (Narum, Arnsberg, Talbot, & Powell, 2007). Despite these concerns, the wild population of  
180 green turtle nesting in the Cayman Islands has increased and the number of nesting females  
181 is increasing despite the long generation time of the species (Aiken et al., 2001; Cayman  
182 Islands DoE unpublished data). To date, the exact role of the CTF breeding program in this



183 recovery is unknown, but the application of living tags (created by the transplantation of a  
184 4mm diameter disc of plastron to the carapace) has shown that at least some of the released  
185 hatchlings survived to adulthood and reproduced on nesting beaches in the Cayman Islands  
186 (Bell et al., 2005).

187

188 Genetic evaluation and monitoring of the success of the CTF reintroduction program is  
189 necessary to understand its contribution to the recovery of the wild populations and its impact  
190 on the local gene pool. Using a set of 13 microsatellites, a fragment of the D-loop mtDNA (800  
191 bp) and four mitochondrial simple tandem repeats (STR) markers, we analyzed the genetic  
192 diversity and genetic structure of 257 captive and 57 wild green turtle females nesting on the  
193 islands of Grand Cayman. This study aims to reconstruct the farm population structure and  
194 evaluate the reintroduction programme, specifically 1) estimate the genetic diversity of the  
195 farm breeding stock, 2) assess parentage and sibship relationships between farm and wild  
196 population and 3) identify the genetic structuring of the farm breeding stock and of the wild  
197 population in relation to other wild green turtle populations. We aim to provide novel insights  
198 and guidelines for future reintroduction actions using our results as a case study.

## 199 **Materials and Methods**

200

### 201 *Sampling and DNA extraction*

202 The study was conducted using samples from wild green turtle females nesting on Grand  
203 Cayman (Cayman Islands) and from breeding females of the Cayman Turtle Farm (CTF). Tissue  
204 biopsies were taken from all females of the farm breeding stock from 2012 to 2014 (N=257)  
205 and from all wild nesting females encountered during 2013 and 2014 (N=57). Tissue samples  
206 were taken from the neck or from the rear flippers with a scalpel blade and stored in 100%  
207 ethanol. All individuals were PIT tagged (Passive Integrated Transponder) (Bjorndal, Reich &  
208 Bolten, 2010) to avoid pseudoreplication. We also obtained information about the origin of  
209 the farm breeders or year of birth from the farm databases when available (Supplementary  
210 Dataset S1), which indicated that the breeding stock consisted of original founder and captive  
211  $F_1$  individuals. Based on this background data, we identified three sample groups within the  
212 farm breeding stock, as they represent different stages of the reintroduction: founders, C1995  
213 and multicohort  $F_1$  breeders ( $MCF_1$ ). The group 'Founders' includes individuals known to  
214 belong to the original stock and to come from distinct populations (N=25). The group 'C1995'  
215 consists of  $F_1$  individuals born in the farm in 1995 and kept to increase the number of breeders  
216 after hurricane Michelle (N=189). The group ' $MCF_1$ ' (Multicohort  $F_1$  breeders ) are  $F_1$  females  
217 born from 1986 up to 2002 and used for routine replacement of the original founder stock in  
218 order to maintain management census sizes (N=43). These two  $F_1$  groups were considered  
219 separately because they are the result of two different management strategies (a single large  
220 replacement, the first, *versus* continuous small replacements, the latter).

221 The DNA of all samples was extracted using the QIAamp Blood and Tissue Kit (Qiagen®) or

222 using E.Z.N.A.<sup>®</sup> Tissue DNA kit (OMEGA Bio-tek), following the manufacturer protocols. DNA  
223 was suspended in 100  $\mu$ L of deionized water.

224

#### 225 *Laboratory analysis*

226 All samples were genotyped at 13 microsatellite loci, originally designed for different species  
227 of sea turtles that amplify and are polymorphic in green turtles (Wright et al., 2012).

228 Additionally, we sequenced an 800bp fragment of the mtDNA D-Loop region (Abreu-Grobois  
229 et al., 2006) and four (AT)<sub>n</sub> mtDNA STRs (Tikochinski et al., 2012) in all wild individuals and a

230 selection of the farm animals. The selection of farm samples was based on the known origin  
231 of the animals coupled with our microsatellite results, in order to characterize the founder

232 stock and to confirm parentage assignments (see results). Amplification PCR conditions for  
233 each marker are in Supplementary Table S4.

234

235 One of the primers for each microsatellite (Supplementary Table S5) was labeled with a  
236 fluorescent dye (6-FAM, HEX or NED). Microsatellite loci were amplified with two multiplex

237 PCR sets as described in the literature (Wright et al., 2012) and carried out with a GenAmp  
238 PCR System 2700 (Applied Biosystems<sup>®</sup>). Each multiplex was amplified in a final volume of 5

239  $\mu$ L, with 2.5  $\mu$ L of Multiplex PCR Master Mix (Qiagen<sup>®</sup>), 1.5  $\mu$ L of primer mix (as detailed in the  
240 Supplementary Material in Bradshaw et al. 2018) and 1  $\mu$ L of DNA. After amplification, 15  $\mu$ L

241 of ultrapure H<sub>2</sub>O Ecolab were added in each reaction tube and amplification success assessed  
242 in an agarose gel. Microsatellite allele sizes were estimated in 2  $\mu$ L of diluted amplified DNA,

243 0.5  $\mu$ L of GeneScan<sup>™</sup> 500 Liz Size standard (Applied Biosystems) and 12.5  $\mu$ L of deionized  
244 formamide on an ABI 3730 DNA Analyzer (Applied Biosystems) at the Serveis Científic-Tècnics

245 of the Universitat de Barcelona, and alleles assigned using GeneMapper® software (version  
246 3.7, Applied Biosystems). In order to check for genotyping errors 27 samples were randomly  
247 selected and genotyped twice, resulting in a genotyping error < 0.2%.

248

249 Mitochondrial D-Loop sequences (800 bp long) were amplified in 142 individuals  
250 (Supplementary Dataset S1). The final reaction volume was 15 µL containing 5.08 µL of  
251 deionized water, 3 µL of PCR buffer 5x (GoTaq® Promega), 1.8 µL of dNTPs (1mM), 0.6 µL of  
252 MgCl<sub>2</sub> (25mM), 1.8 µL of BSA, 0.3 µL of forward primer (10 µM), 0.3 µL of reverse primer (10  
253 µM), 0.12 µL of GoTaq® G2 Flexi DNA Polymerase (Promega 5u/µL), and 2 µL of DNA.  
254 Mitochondrial STRs amplifications were conducted for the same individuals (Supplementary  
255 Dataset S1). The final reaction volume was 15 µL, with 5.48 µL of deionized water, 3 µL of PCR  
256 buffer 5x (GoTaq® Promega), 1.8 µL of dNTPs (1mM), 0.6 µL of MgCl<sub>2</sub> (50mM), 1 µL of forward  
257 primer (10 µM), 1 µL of reverse primer (10 µM), 0.12 µL of GoTaq® G2 Flexi DNA Polymerase  
258 (Promega 5u/µL), and 2 µL of DNA. The amplified DNAs (3 µL) of both mtDNA markers were  
259 purified with Exo-SAP (2 µL containing 0.4u of EXO and 0.4u of TSAP) using a single cycle of  
260 37°C for 15 min and 80°C for 15 min. Then, 1 µL (5 µM) of the corresponding forward primer  
261 was added to the purified product (LCM15382 for D-loop and CM-D-1 for STRs) and dried at  
262 80°C for 30 min in order to be sequenced on an ABI 3730 automated DNA analyzer (Applied  
263 Biosystems) at the Serveis Científico-Tècnics from Universitat de Barcelona.

