



IAC BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE PRO TEMPORE SECRETARIAT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES (IAC)

IAC Takes Steps Towards Hawksbill Conservation



R.P. van Dam

The hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) has suffered extensively from commercial exploitation. This critically endangered species is in highly desired for its prized shell, which is made into crafts and personal items such as combs and jewellery. Despite the ban on international hawksbill trade (CITES), some illegal trade still exists. This, along with other threats like climate change, continues to exert pressure on the world's decimated populations. The Wider Caribbean region boasts some of the most impor-

tant nesting sites for this species. However, from 2000-2004 an alarming decline in the number of nests in the Yucatan Peninsula was reported, suggesting the existence of a phenomena with a regional impact. During the IAC COP2, the Mexican authorities requested the help of the Scientific Committee in evaluating this critical situation and, during the IAC COP3, the Resolution *Conservation of the hawksbill turtle* was passed. In March of 2007, the IAC participated in PESCA 2007 in Havana, Cuba, sharing technical information and concern for the Greater Caribbean hawksbill populations. The IAC later meet with the Central American CITES Committee in El Salvador (including Mexico and the Dominican

Republic as observers) to analyze documents to be presented at the next CITES COP (Holland, June 2007). The IAC reported on the current hawksbill situation in the Gulf of Mexico and presented the IAC Hawksbill Resolution. The IAC Secretariat highlighted the benefits of having the SPAW Protocol (Cartagena Convention) and the IAC coordinate matters related to the Conservation Strategy for the Wider Caribbean Hawksbills approved at the CITES COP 13, while topics dealing with international commerce should be left to CITES, the responsible body.



IN BRIEF:

- A new brochure *Sea Turtles: Struggling to Survive* is now available online (www.iacseaturtle.org/iacseaturtle/English/pub.asp). It describes the main threats to sea turtle's in the region and offers possible solutions for their mitigation.
- Shortly after the Secretariat's recent visit to **Panama**, we received a letter from ARAP (Panama's Authority on Aquatic Resources) expressing their interest in ratifying the IAC. We look forward to their future inclusion in the IAC!
- A friend or loved one having a birthday? Mothers Day? Just thinking of someone? Send a Caribbean Conservation Corporation virtual sea turtle e-card. (www.cccturtle.org/cards)

7th Chilean Environmental Symposium

Four species of sea turtles have been registered in Chilean waters and, because of their multinational distribution and highly migratory nature, the need for international cooperation has been recognized as a top priority. The 7th Environmental Symposium will be held from September 27th -

29th, 2007 in Chile, focusing on sea turtle research and conservation efforts along the southwest Pacific coastline. The goal of this meeting is to coordinate and improve efforts among researchers and conservationists in this region as well as discuss agreements and international conventions, such as the

IAC. Although the bill is currently in the hands of the congress, this symposium will provide the Congress with necessary technical information on sea turtle matters, thus encouraging the ratification of the IAC. For more information on this event: tortugasmarinas.chile@gmail.com

COMING SOON:

Once again the time has come for the **IAC 2007 Annual Reports** to be handed in. They will be made available as soon as they are received (Check out: *About the Convention* on our website). The Reports are an important tool that help determine the compliance with the Convention's objective and ensure that decision makers and managers have the best available scientific information. The Reports contain information on each country's sea turtle conservation programs, threats facing sea turtle populations, pertinent laws and regulations and much more!



3rd Meeting of The Sea Turtle Network of Honduras

For over 30 years, Honduras has been protecting sea turtles in the Gulf of Fonseca (Pacific Ocean), mainly the olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) However, along its Caribbean coast, conservation efforts have not been as stable, initiating in the late 80's and managing the four species found along this coast. A decline in sea turtle monitoring and management activities, along with the need for collaboration among projects, sparked

the creation of the National Sea Turtle Network in 1997. The 3rd Meeting of the Sea Turtle Network of Honduras will be held from May 8th-10th, 2007. This ambitious meeting has set many specific goals, such as: analyze the current situation of Network, create a 2007-10 Strategic Plan, exchange last season's results and management techniques as well as review the country's compliance with the IAC resolutions and agreements at both the national

and international level. Over 60 participants are expected from the governmental, non-governmental and private sectors as well as the participation of both international organizations and the civil society. For more information contact the event organizers:

Natural Resources and Environmental Secretary (SERNA), General Direction of Biodiversity.

www.serna.gob.hn



New manual (in Spanish). Management and Conservation of Sea Turtles in Costa Rica, emphasizing beach monitoring and hatcheries.

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WWF's International Smart Gear Competition

Fisheries bycatch is the leading threat to many endangered marine mammals, cetaceans, seabirds, sea turtles and fish. Over 250,000 loggerhead and leatherback sea turtles are incidentally captured every year in longline fisheries alone and an estimated 150,000 individuals in shrimp trawls. In an effort to reduce bycatch, WWF partnered with industry

leaders, scientist and fishers to launch the International Smart Gear Competition, which inspires innovative, practical, cost-effective ideas that allow fishermen to better target their intended catch. The 2005 grand prize winner created a simple mechanism to set baited hooks on longlines at depths below 100 meters, thus minimizing sea turtle bycatch by

Pacific island tuna longline fishers. The competition is open to the public - fishermen and conservationists alike. A cash reward of \$30,000 goes to the grand prize winner and two \$10,000 prizes to runner-ups. Winning ideas will be further tested, refined and implemented. Entry deadline is July 31st, 2007. For rules and entry forms go to: www.smartgear.org.

Species Update . . .

We have a winner! Join eleven leatherback sea turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) as they travel over 500 miles to make their high seas journey from their nesting site in Costa Rica to the Galapagos Islands. You will also learn about their environment, how long they hold their breath and to what depths they dive, and the threats they face along the way. Check out:

www.greatturtleace.com and www.toppccensus.org.



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