



INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES (IAC)

NEWS BULLETIN



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Meeting of Honduras National Sea Turtle Committee

**May 21-23, 2024
La Ceiba, Honduras**

The Meeting of the National Sea Turtle Committee – Honduras (COTTOM) took place in la Ceiba, Honduras from May 21- 23, 2024. The Vice Minister of Environment of Honduras Mr. Jorge Salaverri attended the first and last day of the event and expressed the support to the dedicated work of the sea turtle community in Honduras.



COTTOM GROUP PICTURE



PAINTINGS BY
JUSTO GUEVARA

The IAC Secretary was invited as a keynote speaker to highlight the IAC annual reports and the need to strengthen the collaboration with Honduras Sea Turtle Committee to provide information for the IAC annual report to support regional sea turtle conservation efforts. At this meeting the delegate from Costa Rica to the IAC Scientific Committee MSc. Didiher Chacon was invited to do a workshop on sea turtle conservation methods.



FISHERMAN FROM THE COCALITO COMMUNITY



HONDURAS SEA TURTLE COMMITTEE BOARD

The meeting was a rich technical exchange with sea turtle conservationists from Honduras (Pacific and Caribbean) to learn about the ongoing work on the IAC index nesting sites, the current status of the conservation of five sea turtle species, and to agree in a more efficient mechanism to share information from the nesting beaches among the members of the COTTOM to include in the IAC report. The Honduras Secretariat of

Natural Resources presented a new APP to help fill out information for the IAC report that can be used in the field. Fisherman community groups such as the artisanal fisherman association from Cocalito HABAWA, presented their efforts raising awareness with the local fisherman about protecting sea turtles using materials found in the communities and making artwork from recycled satellite antennas, their efforts have resulted in reduction of number of gillnets used by the community and less incidental sea turtle catch.

At the meeting the new Board of Directors of the COTTOM was established. The meeting was attended by representatives of Ministry of Environment, Fisheries, NGOs, academia, and local indigenous communities all involved in the COTTOM. The meeting was organized with support of UICN-Honduras and SERNA.



11th Meeting of the IAC Conference of the Parties COP11

**June 11, 2024
Manta, Ecuador**



COP11 GROUP PICTURE

COP11 key outcomes:

- 12 governments participated from the IAC region: Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Caribbean Netherlands, Panama, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Peru, Guatemala, the United States, and Honduras, with credentials to discuss and adopt Resolutions and the IAC Work Plan 2024-2026.
- The governments of France and Canada attended as observers and expressed their efforts towards participation and collaboration in work of IAC and with view of joining the treaty.
- The resolution regarding the continuation of the IAC Secretariat location in the United States – Virginia at the Headquarters of the USFWS and the contract of the IAC Secretary was adopted.
- The renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the National Maine Sanctuary Foundation was signed.
- A letter of intent IAC-SPAW Protocol was endorsed by IAC Parties. This is a very important step to strengthen IAC collaboration and partnerships.
- The government of Dominican Republic presented to COP11 a new Ministerial Resolution to prevent vessel strikes harming sea turtles in the Bavaro Lagoon. This resolution was drafted with technical expertise provided by the IAC Scientific Committee.
- The manual for the handling and release of sea turtles caught incidentally in fishing operations was presented and it will be adopted by IAC Parties by email after editorial review from the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts.
- The IAC Secretariat, Scientific, and Consultative Committee of Experts Work Plan was adopted for the biennium.
- Two new working groups were formed: Working Group on Fibropapilloma (IAC Scientific Committee), and a Working Group to support implementation of Saving the Blue Five project together with CPPS, GIZ and IAC Countries (Consultative Committee). This is a very positive step to support IAC implementation in the region.

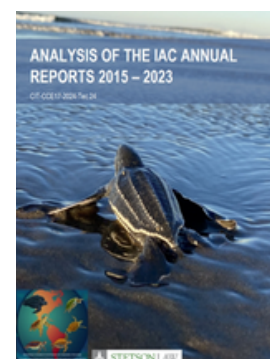
Four technical documents and their recommendations were endorsed by IAC Parties:

- Areas Used by the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle Population and Recommendations on Leatherback Conservation in These Areas
- Status of Loggerhead Turtles Within Nations of the IAC
- IAC Index Nesting Beach Data Analysis (2009-2023)
- Analysis of the IAC Annual Reports 2015-2023

The IAC 11th Conference of the Parties took place from June 11-14, 2024 in Manta, Ecuador. COP11 was hosted by the Government of Ecuador and co-organized by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition-Coastal-Marine division, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with support of local NGOs. The COP11 inauguration ceremony was attended by the Minister of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition Ms. Sade Fritschi Naranjo, Vice Minister of Environment Mr. Edgar Heredia, the Mayor of Manta Mrs. Marciana Valdivieso, and the IAC Secretary. IAC COP11 was chaired by Minister Juan Diego Stacey, Director of Environment and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility – Ecuador.