264

#### 265 *Data analysis: Microsatellites*

266 We checked for null alleles using the program MICRO-CHECKER (Van Oosterhout, Hutchinson,  
267 Wills & Shipley, 2004). Pairwise linkage disequilibrium and deviation from Hardy-Weinberg

268 equilibrium were assessed using GENEPOP v4.3 software (Raymond & Rousset, 2004). In order  
269 to correct for multiple comparisons, we used the Benjamini-Yekutieli (B-Y) FDR (False  
270 Discovery Rate) correction (Narum, 2006). To test for inbreeding through observed ( $H_o$ ) and  
271 expected ( $H_e$ ) heterozygosity we used GENETIX v4.05.2 (Belkhir, Borsa, Chikhi, Raufaste &  
272 Bonhomme, 2004) software on all groups of individuals. Allelic richness was computed with  
273 rarefaction using R package DiveRsity (Keenan, McGinnity, Cross, Crozier, & Prodöhl, 2013).  
274 Pairwise genetic distances ( $F_{ST}$ ) among our groups were calculated using GENALEX 6.503  
275 (Peakall & Smouse, 2012). We used the same program to calculate the relatedness estimator  
276 of Lynch and Ritland (1999) among individuals within each group. Since we are analyzing  
277 samples with potentially very distinct origin, we estimated relatedness values for each subset  
278 separately based on the allele frequencies obtained within the subset. We also tested if  
279 relatedness values for each subset significantly deviate from those randomly obtained by 9999  
280 permutations, as implemented in GENALEX 6.503 (Peakall & Smouse, 2012). For this last  
281 analysis we considered all the samples together to calculate baseline allele frequencies.

282

283 We identified the most probable number of genetic groups among the founder individuals of  
284 the captive stock, since they could come from geographic distant areas, while the rest of  
285 samples from the breeding stock belongs to the  $F_1$  of the captive breeding and therefore are  
286 the result of a mix of genetic material. We used the software STRUCTURE v2.3.4 (Pritchard,  
287 Stephens, & Donnelly, 2000) and performed 10 repetitions of each independent K value from  
288 1 to 10; burn-in length was set to 50,000 with 500,000 Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC). To  
289 select the best K we calculated the log probability of the data with STRUCTURE HARVESTER  
290 (Earl, 2012).

291 We conducted sibship and maternity analysis using three different programs based on  
292 maximum-likelihood: COLONY v2.3 (Jones & Wang, 2010), CERVUS v3.0.7 (Marshall, Slate,  
293 Kruuk & Pemberton, 1998) and ML-Relate (Kalinowski, Wagner & Taper, 2006). COLONY  
294 performs parentage assignment, sibship analysis and reconstructs genotypes of unsampled  
295 parents. COLONY also generates the best cluster in which the program infers unsampled  
296 mothers and fathers and allows forming family groups. We set the parameters to long run,  
297 high precision and error rate = 0.0001. All individuals were included as offspring and  
298 motherhood input data. To refine the analysis and to minimize the error we excluded as  
299 mothers all wild individuals, as they could not have sired any of the farm individuals, and all  
300 captive individuals born in 1995 (cohort C1995) or later, according to the information provided  
301 by the CTF (Supplementary Dataset S1), as they would be too young to be mothers of the  
302 other breeding females. CERVUS performs parentage analysis using strict confidence level set  
303 at 95%. ML-Relate estimates the relationship among individuals from codominant genetic  
304 data. We computed the log-likelihood of relatedness for all pairs of individuals and produced  
305 a confident interval of 95% after 999 simulations per test. The outputs of the three programs  
306 were then combined to identify for maternity and sibship relationships in our sample set.  
307 Maternity outputs of CERVUS and COLONY were also compared using PedAgree (v1.06),  
308 software which can be used to assess accuracy and congruence for genetically reconstructed  
309 pedigree relationships from these two programs (Coombs, Letcher & Nislow, 2010).

310

### 311 *Data Analysis: Mitochondrial DNA*

312 D-Loop sequences were aligned, cut and compared with published haplotype sequences  
313 found in the database maintained by the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research

314 (<http://accstr.ufl.edu/>) using BioEdit software (Hall, 1999). STRs were scored by counting the  
315 number of (AT)<sub>n</sub> repeats in each of the 4 loci of the sequence described in the literature and  
316 haplotypes named using the four-number barcoding system (Tikochinski et al., 2012). MEGA7  
317 software (Kumar, Stecher & Tamura, 2016) was used to create a Neighbor-Joining tree (Saitou  
318 & Nei, 1987) to identify the phylogeny of D-Loop haplotypes by maximum likelihood (Tamura,  
319 Nei & Kumar, 2004) with 999 bootstrap replicates. The tree was rooted in the middle of the  
320 longest branch. We also created a haplotype network using Median Joining calculation  
321 (Bandelt, Forster & Röhl, 1999) as implemented in NETWORK 5.0 software ([www.fluxus-](http://www.fluxus-engineering.com)  
322 [engineering.com](http://www.fluxus-engineering.com)). Each D-Loop haplotype was assigned to a lineage by comparison to the  
323 lineages identified by Naro-Maciel et al. (2014). We calculated haplotype and nucleotide  
324 diversity for wild and captive individuals separately using Arlequin 3.5 (Excoffier & Lischer,  
325 2010) and DnaSP v5 (Librado & Rozas, 2009). Both D-loop and STR sequences were also used  
326 to confirm maternal assignments resulting from microsatellite analysis. Using D-loop  
327 sequences we performed analysis of wild and captive populations compared to other wild  
328 populations of the Caribbean (Shamblin et al., 2015a), African (Patrício et al., 2017; Shamblin  
329 et al., 2015b) and Mediterranean (Bradshaw *et al.* 2018) regions. Incorporating D-loop  
330 sequences from these populations, we tested for genetic structuring ( $F_{ST}$ ) and genetic diversity.

