

NEWS

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

JULY—SEPTEMBER, 2019

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) new Resolution to protect sea turtles

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) updated its measures to protect sea turtles adopting [Resolution C-19-04 to Mitigate Impacts on Sea Turtles](#) during their 94th Meeting in Bilbao, Spain on July 22-26, 2019.



Endangered species such as the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle, die entangled in nets or by hooks. Scientific technologies have proven to effectively reduce these threats and now the IATTC countries have updated regulations to implement them. The IATTC member countries should now train their fishing crews on methods to avoid catching sea turtles and release incidentally-caught individuals in good survival conditions.

The IAC member countries that are also members of the IATTC played a key role in the adoption of these measures. This was the third year that the United States lead the proposal to strengthen these measures in the IATTC. Within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding with the IATTC, the IAC, in collaboration with regional experts from the Laud OPO Network has provided technical assistance to support its countries throughout this long process with recommendations reflected in the resolution adopted.

The IAC celebrates this new resolution which is a significant contribution to the conservation of these species through the mitigation of impacts from interactions between fishing vessels and sea turtles.

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Inauguration of Sea Turtle Nesting Season 2019-2020 in Guatemala

Guatemala nesting season 2019-2020 inauguration on July 17, 2019, was held at the Posada de Don José hotel in Retalhuleu. The objective of the event was presenting general information on sea turtle species within a legal and technical framework, begin season 2019-2020 activities, and present an innovative method to build an Eco-hatchery in “La Barona”.

The IAC Scientific Committee delegate, Ms. Airam Lopez Roulet, from the Protected Areas Council (CONAP in Spanish) Central Office Section on Hydrobiological opened the meeting. Ms. Lopez presented general information on the sea turtle species visiting Guatemala’s beaches with an emphasis on the basic procedures to use olive ridley sea turtle eggs. She also explained sea turtle's life cycle, and the regulations applicable to collect eggs on the beach, delivering the eggs to a hatchery, identification of sea turtle species, the correct release of hatchlings, and hatcheries management in general. Also, Ms. Lopez briefly introduced the National Strategy for Sea Turtles Management and Conservation and presented the new format booklet for the Conservation Quota, proper usage, and monitoring.

Following, the student of Education in Natural Science with an Environmental Focus, María Jose Rodríguez, presented the project carried out in Tulate village, La Barona sector at San Andrés Villa Seca Municipality, Retalhuleu. This project involved the construction and renovation of the community hatchery “La Barona” using recycled material, mainly 3 L carbonated drinks plastic bottles. These materials were assembled and reinforced with construction materials, such as cement, sand, iron and PVC tubes.

A press conference was held with the state (i.e. department) local media and institutions in charge of sea turtle conservation such as CONAP and National Civic Police PNC-DIPRONA. The media received information on the Strategy for Sea Turtles Conservation, the presentation of the new booklet for the 20% Conservation Quota, the support to communities provided by institutions, and the penalties and prosecutions applicable if regulations are violated.

At the end of the inauguration of the nesting season, all hatcheries received educational kits including games and teaching material to be used during awareness talks for visitors of the different sea turtle conservation units along the south pacific coast.



16th Meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee at Stetson University College of Law in Gulfport, Florida – September 25 – 27, 2019.



Group Photo at the IAC 16th Scientific Committee at Stetson University College of Law

Stetson University College of Law and the Department of Environmental Law, in Gulfport FL United States, hosted the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles 16th Scientific Committee meeting held on September 25-27, 2019. The college of Law Dean, Professor Michèle Alexandre, welcomed the scientists participating in the meeting and highlighted the importance of the IAC Scientific Committee work, providing technical recommendations that decision-makers from the Member Parties use to translate into environmental regulations aiming to ensure sea turtles survival.

The meeting was conducted with the participation of 27 attendants including delegates from Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Caribbean Netherlands, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru and the United States, representatives of the United States

Department of State, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and accredited observers.

The subjects discussed were the implementation of the Resolution on Exceptions in Panama and Guatemala, based on the five-year report presented by each country; the development of forms to report sea turtle bycatch in fisheries in the IAC Annual Report, according to the Resolution for the Conservation of the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback ([CIT-COP9-2019-R2](#)); collaboration with other international organizations such as CITES, CIAT, and RAMSAR; a follow up report on the implementation of the pilot project on climate change and sea turtles in the IAC countries, and the implementation of an Online Reporting System for the IAC Annual Report.

Regarding the concern addressed in the previous meeting about a potential reduction of Green Turtles nesting in Galapagos, it was clarified that the case is not as alarming as believed, as Ecuador provided additional nesting data which will be updated to show the population current status.

