

IAC Wishes You a Happy Holiday

Inter-American Convention for Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

News Bulletin No. 13

December 2011



As the holiday season approaches, the IAC *Pro Tempore* Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your continued support in helping the IAC achieve sea turtle conservation and protection in the Americas and for sharing in a successful celebration of its 10 Year Anniversary.

May your holiday season and the new year be filled with much joy, happiness and success. We look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Verónica Cáceres Ch.
IAC *Pro Tempore* Secretary

Belinda M. Dick
IAC Technical Assistant

Regional Meetings

Fifth Pan-American Ramsar Meeting

The Fifth Pan-American Meeting of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance was held from December 6-10, 2011 in Kingston, Jamaica. The meeting focused on issues to be addressed at the COP11 of the Ramsar Convention to be held in July 2012 and provided an opportunity for Parties to assess the progress made in implementing the Convention in the Americas. The IAC PT Secretary participated as an observer in this meeting to follow up on the discussions regarding the signing of an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two Conventions. The MOU highlights a series of joint actions that can be taken to identify and strengthen the conservation of those internationally important sites for both Conventions since many sea turtle feeding and nesting habitats coincide with RAMSAR sites for several of the Contracting Parties. The draft MOU between CIT-Ramsar was circulated among the participants (31 countries and approximately 60 people) for comments. During plenary session the delegates expressed their support for the MOU, favorable comments were received by Mexico, Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Chile. The delegate of Mexico, Dr. Carlos García, mentioned that they have 42 Ramsar sites where sea turtles are present and thus strongly feels that this is a very important partnership. Dr. Garcia also offered to begin joint actions in 6 of these sites under the framework of the MOU. Chile applauded the efforts being made to seek synergies between the two Conventions, the delegate from the Colombian Embassy showed her enthusiasm to promote Colombia's adhesion to the IAC and the Dominican Republic expressed similar enthusiasm. Venezuela congratulated the IAC Secretariat for their efforts in favor of regional dialogue and for their recent publication, the IAC 10th Anniversary Report, which highlights the efforts made by each country to implement the Convention.





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VI ASO Meeting

The VI Meeting and V Workshop for Sea Turtle Research and Conservation in the South West Atlantic (ASO) was held from November 27 -30 in Florianópolis, Brazil and was organized by Project Tamar. Around 200 specialists and students from biology, veterinary and oceanography fields participated from the three countries that make up the ASO network (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay). The objective of the meeting to share experiences and scientific information on sea turtle biology, conservation and recovery was achieved. 54 scientific projects were presented and workshops on topics such as fishing and bycatch, veterinary care, environmental education and the blue corridor were held, uniting the efforts of the three countries within the network in their goal of conserving the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). One of the conclusions of their meeting was to begin joint efforts within the ASO network for the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*).

Panama Holds the V Regional Symposium on Sea Turtles in the Southeastern Pacific

International sea turtle experts from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, USA, Peru and Panama as well as national community members met in Panama City from December 1-2, 2011 to share updates on latest sea turtle research, monitoring, management, legislation and environmental education in the region. This event concluded with a declaration of Panama, reaffirming their commitment along with the other countries in the region to continue working in favor of sea turtle conservation and protection through complying with current international conventions and agreements. Panama's IAC Scientific Committee member, Marino Abrego (ARAP), presented the IAC and its progress over the past 10 years at the event.



IAC Reaches Out

Jamaica

The IAC PT Secretary met with members of Jamaica's National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) to discuss the advantages to ratifying the IAC and the importance of increasing Caribbean membership in order to strengthen sea turtle protection and conservation in the Americas. NEPA is responsible for carrying out sea turtle research on the four species found in Jamaica (hawksbill, green turtle, leatherback and loggerhead) and expressed interest in moving forward with the necessary consultations in Jamaica's Ministry of Housing and Environment as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We look forward to the possible integration of Jamaica to the IAC.