331  
332 We performed Mixed-Stock analysis (MSA) of the Founders subset against a baseline of  
333 rookeries with short (400bp) D-loop sequences, consisting of North Caribbean, South  
334 Caribbean and South Atlantic populations (23 populations in total). We used short sequences  
335 to be able to include data from populations of known origin of the founders according to CTF  
336 background records. We used BAYES program (Pella & Masuda, 2001), with 40,000 MCMC

337 runs for each potentially contributing nesting site with prior expectations of 0.978 for a  
338 particular nesting site and 0.001 for the twenty-two other nesting sites. Lack of convergence  
339 was assessed with the shrink factor of Gelman & Rubin (1992). The contribution of each  
340 rookery to the founder group was estimated from the mean of chains after 20,000 burn-in  
341 steps.

342

343 The results of both mitochondrial DNA and microsatellite analysis of wild and captive were  
344 used together to define the farm population structure. For this purpose, we combined D-Loop  
345 and STRs in a haplotypic system as in Shamblin et al. 2015b to perform  $F_{ST}$  tests among all  
346 groups.



## 347 **Results**

### 348 *Genetic Diversity*

349 All 314 individuals were genotyped with the 13 microsatellite markers showing a number of  
350 alleles ranging from 6 (B123) to 23 (Cc2) (Supplementary Table S5). Four markers were found  
351 to be in Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium, one (D2) was not at equilibrium in both groups, and the  
352 remaining eight yielded different results depending on the sample group considered. However,  
353 we decided not to discard any of the markers due to being out of Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium  
354 for two reasons. Firstly, previous studies concluded that none of these markers deviate from  
355 Hardy-Weinberg Equilibrium in other wild populations (Bradshaw et al., 2018; Wright et al.,  
356 2012), suggesting that the detected deviations are not due to the properties of the marker.  
357 Secondly, these deviations are expected to be found both in the captive individuals,  
358 considering the process of founding from different natural populations, and in the wild  
359 population, due to the reintroduction process. Furthermore, analyses were run without these  
360 markers and the results did not change substantially. Expected heterozygosity ( $H_e$ ) decreased  
361 from founders to C1995 and from C1995 to wild individuals (Table 1), although differences  
362 were not significant as assessed with a Wilcoxon matched pairs test. Mean observed  
363 heterozygosity ( $H_o$ ) had its highest value on individuals in cohort C1995 although differences  
364 were not significant. We obtained a total of 17 D-Loop haplotypes (Figure 2, Supplementary  
365 Table S6). All but one had been previously described in populations in the Caribbean Sea,  
366 South America, South Atlantic (Ascension Island (Formia et al., 2006)) and Africa (Shamblin et  
367 al., 2015a; Shamblin et al., 2015b). The haplotypes found in our samples belonged to different  
368 lineages as defined in the literature (Naro-Maciel et al., 2014): most haplotypes belonged to  
369 the A lineage (84%), which is typically found in the Caribbean, while the rest belonged to

370 lineage B (Figure 2) typically found in South America, South Atlantic, and Africa (Shamblin et  
371 al., 2015a; Shamblin et al., 2015b; Patricio et al., 2017). CM-A5.1 is the only haplotype of  
372 lineage B found shared by both the captive and wild populations; however, this haplotype is  
373 not exclusive of the South Atlantic region and can be found in other wild populations of the  
374 Caribbean region (Naro-Maciel et al., 2014). The new haplotype (CM-A78.1) (Genbank  
375 Accession Number: MH177873) belongs to Lineage A (Figure 2). Haplotype diversity (H) and  
376 nucleotide diversity ( $\pi$ ) decreased from the founder generation to cohort 1995 and to wild  
377 females (Table 1). We found 23 different STR haplotypes, with the highest haplotype diversity  
378 in the founder generation. When considering the two mitochondrial markers together, 32  
379 haplotypes were obtained (Supplementary Table S6), also with the highest diversity in the  
380 founder generation (Table 1).

381

#### 382 *Relatedness reconstruction among wild and captive individuals*

383 Individuals of the original founder stock (N=25) showed the lowest degree of relatedness ( $r=-$   
384 0.021), while the cohort 1995 (N=189) showed the highest value ( $r=-0.003$ , Table 1). Only  
385 C1995 presented relatedness values significantly higher than those expected considering the  
386 permutation analysis ( $p = 0.0001$ ).

387 COLONY identified a total of 82 mothers and 54 fathers (both assigned and inferred),  
388 differentially contributing to  $F_1$  generation (Supplementary Figure S1), while almost all  
389 founder individuals were sired by different males and females. Mother/father sex ratio  
390 proportions for parents assigned to each subset increasing from Founders (sex ratio = 0.96),  
391 to  $MCF_1$  (sex ratio = 1.25) to C1995 (sex ratio = 1.52). The proportion offspring/mother  
392 (Founders = 1.05,  $MCF_1$  = 1.22 and C1995 = 2.82) and offspring/father increased in the same

393 way, in accordance with the increase of relatedness levels in each group. A total of 43 mothers  
394 and 34 fathers were identified for wild females with a sex ratio similar to MCF<sub>1</sub> individuals (sex  
395 ratio = 1.26).

396 COLONY identified 40 parent-offspring pairs comprised of 7 mothers of the captive breeding  
397 stock and 36 captive offspring plus 4 wild offspring. ML-Relate found 45 parent-offspring pairs  
398 comprised of 27 mothers of the captive breeding stock and 33 captive offspring plus 12 wild  
399 offspring. Finally, CERVUS assigned a possible mother to each one of the offspring in the  
400 sample set, so we only considered the pairs involving a mother already found in at least one  
401 of the other two programs as an additional support of the results. Sibship relationships were  
402 assigned prioritizing the following order: Parent-Offspring, Full-Siblings, Half-Siblings and  
403 Unrelated. The comparison of the three programs found a total of 17 mothers and 41 offspring,  
404 of which 7 individuals were wild and 34 were from the farm (Figure 3). Of the identified  
405 mothers, 12 were parents of captive offspring only, 2 were parents of wild offspring only and  
406 3 were parents of both farm and wild offspring. Only 13.2% of farm individuals were assigned  
407 to a captive mother. Six wild individuals were full-siblings of one or more captive individuals  
408 as estimated using two programs. All Parent-Offspring and Full-Siblings relationships between  
409 a wild and a captive individual were consistent with D-loop and STR haplotypes  
410 (Supplementary table S7). A total of 90% of the wild individuals were found to be related to  
411 the farm by at least two of the three programs used, either as offspring or as sibling (Figure  
412 4).

413

#### 414 *Population differentiation*

415 Pairwise  $F_{ST}$  values from microsatellite data identified significant genetic differentiation

416 between wild and two farm subsets (Founders and C1995) and also between these two  
417 subsets (Table 2). However, pairwise  $F_{ST}$  analysis based on the combination of both mtDNA  
418 markers, D-loop and STR sequences, did not show any significant differentiation.