COP11 PLENARY



IAC TECHNICAL REPORT

These documents are available on the IAC website
<http://www.iacseaturtle.org/>



Sea Turtle Day 2024 – IAC-CPPS

June 16, 2024



IAC Secretariat and the Coordination of the Action Plan for the Marine Environment/Permanent Commission of the South Pacific presented at IAC COP11, the IAC-CPPS Sea Turtle Day 2024 celebration card, and the proposal for a manual for the handling and release of sea turtles caught incidentally in fishing operations. The manual is still undergoing an internal review process, and it will be adopted by IAC Parties by email after editorial review from the IAC Consultative Committee. The manual is the result of the work of the IAC Scientific Committee – Fisheries Working Group in collaboration with CPPS Sea Turtle Committee and funding from USFWS Marine Turtle Conservation Fund and Save Blue 5 project – GIZ.

Visit to Wildlife Refuge Isla Corazón and Fragata

June 17, 2024
Ecuador

The IAC Secretariat visited the Wildlife Refuge Isla Corazón y Fragata in Ecuador on June 17 to learn about the experiences from the park rangers about the process that lead to the successful incubation ex-situ of the first East Pacific Leatherback nest. The park rangers full time dedication guided by IAC Scientific Committee members from Ecuador and Mexico resulted in the first successful leatherback hatchlings release in continental Ecuador.



SIGN AT ISLA CORAZÓN



ISLA CORAZÓN PARK RANGERS



21st Meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee

**August 21, 2024 (Virtual),
August 27-29, 2024 (In-Person)
La Antigua, Guatemala**



SC21 GROUP PICTURE - AECID

The 21st Meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee was held in two parts – virtual meeting on August 21 and in-person meeting from August 27-29 in La Antigua, Guatemala at the historical site of the Center of Spanish Cooperation AECID of the Government of Spain. The SC21 was co-organized by Guatemala Council of Natural Protected Areas CONAP, AECID and IAC Secretariat. The SC21 meeting Chair is Ms. Lezlie Camila Bustos from Chile – Undersecretary of Fisheries.

SC21 main outcomes:

- Recommendations for the proposal presented by Guatemala of their Management Plan for Exceptions for the Subsistence Use of *L. olivacea* eggs
- Adoption of the Technical Document on Fisheries Electronic Monitoring (EM) Systems, their importance for the collection of relevant information for the conservation of sea turtles and the lessons learned in the implementation of EM in Chile, Peru and the USA
- Recommendations on future collaboration with Plymouth Marine Lab
- Work plan for the Working Group Strategic Alliances
- Work plan and membership for new Working Group on Fibropapilloma
- Work plan for the Working Group on Vessel Strikes and Sea Turtles
- Presentation of scientific research carried out by Ecuador and Belize to implement the objective of the Sea Turtle Convention



SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE 21 PLENARY -AECID



The IAC Scientific Committee visits sea turtle conservation sites in the Guatemala Pacific coast

On August 28, 2024, the IAC Scientific Committee visited three sea turtle conservation sites and community managed hatcheries in Guatemala Pacific Coast. The hatcheries visited are under the management of community groups, the Guatemala Navy, and Center for Marine Conservation. The conservation efforts on the ground in Guatemala are led by remarkable people with 20+ years of experience working to protect the *L. olivacea* sea turtles in Guatemala. The sites visited: Centro de conservación marina AGHN, Comando Naval del Pacífico.

August 28, 2024



IAC SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE DURING A VISIT TO GUATEMALA SEA TURTLE HATCHERIES



SEA TURTLE HATCHERY MANAGED BY GUATEMALAN NAVY. LOCATION PUERTO SAN JOSÉ, ESCUINTLA- GUATEMALA



CPPS WORKSHOP

Workshop Regional Program for Sea Turtle Conservation in the South Pacific – Review Progress

**October 2-4, 2024
Guayaquil, Ecuador**

The objective of the workshop was to evaluate the progress made in the implementation of the Program for Sea Turtle Conservation in the South Pacific adopted by CPPS since it was created in 2007. The result from this evaluation will be used to prepare an updated program for 2024-2030. The IAC Secretary was invited to present the progress in the implementation of IAC Resolutions and the work of the IAC Scientific and Consultative Committee that is in line with the activities of the CPPS program to have a regional panorama and identify what has been done and what opportunities there are to strengthen collaboration CPPS to implement the updated sea turtle program. The workshop was attended by CPPS Sea Turtle Committee, governmental delegates from Peru, Chile, Panama, Colombia and Ecuador, as well as a representative from the government of Costa Rica and IAC Focal Point.