The Scientific Committee will be working during the inter-sessions period to comply with the activities agreed in the meeting work plan to continue advising decision-makers in the IAC 16 member countries.



Scientific Committee (SC16) working groups discussing about Exceptions, Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle (above) and Fisheries (Below).

Discussion on the IAC Convention with Stetson University Environmental Law Students and the IAC Secretary *PT*

Within the framework of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) 16th Scientific Committee meeting, the IAC Secretary *Pro Tempore*, Ms. Veronica Caceres, took part in a discussion with Stetson University College of Law students of environmental Law in Gulfport, Florida.



Stetson University Environmental Law Students — Gulfport, Florida

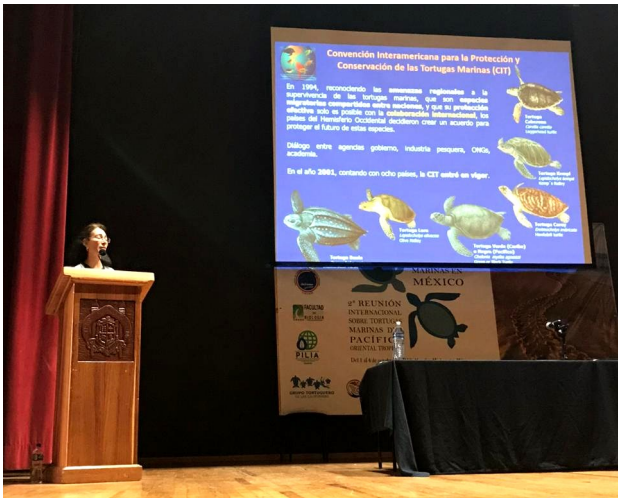


IAC Secretary *PT* explaining about the IAC

As an introduction, the Secretary *PT* presented the Convention objectives, structure and operation, and the items of the 16th Scientific Committee meeting that would take place at the university campus.

The Director of the Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy, Professor Royal C. Gardner, and Ms. Erin Okuno, from the same institute, participated in the dialogue as well. The environmental law students from Stetson University took this opportunity to receive first-hand information on the operation of an international treaty for the conservation of endangered species.

IAC Keynote Presentation at Mexico's 5th National Meeting on Sea Turtles and 2nd International Meeting on Tropical Eastern Pacific Sea Turtles



(Left) IAC Secretary *Pro Tempore* presentation, Ms. Veronica Caceres. (Right) Organizers of the International Meeting on Tropical Eastern Pacific Sea Turtles in Morelia, Michoacan.

The IAC Secretary *Pro Tempore*, Ms. Veronica Caceres (left) was keynote speaker at Mexico's 5th National Meeting on Sea Turtles and 2nd International Meeting on Tropical Eastern Pacific Sea Turtles in Morelia, Michoacan (October 1-4, 2019), thanks to the invitation of the *Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo*, Morelia. The event covered subjects such as anatomy, physiology, health, reproductive biology, population biology, monitoring, movement, environmental education, conservation and management, and fisheries and threats. The items were presented as talks and in a poster session on the second day of the event.

Ms. Caceres presented the talk "*Protection of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback within the Framework of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles*" where she highlighted the IAC objectives as well as the Member Parties efforts to protect the critically endangered leatherback turtle within the framework of Resolution CIT-COP7-2015-R2 for the Conservation of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle.



Group Photo. Morelia International Meeting on Sea Turtles - October 1 – 4, 2019. Photo: Carlos Salas



IAC colleagues (left), such as Dr. Laura Sarti, delegate from Mexico to the Consultative Committee, the IAC COP Chair and delegate from Costa Rica, Mr. Rotney Piedra, and the IAC Leatherback Task Force Coordinator, Dr. Bryan Wallace, also participated in the event. Dr. Wallace, presented his conference *"Eastern Pacific Leatherback: Where are we coming from? Where are we? and Where are we going?"*, and the delegates from Mexico and Costa Rica presented on leatherback

turtles in protected areas in Mexico, and Las Baulas National Marine Park in Costa Rica.



Other representatives from IAC Countries such as Ms. Lissette Ramirez from Ecuador's Ministry of Environment, presented about public policies to strengthen conservation in Ecuador; Mr. Israel Llamas from Panama, spoke about Eastern Pacific hawksbill monitoring in Coiba Island, and Dr. Joanna Alfaro from Peru, presented leatherback conservation actions in this country by reducing bycatch in small scale fisheries.

On the last day of the event, the members of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Network (LaudOPO) met to update this season nesting information from Mexico, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. The IAC informed on the opportunity to share data from the IAC Annual Report, and the COP Chair, Mr. Rotney Piedra, suggested LaudOPO presenting recommendations to the IAC Scientific Committee, through the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts.