419 Moreover, based on published D-loop sequence data from other wild populations of the  
420 Caribbean, South Atlantic, and Mediterranean Sea (Supplementary table S8), we found  
421 significant genetic differentiation of both wild and farm Cayman populations to all the other  
422 populations of the Atlantic and Mediterranean with two exceptions within the Caribbean  
423 (Supplementary Table S9). Dry Tortugas (DRT) is similar to the farm and wild Cayman Island  
424 turtles and Tequesta (TEQ) is similar to wild only, but in both cases the sample size of previous  
425 studies was scarce and several haplotypes present in both farm and wild Cayman Island turtles  
426 are absent in DRT and TEQ. Moreover, we found that all Cayman Island sampling groups have  
427 high haplotype diversity when compared to the other wild populations of the Caribbean, the  
428 South Atlantic, and the Mediterranean Sea (Supplementary Figure S2). The Mixed Stock  
429 Analysis on the Foundes subset identified that the highest contributions were from Cuba  
430 (22.74%), Singer Island, Florida (USA) (14.2%), Mexico (11.76%) and Aves Island, Venezuela  
431 (11.76%) (Figure 5). This result is consistent with the known contributions to the founder  
432 stock, which are limited to 5 nesting locations and the foraging area of Nicaragua, potentially  
433 hosting individuals from all the Caribbean (Figure 1). On the other hand, only one genetic  
434 group was identified by bayesian clustering using STRUCTURE (Supplementary Figure S3).

435

436

## 437 **Discussion**

438

439 Biodiversity loss has become a major problem on a global scale and *ex-situ* conservation  
440 programs are a useful tool to preserve biodiversity in a wide range of taxa (Barnosky et al.,  
441 2011). It has been estimated that in the next 200 years between 4000 and 6000 species of  
442 terrestrial vertebrates will require captive breeding and reintroduction to avoid extinction  
443 (Frankham, Ballou & Briscoe, 2010). *Ex-situ* conservation actions require a scientifically  
444 informed management strategy throughout the different stages of the process, to establish  
445 self-sustained wild populations following the reintroduction. In this study, we have combined  
446 the potential of genetic analysis with background information of captive individuals across  
447 different generations, to demonstrate how the Cayman Island's reintroduction program has  
448 contributed to restore the wild population. We have also shown how the different farm  
449 management strategies have conditioned the genetic composition of the breeding stock with  
450 added genetic value for the continuous small replacements of breeders.

451

### 452 *Farm structure*

453 When the CTF was founded, eggs and adults from different populations in the Caribbean Sea  
454 and the South Atlantic Ocean were taken to the farm to divide the impact of the removal of  
455 individuals among different populations (Cayman Turtle Farm, 2002). However, this strategy  
456 had an additional unexpected effect, because later studies demonstrated the profound  
457 genetic structuring among Atlantic nesting beaches (Naro-Maciel et al., 2014 and references  
458 therein). Farm haplotypes belong in fact to both lineage A and lineage B, described in Naro-  
459 Maciel et al. 2014 from the Caribbean and from the South Atlantic/Africa region respectively,

460 consistent with the reported origin of the founder stock.

461 The founder stock was thus characterized by high initial diversity coupled with an expected  
462 low relatedness among the individuals. However, the breeding stock suffered a reduction in  
463 October 2001 due to Hurricane Michelle when it was reduced from 355 to 87 adult individuals,  
464 only 34 belonging to the initial founder stock. Individuals born on the farm, mainly from the  
465 cohort 1995, were kept for breeding purposes in order to increase the size of the breeding  
466 stock after the hurricane, representing now the 72.9% of the present captive breeding stock.  
467 The high percentage of  $F_1$  breeders not assigned to any of the current founder females, (80.2 %)   
468 shows the contribution of the adult turtles lost in the hurricane or in previous management  
469 actions. Thus,  $F_1$  breeders remain a potentially valuable source of diversity to the wild  
470 population.

471

472 The reduction of the breeding stock caused by the hurricane and the subsequent use of a large  
473 number of individuals (189) of one cohort (C1995) in the breeding stock, reduced the farm  
474 genetic variability at nuclear and mitochondrial markers. Moreover, this management  
475 strategy has increased the degree of genetic relatedness within farm individuals (Table 1) due  
476 to the higher proportion of breeders sired by the same parents when using this many  
477 individuals from a single generation. In contrast, the levels of variability of the  $MCF_1$  group are  
478 higher, with no signals of inbreeding and lower relatedness values. This suggests that  
479 continuous small replacements of the breeding stock using individuals from different cohorts  
480 is a better strategy to maintain diversity, when possible. In any case, the loss of variability and  
481 increased relatedness are expected consequences of any captive breeding program due to  
482 genetic drift, especially those lacking genetic management (Ralls & Ballou, 1986; Witzemberger

483 & Hochkirch, 2011). Furthermore, the higher observed ( $H_o$ ) than expected ( $H_e$ ) heterozygosity  
484 in C1995 and the  $MCF_1$  fits the expected outcome when individuals from different populations  
485 reproduce (Witzenberger & Hochkirch, 2011), as their parents belong to the original founder  
486 stock. The observed variations in diversity provide valuable knowledge for future  
487 management actions in the farm, for instance, while deciding which individuals to keep for  
488 the breeding stock or as a basis for a directed reproduction program. The correct management  
489 of captive stock meant for reintroduction is a critical point for any ex-situ program, since the  
490 selection of captive breeders will reflect in the future wild reintroduced population. For this  
491 reason, the genetic balance of the captive stock has to be taken under consideration not only  
492 at the beginning, but also throughout the whole project to ensure a genetic combination as  
493 optimal as possible.

494

#### 495 *Relationship with the wild population*

496 During the past 40 years, the CTF has been releasing hatchling and yearling turtles following  
497 the headstarting method in order to avoid the high rates of mortality during their early life  
498 stages (Bell et al., 2005). Although in the 1980s several studies declared the former wild  
499 population extinct (King, 1982; Stoddart, 1980), the Cayman Islands currently hosts a nesting  
500 population. Fifty-seven of these nesting females were captured and sampled, but ongoing  
501 tagging studies suggest that there are around 100-150 nesting females (ongoing data  
502 collection). Our sibship reconstruction showed that the farm had a significant contribution to  
503 the wild population since 90% of the wild nesting females in Grand Cayman are offspring, full-  
504 or half-siblings of female captive breeders. Consequently, most mothers and fathers (assigned  
505 or inferred by the program) of wild breeding females were either permanently captive in the

506 farm or escaped from the captive breeding stock (Supplementary Table S10). The contribution  
507 of the farm to the wild population should be considered a minimum, since potential captive  
508 parents for the wild breeders and current wild nesters might be part of the farm breeding  
509 stock lost in 2001. Furthermore, the contribution of the younger breeders has not yet shown  
510 its impact on the population, due to marine turtles' long life cycle as the released individuals  
511 may need between 15 and 19 years to reach maturity, depending on stage of release.

