



NEWS BULLETIN

Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC)

2014 has started and IAC's Member Countries with the Secretariat PT support have continued activities aimed at the protection and conservation of sea turtles in the Americas. This bulletin includes activities from Brazil, Chile, Curaçao, Ecuador, and United States. It also provides a list of courses and events for your information. We urge IAC Contracting Parties, NGOs and other institutions to keep supporting the conservation efforts of these species and their habitats.



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Organizing a Monitoring Program for Nesting beaches in Curaçao

The IAC Secretary *PT*, Ms. Veronica Caceres Ch., Mr. Paul Hoetjes, IAC Caribbean Netherlands Focal Point and Ms. Mabel Nava, Director of Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire (STCB) visited Curaçao from February 18-19, 2014 to attend technical meetings with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Health, Environment and Nature, officers from the Ministry of Foreign Relations and representatives from local scientific institution Carmabi and conservation NGO Uniek Curaçao in order to organize the work plan for the first sea turtle monitoring program in Curaçao.

During the visit, Curaçao's technical team identified its first index beach at Parke Nashonal Shete Boka. Furthermore, a program was proposed to monitor sea turtle nesting activities for the index site. This program will be funded by the Ministry of Health, Environment and Nature of Curaçao and it will receive initial support from partners in the region such as Bonaire and IAC colleagues in Barbados.

To operate the program, a team composed of a field coordinator and two data collectors were identified. The data collectors will receive their training on species identification, nests, tracks identification, and data storage in Barbados. Once the training is concluded, the STCB will continue the training in Curaçao to build local capacity with park rangers and representatives from the Government and local environmental NGO's. Data analysis will be done with support from Carmabi and the results will be included in the IAC Annual Report.



Field Trip in Curaçao
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Curaçao's nesting beach monitoring program is an excellent example of how collaboration among IAC Contracting Parties, Government authorities, local and international NGO's, scientific institutions and other stakeholders with the assistance of the IAC Secretariat *PT* can create synergies to significantly contribute to the regional efforts for the conservation of sea turtles.

First Satellite Tracks of Neonate Sea Turtles in the South Atlantic Ocean



Fig. 1- loggerhead turtles with satellite

©Y. Swimmer

The University of Central Florida, Projeto TAMAR (www.tamar.org.br), and NOAA NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, are working collaboratively to understand the migratory behavior and dispersal patterns of oceanic stage loggerheads in the South Atlantic Ocean. Nineteen neonate loggerhead sea turtles were tagged using modified small-scale solar-powered satellite tags (Fig. 1). Turtles were lab-reared to 4-13 months old, 10.8-26.8 cm straight carapace length (SCL), and 235-2800 grams.

Turtles were released at different times throughout the nesting season, four releases: November and December 2012, March and May 2013; to coincide with changes in the current pattern along the coast of Praia do Forte.

Except for two turtles that transmitted for less than 5 days, the transmission duration of the tags varied from 26 and 120 days ($n=17$). Throughout the tracking period the turtles traveled between 575 and 4758 km (e.g. as far as the island of Barbados in the Caribbean; Fig 2). Initially, all turtles followed a general circulation pattern observed with initial drifter trajectories following large-scale current patterns. While some of the turtles traveled along the continental slope (north or south depending on the prevailing current pattern), others also moved to oceanic waters. Young turtles in the South Atlantic appear to be influenced by seasonal changes in current regimes—possibly impacting the connectivity of Brazilian turtles in the western Hemisphere.

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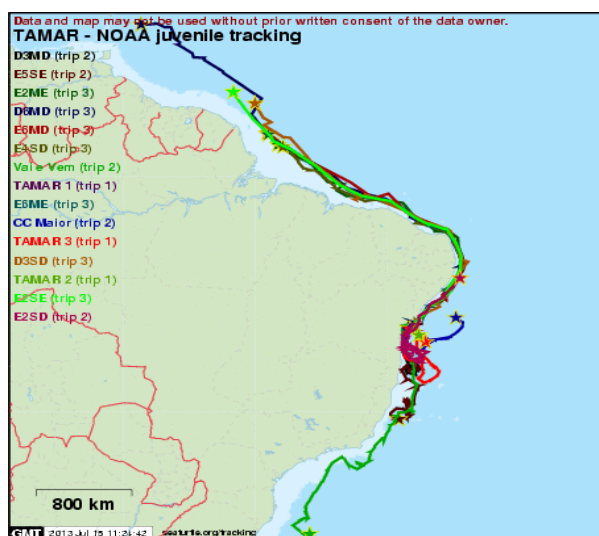


Fig.2- 17 turtles' transmission after their release in Praia do Forte

Monitoring Hawksbill Turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in Ecuador

Park rangers at Machalilla National and other volunteers, with support from the Ecuador's Ministry of Environment, Conservation International Ecuador and Ecofondo Foundation organized a program to monitor Eastern Pacific Hawksbill turtle's nesting beaches. The area called "La Playita" was identified as the most important due to the number of turtles nesting in the area (up to four in one night during February 2014), turning the area into the known beach with more nest of this species in South America.

The Eastern Pacific Hawksbill populations are among the most endangered sea turtles in the planet and one of the least known. Therefore the efforts of Ecuador's Government and Machalilla National Park authorities are very important to identify and protect their nesting habitats.

Black turtles' (*Chelonia mydas agassizii*) site characterization in Northern Chile: a step for its conservation

The Tortumar-Chile research group, under the Arturo Prat University (www.unap.cl), began in 2011 to systematically report the presence of black turtles (*Chelonia mydas agassizii*) in the area called "casa del soldado" and "La Puntilla" in Arica, Parinacota region. The site has high productivity and the presence of an extensive seagrass bed of the *Ulva* genus, which attracts sea turtles.

The sector is located within an urban area, adjacent to the Rio San Jose. It is affected by a number of anthropogenic activities which pose a threat to the ecosystem's health and the presence of sea turtles. The main threats are: collisions with jets-ski and small boats, plus incidental by-catch by artisanal fishermen.

The regional government (<http://www.gorearicayparinacota.cl>) financed the project "Sea turtle conservation in the Arica and Parinacota region". The implementation of this project allowed the ocean characterization of the area, turtles'

tagging, performing genetic analysis on turtles and the morphometric study of epibionts.

In the short term, the project will also provide the authorities with the necessary background information for the development of a sea turtle protection plan, which include the creation of a protected area and a tourism development plan for the area.



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Upcoming Events

❖ XVII Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation Workshop

Querepare, Venezuela; May 21-28, 2014.

Deadline for Inscription: **March 15th, 2014**

For more information, please contact María José Cisnero (mariacisnero@gmail.com)

❖ International workshop on Research and Conservation of Sea turtles in feeding areas

Rocha, Uruguay; March 31 to April 5th, 2014

For more information, please contact: Alejandro Fallabrino (afalla7@gmail.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/328370887302650/?ref=5&source=1>

❖ 34th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation

New Orleans, Louisiana, USA; April 10-17, 2014

<http://iconferences.seaturtle.org/>

We invite you to send news of courses, research results, and other activities related to sea turtles and their conservation so that we can include in the next release.

Please send your article in a Word file and photograph in JPG format to
smendez.cit@gmail.com.