IAC Secretary Visits Sea Turtle Index Nesting Sites in Ecuador

October 16, 2024

During IAC's visit to the Marine Protected Area, La Puntilla de Santa Elena, on October 5, 2024, the reserve manager, Ms. Beatriz Ladines, explained the activities for conservation of sea turtle nests that are carried out in three index beaches that Ecuador reports to IAC: Punta Brava, Mar Bravo, and Tres Cruces. The conservation work carried out by the park rangers and volunteers with the community and in the area is of crucial importance. Sea turtles have a safe place for nesting and foraging thanks to their dedication and IAC can obtain valuable information from data collected from these nesting sites.



INDEX NESTING SITE: ECUADOR – TRES CRUCES



INDEX NESTING SITE: ECUADOR – PUNTA BRAVA

IAC Secretary Visits Sea Turtle Conservation Projects in Panama

November, 2024

Tortugas de la City, located in Veracruz, 10 km from the capital city of Panama, is an initiative led by Natividad Jaén, founder of an NGO "Mi voz para tus ojos" and who for more than 10 years has worked with the community of children from Veracruz who call themselves "Friends of the Mangrove" who are leaders and agents of change in their community through beach clean-up activities, education on sustainable fishing, raising awareness in hotels and restaurants to reduce light pollution that disorients turtles, and are the soul that keeps the community together around the protection of the environment.



CIT PANAMA FOCAL POINT MARINO ABREGO AND "FRIENDS OF THE MANGROVE" - CITY TURTLES



IZQ-DER: MARINO ABREGO (MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT/ IAC FOCAL POINT-PANAMA), VERONICA CACERES (IAC), BIOLOGISTS TORTUGUIAS PROJECT JEANNELLYS MORENO, AND ANDY MANUEL MORENO.

TortuBanks, located in Punta Chame, has been in operation for three years with a hatchery for the protection of *L. olivacea* sea turtle eggs, they work with various institutions and local companies. They work with the support of the Technological University of Panama, the Ministry of Environment and Ocean Soldiers. The challenges they face are the lack of environmental education in the community to give more value to the ecosystem, the predation of nests due to natural causes such as crabs and that the beaches have a lot of human impact with plastic. TortuBanks' mission is the protection of sea turtle nests and raising awareness of the local community, nest protection, monitoring and environmental education with social networks in the community. TortuBanks has been an agent for change in the perception of sea turtles and their importance for the ecosystems in Punta Chame.

Tortuguias project with more than 10 years working in Punta Chame, Panama, has been one of the pioneers in the community that have consistently carried out the protection of the nests of *L. olivacea* and have been leaders and role model for the creation of similar turtle conservation projects in the area. They have active participation of the community in environmental education activities in schools, and local people participate as part of their team. This project has guidance and support of the Ministry of Environment of Panama and it is a member of the PANATORTUGAS Network and this year they organized the national meeting of this network in Punta Chame.



TORTUBANKS- JESUS MENDOZA



IAC participates at Southeast Pacific Meeting: Committed for a Sustainable Ocean



GROUP PICTURE- CREDIT CPPS

November, 2024

The IAC Secretariat and members of the Scientific and Consultative Committee attended the Southeast Pacific Meeting: Committed for a Sustainable Ocean, organized by the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS) in the framework of the Save the Blue Five – GIZ project. The event was held in Panama City, Panama from November 20-22, 2024. The meeting brought together more than 200 people from academic, civil society and governmental organizations from 6 countries: Costa Rica, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Panama and Ecuador. The objective was to promote dialogue and regional collaboration in the Southeast Pacific among key actors to address issues that help achieve better governance, protection and preservation of migratory marine megafauna (Blue 5: Sharks, rays, whales, dolphins and sea turtles), with sea turtles being an important part of this dialogue.



IAC DELEGATES L-R: JOSÉ MIGUEL CARVAJAL (COSTA RICA), VERÓNICA CÁCERES (SECRETARIA CIT), DIDIHER CHACÓN (COSTA RICA), LEZLIE BUSTOS (CHILE), MARINO ABREGO (PANAMÁ), NELLY DE PAZ (PERÚ), Y PAULA SALINAS (CHILE).

The event had the following panels: 1) Commitments for marine biodiversity and regional governance, 2) Presentation of the sea turtle species for the Save the Blue 5 project: hawksbills, leatherbacks and greens, 3) Blue Financing. Side events: 1) Marine Protected Areas and the Blue Five, 2) Dialogue on Regional Harmonization in the Monitoring of the Blue Five, 3) Plastics in the Ocean and their Impacts on the Blue Five, 4) Ocean Youth and 5) BBNJL Challenges and Opportunities in the Region. The IAC was invited to be a partner in the implementation of the five-year Save the Blue Five project. The IAC Consultative Committee has a working group that will align the implementation of the IAC resolutions with activities within the framework of the Save the Blue Five project.