512

513 Considering the large number of related individuals detected among captive and wild  
514 populations it is not surprising to find no significant differences in haplotype frequencies even  
515 for the two mitochondrial markers combined. The two groups share the highly frequent CM-  
516 A3.1\_6-8-4-4 (30%), but also some rare haplotypes, such as CM-A13.1\_5-7-7-4 (<5%) and CM-  
517 A27.1\_5-9-4-4 (<5%), which further reinforces the relatedness between captive and wild  
518 populations. On the contrary, microsatellites show significant differences between wild and  
519 two farm subsets, C1995 and founders, which could be due to the contribution of males to  
520 nuclear markers. For this reason, although the success of the reintroduction has already been  
521 determined by the outcome of the present analysis, the genotyping of male individuals or the  
522 reconstruction of male genotypes (Wright et al., 2012; Phillips, Mortimer, Jolliffe, Jorgensen,  
523 & Richardson, 2014) could refine the actual contribution of the farm to the wild population.

524

525 Due to the lack of historical samples of the original wild Cayman nesting population for genetic  
526 analysis, it is not possible to know the extent of the impact of the farm reintroduction program  
527 on it but our results indicate two possible scenarios. On one hand, the original wild population  
528 could have been completely replaced by captive individuals and thus the 10% of unrelated



529 wild individuals could be some of the captive individuals lost in 2001 during the hurricane  
530 Michelle or their descendants or siblings. As evidence, the four South Atlantic exclusive  
531 haplotypes in the wild population are found in individuals related to the farm as full- or half-  
532 siblings. Therefore, these haplotypes may have been inherited from captive individuals not  
533 present in our breeding sample. In fact, the possible escape of captive individuals caused by  
534 the hurricane could be considered an accidental reintroduction. On the other hand, the few  
535 wild females with no relationship with captive turtles could be the remains of the original wild  
536 population. In fact, these non-related individuals presented haplotypes typically found in  
537 other Caribbean populations. In the context of a captive breeding or reintroduction program,  
538 these scenarios highlight the importance of collecting samples from wild individuals of a  
539 population on the edge of extinction, whenever possible. In fact, the gathering of original wild  
540 samples would facilitate the identification of original and reintroduced individuals of the  
541 future recovered population, resulting in more accurate management decisions.

542

#### 543 *Comparison with other natural populations*

544 Any reintroduction program is usually associated with a decrease in genetic diversity due to  
545 the reduced size of the captive stock and to the maintenance of the captive population that  
546 may lead to major problems caused by inbreeding depression (Edmands, 2007; Witzemberger  
547 & Hochkirch, 2011). Although in 1980 the number of farm founder breeders (208) doubled the  
548 optimum suggested by Witzemberger and Hochkirch (2011) to avoid inbreeding and loss of  
549 genetic diversity, the subsequent deaths in captivity and escapes as a result of the hurricane  
550 caused a drop in the number of founders, potentially increasing the risk of inbreeding  
551 depression. On the other hand, the different origins of these individuals might trigger the loss

552 of individual fitness due to outbreeding, as a result of negative interpopulation hybridization  
553 (Edmands, 2007). Using Mixed-Stock Analysis we showed that the present founder stock still  
554 includes individuals from the North Caribbean region (Mexico, Costa Rica and Nicaragua) and  
555 the South Caribbean region (Guyana and Suriname) but the contribution of the south Atlantic  
556 region (Ascension) remains undetected (Figure 5). However we found the African haplotypes  
557 CM-A8.1 and CM-A42.1 in the C1995 subset. The haplotype CM-A8.1 is the most abundant in  
558 Ascension Island (Naro-Maciel et al., 2014), one of the source populations of the founder stock.  
559 The haplotype CM-A42.1 is exclusive from Poilao (Patricio et al., 2017) where it coexists at low  
560 frequency with CM-A8.1. As the populations of Poilao and Ascension are genetically similar  
561 (Patricio et al., 2017), finding the CM-A42.1 haplotype in the farm would imply that this  
562 haplotype is also found in Ascension Island but yet has to be discovered. Considering that after  
563 the hurricane catastrophe only 28 founder females out of 148 survived, this reduction  
564 probably resulted in a potential extensive loss of haplotypes in the founder stock but that  
565 were transmitted to the  $F_1$  and potentially also to the reintroduced individuals  
566 (Supplementary Table S3). Therefore, the former founder stock could have presented African  
567 and south Atlantic haplotypes, now not detected in the founders, that could be found in the  
568 future in wild breeders if admixture does not compromise their fitness.

569

570 The levels of variability of mtDNA D-Loop found in captive and wild females are similar or  
571 higher when compared to other populations of green turtles from the Atlantic Ocean or the  
572 Mediterranean Sea analyzed in other studies (Figure 5). The explanation of the high diversity  
573 found in the CTF may rely on the great number and high diversity of origins of the farm  
574 breeders' founder stock. This diverse origin can be easily detected by an increase of the

575 observed heterozygosity on the individuals that resulted from the admixture of the founders  
576 (MCF<sub>1</sub> and C1995); any offspring from parents of different origin are much more likely to have  
577 high levels of heterozygosity, due to the parents not sharing common alleles. However,  $F_{IS}$   
578 values of wild Cayman females are positive and significant despite their high relatedness to  
579 the farm. The admixture of individuals from genetically differentiated units can affect the  
580 fitness and reproductive capacity of the offspring because of outbreeding depression (Weeks  
581 et al., 2011), by disrupting fine-scale local adaptation or epistatic interactions (Weber et al.,  
582 2012). Tentative evidence has been proposed for such an inbreeding-outbreeding tension in  
583 an Indian Ocean population of hawksbill turtles (Phillips, Jorgensen, Jolliffe & Richardson,  
584 2017). In the case of the Cayman Islands, both admixed breeding farm females and sampled  
585 wild females seem to be fully capable of reproduction, suggesting that outbreeding depression  
586 is not likely to be relevant. Nonetheless, the monitoring of diversity along with the study of  
587 the reproductive success of the wild population, as well as the farm, is extremely important,  
588 in order to evaluate any long-term impact on natural populations. Monitoring studies rarely  
589 evaluate reintroduction effects of  $F_2$  or  $F_3$  generations, despite some of the negative effects  
590 of outbreeding may appear in late generations (Edmands, 2007). For instance, a study on  
591 artificially translocated pink salmon has detected outbreeding depression in  $F_2$  hybrids  
592 resulting from spatially separated populations (Gilk et al., 2004). For these reasons, when  
593 forming a founder stock for captive breeding, although the gathering of individuals from  
594 distinct genetic populations is a solid concept, the genetic composition of the populations  
595 should be previously tested to minimize the risk of outbreeding depression. Therefore, a  
596 continuous genetic monitoring of wild Cayman nesting events (including fertility and  
597 variability records) would be crucial to investigate fitness consequences after different genetic

598 groups have mixed (Edmands 2007).