Cuba, Suriname, Dominican Republic

The IAC PT Secretary met with various delegates at the Pan-American Ramsar meeting to present the Convention and distribute the IAC 10 Year Anniversary Special Report. Letters were sent to the Director of Cuba's Ministry of Science and Technology and Suriname Ministry of the Environment requesting a formal review of the IAC. A meeting was held with Ms. Gloria Santana from Dominican Republic's Ministry of the Environment (SEMARENA), who is responsible for conducting the ratification process, she informed the IAC PT Secretary on the progress being made within the Ministry on their ratification of the IAC that is moving forward.

Upcoming Meeting

32 International Sea Turtle Symposium

The Annual Symposium will be held in Huatulco, Mexico from March 12-16, 2011. This years theme "Time for Innovation" encourages new ideas and new energy to address sea turtle issues. For more information: <http://iconferences.seaturtle.org>



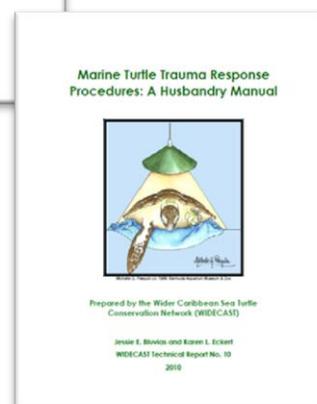
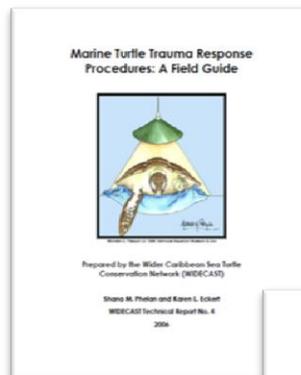
Turtle News in the IAC Region

Wider Caribbean Region

In 2006, the **WIDECAS** Sea Turtle Injury Response Field Guide was published that includes protocols to guide first responders in caring for injured sea turtles, including boat strikes, turtles entangled in a fishing line, hooked, speared, oiled, among other injuries. These guidelines, which also discussed resuscitation, necropsy, euthanasia and carcass disposal, are intended to be implemented *in situ* and the animal released.

Because not all sea turtles can be released immediately, procedures and strategies are also needed to guide necessary efforts to provide adequate housing and care for periods of supervised rehabilitation prior to release. Therefore, WIDECAS has now published the **WIDECAS Sea Turtle Husbandry Manual**. The manual summarizes best practices related to human health and safety, sea turtle handling and transport, facilities design and requirements (maintaining turtles in and out of water, lighting and photoperiod, temperature control, life support systems, water system set-up, water quality testing, sanitization), diet and feeding, enrichment, emergency procedures, and release. Both documents can be downloaded at

<http://www.widecast.org/What/Regional/Medicine.html>



Costa Rica Follows Satellite Tracked Turtle in Golfo Dulce

A satellite transmitter was placed on *Amistad*, a female green (or black) sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) in Blanca Beach on the Osa Peninsula of the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica. Prior to its tagging, the turtle was transported to the WIDECAS sea turtle recovery center, where blood work was done and biometric data were taken. This is the second turtle to be tagged in the area. The first turtle provided information that the turtles were using the mangrove habitat as a feeding ground, which is being threatened by agriculture and livestock in the area. Scientists hope to learn more on the connection between feeding grounds and nesting sites in the Pacific in order to recommend appropriate management actions in the Golfo Dulce. They hope this animal will leave the feeding ground and provide information as she migrates toward her nesting beach since the nesting season begins in November. Last year a group of researchers found a turtle that was tagged on Isabela Island in the Galapagos and had nested there in 2002. After contacting colleagues from Ecuador's Darwin Foundation they realized that females nesting at the Galapagos Islands migrate to the Golfo Dulce of Costa Rica to feed.



Photo from Didier Chacon

This project is being headed by WIDECAS under the Hawksbill Initiative of the Eastern Pacific (ICAPO). Although ICAPO's objective is to research hawksbill turtles in Eastern Pacific, it was noted that for every hawksbill captured seven black turtles were caught. Thus the group decided it was important to learn more about the life cycle and feeding habits of this species in order to recommend adequate management strategies in the region.