The Minister of Environment of Panama, Mr. Juan Carlos Navarro gave closing remarks urging governments to implement the commitments in the framework of international conventions as a priority.



Panama will host the IAC 13th conference of the parties in 2028

November, 2024



VICEMINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, OSCAR VALLARINO

Panama will host the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP13) of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), which will take place in June 2028. This event will bring together representatives of 16 countries represented by environmental agencies, fisheries, foreign affairs, academics, scientists and civil society organizations, to address the challenges faced by sea turtles and strengthen international cooperation for their protection.

Panama's Minister of the Environment, Juan Carlos Navarro said that "this shows a recognition of the country's commitment to the protection of these endangered species and leaves the door open for other meetings of global significance to take place." This announcement was done on 23 November 2024 during a meeting between Verónica Cáceres Chamorro, Secretary of the IAC, and Óscar Vallarino, Viceminister of Environment of Panama, with an official letter with Panama's commitment to host COP13. Marino Ábrego, deputy director of Costas y Mares of MiAMBIENTE, indicated that COP13 will be an opportunity to show the country's progress in the protection of sea turtles and strengthen international alliances to protect these species.

During the meeting, the IAC Secretary congratulated the efforts that Panama is making in the implementation of the Convention, highlighting the valuable work of the community projects for the conservation of sea turtles that she visited in Panama in Punta Chame, "Tortuguías" with 14 years of experience in the protection of nests, and "TortuBanks" of more recent implementation. Both operate with the guidance and support of the Ministry of Environment (MiAMBIENTE). A special recognition to the "Turtles of the City" project in Veracruz that works with children who call themselves the "Friends of the Mangrove", who lead beach clean ups campaigns and environmental education activities

Viceminister Vallarino assured that communities and civil society organizations play a crucial role in the success of these initiatives, as well as the constant work of the ministry with implementing management plans that support the conservation of sea turtles, "Panama shows that, with collaboration and commitment, we can be leaders in marine conservation."

News adapted from the official publication of the Ministry of Environment of Panama, 23/ November/ 2024. The full news can be found at this link.: <https://miambiente.gob.pa/panama-sera-anfitrión-de-la-cop13-para-la-conservación-de-tortugas-marinas-en-2028/>



Honduras to host 22nd IAC Scientific Committee Meeting

2025



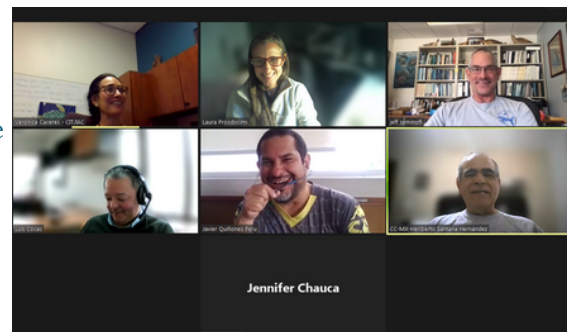
BEACH OF HONDURAS

Through the receipt of the memorandum with the approval of the Minister of Environment of Honduras, Mr. Lucky Halach Medina Estrada, dated November 12, 2024, the venue for the 22nd Meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee in 2025 in Honduras is confirmed. The Vice Minister of Environment, Mr. Jorge Emilio Salaverri, and the IAC Technical Focal Points in the Biodiversity Directorate of Honduras have carried out this management with excellent results that motivate us and demonstrate Honduras' commitment to supporting the Marine Turtle Convention. Our committed team of scientists from the 16 IAC member countries will have a great opportunity to meet in Honduras for the third time and be able to contribute their knowledge on issues that are important to Honduras, particularly the status of the population of the *Lepidochelys olivacea* species.

Meeting of IAC Working Groups

The Working Groups (WG) held their virtual meetings to follow up on their work plans and the organization of the logistics of the next IAC meetings. The IAC Secretariat and the coordinators of the working groups have supported this process. The following virtual meetings were held:

- WG-Strategic Alliances - Topic: Electronic Monitoring Systems
- WG-Northwest Atlantic Leatherback
- WG-Fisheries - Topic: Manual for the handling and release of sea turtles caught incidentally in fishing operations
- WG-Implementation of the Saving the Blue Five project
- WG-Ad hoc Terms of Reference of the Scientific and Consultative Committees
- WG-Legal – Operations of the IAC Secretariat
- WG-Logistical coordination of the 12th Conference of the Parties COP12-Peru
- WG-Logistical coordination of the 22nd Meeting of the Scientific Committee-Honduras
- WG-Agenda coordination of the 18th Meeting of the Consultative Committee



WG STRATEGIC ALLIANCES- JULY, 17 - 2024



WG - FISHERIES



Best wishes for 2025 Happy Holidays!!!!



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You can access the Convention newsletters at this link:

<http://www.iacseaturtle.org/boletin.htm>