599

600 *Concluding remarks*

601 In this study, we have shown that the reintroduction program of green turtles in the Cayman  
602 Islands has greatly impacted the recovery of the wild population since 90% of the wild  
603 population is related to the turtles in the farm. This reintroduction has been fueled by a high  
604 genetic diversity due to the diverse origin of the founders used to start the captive population.  
605 Considering these results, we suggest to scientifically control the future mating of the captive  
606 breeding stock to avoid outbreeding or inbreeding in the captive population while recording  
607 fitness values of fecundity and survival. The success of the reintroduction program opens new  
608 challenges for the future management of the wild population. Further monitoring should  
609 assess whether the recovered population is self-sustainable and is essential to detect and  
610 prevent eventual negative impacts on natural populations of the Caribbean. This monitoring  
611 is necessary because in species with long life cycles, such as green turtles, potential shifts in  
612 fitness could only be detected in the long term. In this study, we evaluated a reintroduction  
613 program 40 years after its implementation. However, the ideal scenario for any reintroduction  
614 program would be to incorporate genetic studies from the beginning. Future captive breeding  
615 programs with reintroduction purposes can benefit from following a few recommendations  
616 that arise from this study. Firstly, founder stock individuals should be collected from the  
617 genetic region of reintroduction, to avoid the mixing of unrelated genetic groups and the risk  
618 of outbreeding. Secondly, genetic pedigrees could be used to program appropriate breeding  
619 strategies to maintain genetic diversity, minimize inbreeding in the captive stock and select  
620 individuals for the reintroduction. Finally, a temporal monitoring of the wild population should

621 be performed including information regarding its status prior the reintroduction. Scientifically  
622 informed *ex-situ* conservation actions might have higher chances of success in the recovery of  
623 endangered species.  
624

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1040 **Data accessibility**

1041 A list of all the sampled individuals that includes the sample code, population (farm or wild),

1042 mtDNA haplotype, STR repeats and microsatellite genotypes is available as Supplementary

1043 Dataset S1.



1044 **Author contributions**

1045 *BG, ACB, CC, MP, and JMB conceived and designed the study. WM sampled all of the Cayman*  
1046 *Turtle Farm (CTF) breeders and provided data from the CTF databases. GEP, JMB, LC, and JB*  
1047 *coordinated the sampling of the wild nesting females. AB, CM, VO, and CC did the laboratory*  
1048 *analysis. AB, CM, CC, and MP conducted the data analysis with inputs from ACB, BG, and JMB.*  
1049 *AB, CC, VO, and MP wrote the manuscript with input all of the authors.*

1050

1051 **Tables**

1052

1053 **Table 1.** Genetic diversity values of each sample subset. The farm breeding stock was  
 1054 subdivided into Founders (from the original founder stock), MCF<sub>1</sub> (individuals of the breeding  
 1055 stock born at the Cayman Turtle Farm) and C1995 (individuals born in 1995 at the Cayman  
 1056 Turtle Farm). The table shows number of samples used with each marker (N), allelic richness  
 1057 (Ar), expected ( $H_e$ ) and observed ( $H_o$ ) heterozygosities, degree of relatedness (Rel) (values  
 1058 significantly higher than those obtained by random permutations are marked with #),  
 1059 inbreeding coefficient ( $F_{IS}$ ) (values significant for Hardy Weinberg disequilibrium are marked  
 1060 with \*), number of haplotypes (Haplo), haplotype diversity (H) and nucleotide diversity ( $\pi$ ).  
 1061 For microsatellite values, standard errors are specified in brackets.  
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		FARM			WILD
		Founders	C1995	MCF <sub>1</sub>	
<b>Microsatellites</b>	<b>N</b>	25	189	43	57
	<b>Ar</b>	8.538 (0.592)	7.644 (0.181)	7.885 (0.369)	7.821 (0.399)
	<b>He</b>	0.717 (0.037)	0.702 (0.034)	0.719 (0.029)	0.693 (0.042)
	<b>Ho</b>	0.681 (0.04)	0.72 (0.038)	0.751 (0.038)	0.664 (0.046)
	<b>Rel</b>	-0.021 (0.0023)	-0.003# (0.0004)	-0.012 (0.0018)	-0.009 (0.0016)
	<b>F<sub>IS</sub></b>	0.05*	-0.025*	-0.042	0.045*
	<b>MtDNA</b>	<b>N</b>	25	41	19
<b>D-Loop</b>	<b>Haplo</b>	8	8	7	12
	<b>H</b>	0.703	0.578	0.602	0.573
	<b><math>\pi</math></b>	0.0069	0.0038	0.0043	0.0039
<b>STRs</b>	<b>Haplo</b>	10	13	9	16
	<b>H</b>	0.877	0.806	0.848	0.814
<b>D-Loop + STRs</b>	<b>Haplo</b>	13	16	11	19
	<b>H</b>	0.703	0.578	0.602	0.573

1072 **Table 2.** Pairwise  $F_{ST}$  values among the wild population and the different groups of the farm.  
 1073 Microsatellite results are shown below the diagonal and the results of the combination of D-  
 1074 loop and STR markers are shown above the diagonal. The values in bold are significantly  
 1075 different after FDR correction ( $FDR_{0.05} = 0.020$ ).  
 1076

	Wild	Founders	C1995	MCF <sub>1</sub>
1077 Wild	0	-0.0075	-0.0001	-0.0114
1078 Founders	<b>0.012</b>	0	-0.0049	-0.0156
1079 C1995	<b>0.005</b>	<b>0.015</b>	0	-0.0035
1080 MCF <sub>1</sub>	0.007	0.033	-0.017	0

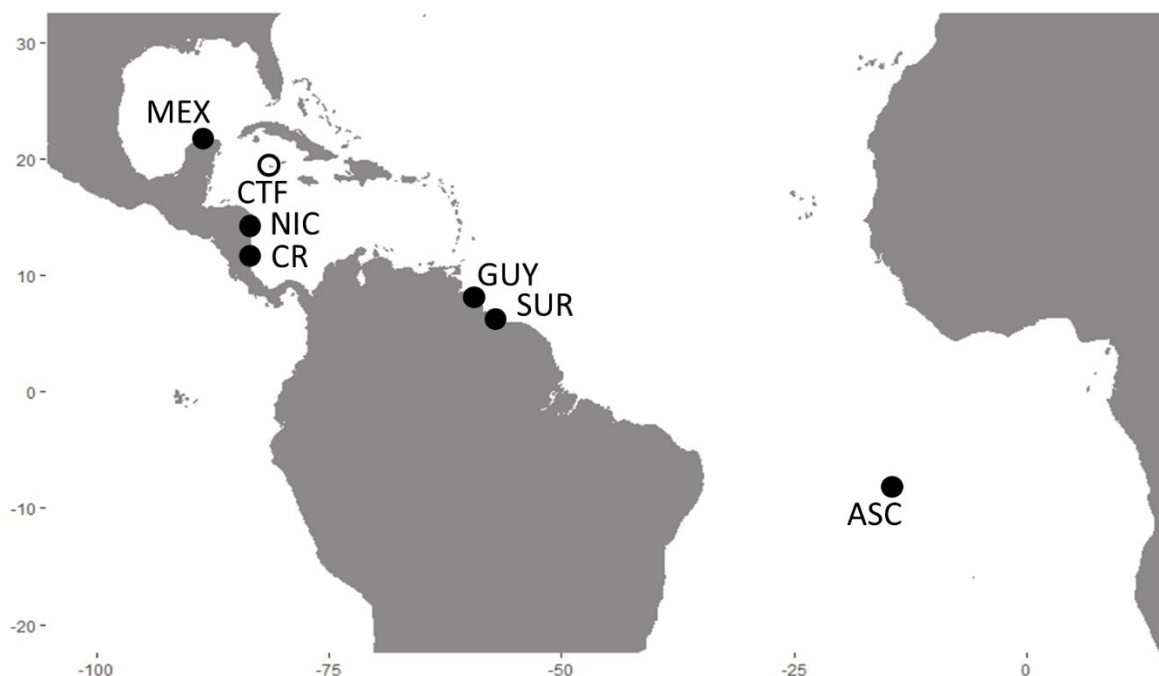
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1084 **Figures**

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1087 **Figure 1.** Map of founders of the Cayman Turtle Farm (CTF). Wild adult turtles and eggs were  
1088 taken from populations in Mexico (MEX), Costa Rica (CR), Guyana (GUY), Suriname (SUR) and  
1089 Ascension Island (ASC) and from the foraging area of Nicaragua (NIC) (for details on adults and  
1090 eggs see Supplementary Table S1 and S2). Locations of founder's origin are marked with black  
1091 circles and the Cayman Turtle Farm is marked with an empty circle.

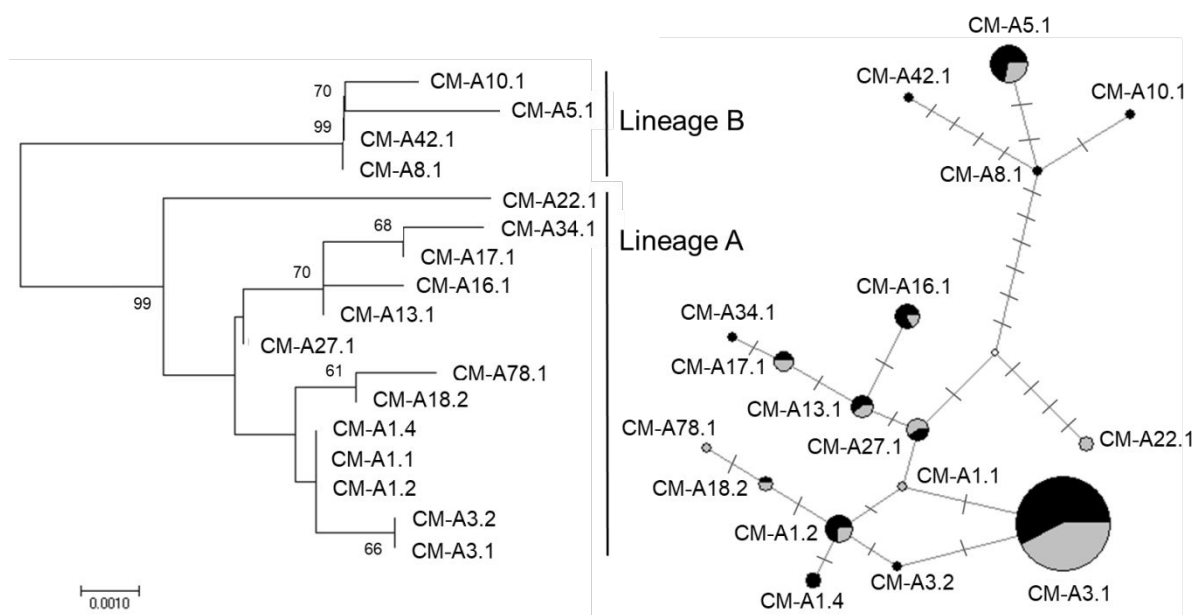
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1099 **Figure 2.** Genetic relationships between the haplotypes found in the farm and wild samples of  
 1100 the Cayman Islands. Left: Neighbor-Joining haplotype tree, middle-rooted at the longest  
 1101 branch, indicating maximum likelihood bootstrap values higher than 60%. Top branch  
 1102 represents lineage B, and bottom branch represents lineage A. The new haplotype found (CM-  
 1103 A78.1) belongs to lineage A. Right haplotype network of the individuals of the Cayman Islands.  
 1104 Connecting lines show single mutational changes between haplotypes. The red dot represents  
 1105 an unsampled intermediate haplotype connecting sampled haplotypes. The size of the pies  
 1106 represents haplotype frequencies of farm (blue) and wild (grey) individuals.

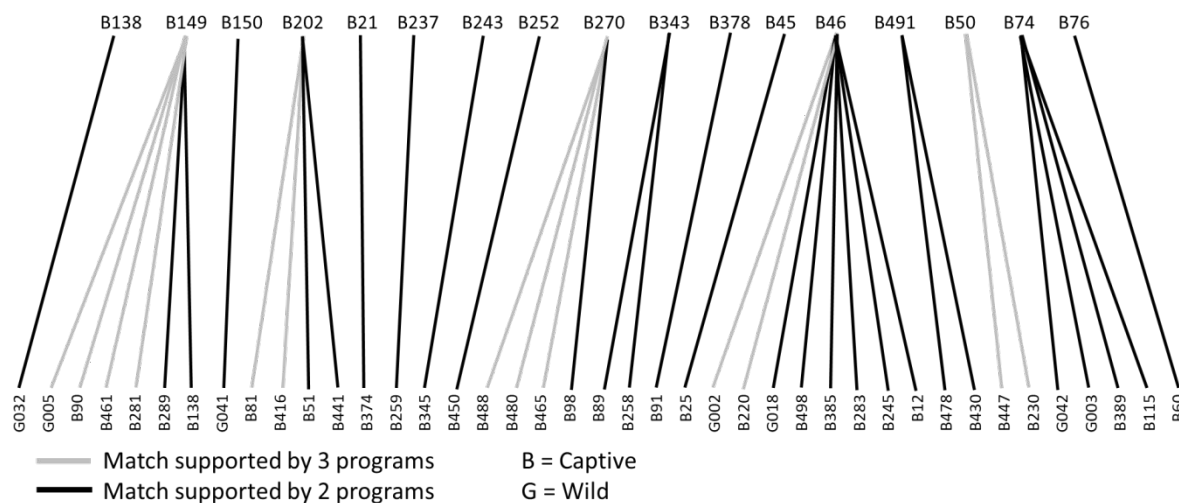
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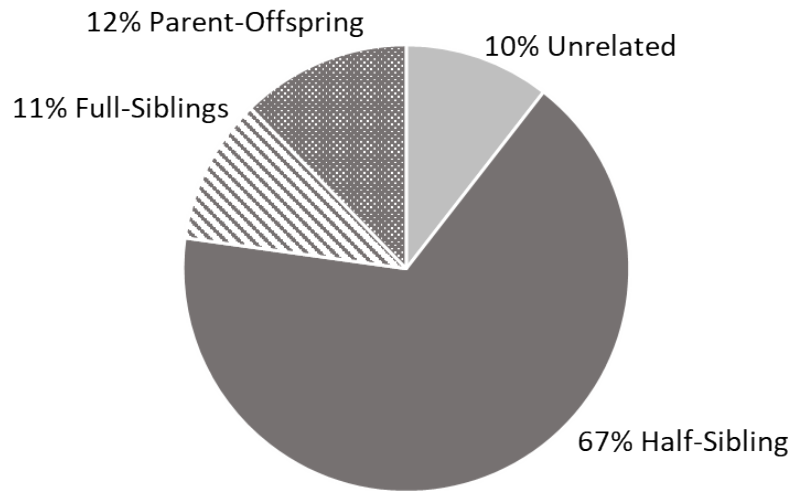
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1113 **Figure 3.** Pedigree of individuals of the Cayman Islands Turtle farm breeding stock. Parent-  
 1114 Offspring pairs were inferred by COLONY (Jones & Wang, 2010), CERVUS (Marshall et al., 1998)  
 1115 and ML-Relate (Kalinowski et al., 2006). The top row consists of captive individuals inferred as  
 1116 mothers; the bottom row consists of wild and captive individuals, which assigned to the  
 1117 mother from the farm. Black lines represent matches supported by all 3 programs, while grey  
 1118 lines represent matches supported by 2 programs.

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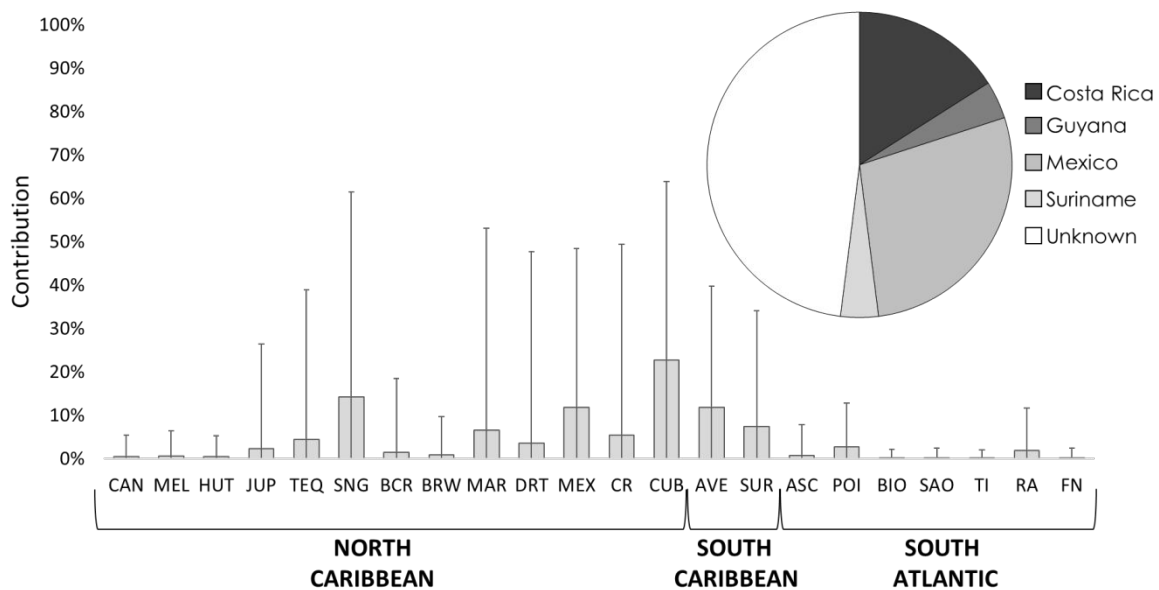
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**Figure 4.** Parentage assignment of wild individuals to the farm breeding stock. All assignments are supported by at least 2 of the 3 programs used (COLONY (Jones & Wang, 2010), CERVUS (Marshall et al., 1998) and ML-Relate (Kalinowski et al., 2006)).



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 1135 **Figure 5.** Mixed-Stock Analysis of the Founder subset against wild populations based on short  
 1136 (400bp) D-loop sequences to include samples of known origin of the founders for which long  
 1137 sequences were not available (i.e. Mexico). The highest contribution appears to be from Cuba  
 1138 (CUB), Singer Island (SNG) (Florida), Mexico (MEX) and Aves Island (AVE), corresponding to the  
 1139 putative geographic areas of origin of these individuals. The pie graph represents the origin of  
 1140 founder individuals as reported in the Cayman Turtle Farm background data; to the 'unknown'  
 1141 category belong individuals who are known to have wild origin but lack the information on the  
 1142 specific collection site. North Caribbean populations are CAN = Canaveral National Seashores,  
 1143 MEL = Melbourne Beach, Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, HUT = Southern Hutchinson  
 1144 Island, JUP = Northern Jupiter Island, TEQ = Tequesta (Southern Jupiter Island), SNG = Singer  
 1145 Island, BCR = Boca Raton, BRW = Hillsboro, MAR = Key West Archie Carr National Wildlife  
 1146 Refuge and DRT = Dry Tortugas National Park (all in Florida, USA) (Shamblin et al., 2015a), MEX  
 1147 = Quintana Roo (Mexico) (Encalada et al., 1996), CR = Tortuguero (Costa Rica) (Bjorndal, Bolten  
 1148 & Troeng, 2005) and CUB = Cuba (Ruiz-Urquiola et al., 2010). South Caribbean populations are  
 1149 AVE = Aves Island (Venezuela) and SUR = Matapica (Suriname) (Bolker, Okuyama, Bjorndal  
 1150 & Bolten, 2007). South Atlantic populations are ASC = Ascension Island, BIO = Bioko Island  
 1151 (Equatorial Guinea), SAO = Sao Tome (Formia, Godley, Dontaine & Bruford, 2006), TI = Trinidad  
 1152 Island (Trinidad y Tobago), RA = Rocas Atoll and FN = Fernando de Noronha (Brazil), and POI =  
 1153 Poilao (Guinea Bissau) (Shamblin et al., 2015b; Patrício et al., 2017).  
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