



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

News Bulletin No. 18

October 2013

Sixth Meeting of the IAC Conference of the Parties

The Sixth Meeting of the IAC Conference of the Parties (COP6) was held in Galapagos, Ecuador, from June 26-28, 2013.

The meeting discussed proposals for the consolidation of the Convention's Permanent Secretariat and addressed issues such as the need to strengthen efforts within IAC countries and to ally with non-Party countries in order to recover the Eastern Pacific leatherback turtle. COP6 made significant achievements by adopting a Resolution on exceptions presented by Panama and Guatemala with recommendations on their management. Progress made in implementing the Convention through compliance with its resolutions reported in the Annual Reports of the IAC countries was reviewed. COP6 approved the use of index nesting sites in annual reports in order to analyze the state of sea turtle populations in the IAC region. In regard to collaboration with other international organizations, COP6 reviewed the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the IAC and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and the Sargasso Sea Alliance gave a presentation and suggested working together with the IAC. COP6 declared their concern for increased security for those working in sea turtle conservation in the places where they perform their duties and regretted the tragic events that occurred recently in the Caribbean in Costa Rica.

We thank the Chair of the COP6, Alexis Gutierrez, IAC Focal Point (United States) for her leadership and support. The COP6 was sponsored by the Government of Ecuador through its Ministry of Environment and the Galapagos National Park who graciously hosted delegates from 10 countries. The COP6 report and resolutions are available [here](#).

The Galapagos National Park sponsored a trip to North Seymour and Bachas Beach, a main sea turtle nesting beach in Galapagos. We congratulate them for their excellent work and local conservation efforts that help ensure the Galapagos Islands will continue to be a true nature sanctuary.



Participants COP6



Eduardo Espinoza (Ecuador), Monica Hidalgo (Vice-minister of the Ministry of Environment – Ecuador), Alexis Gutierrez (COP6 Chair), Verónica Cáceres (IAC PT Secretary)



Eduardo Espinoza explains the sea turtle monitoring program at Bachas Beach, Galapagos Island



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Tenth Meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee

The 10th meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC10) was held from September 10-13, 2013 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. A summary of the results are presented below:

- The level of compliance with the Resolution *Adaptation of sea turtle habitats to climate change* was reviewed and the Committee provided recommendations on how to improve the reporting on this Resolution.
- The list of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) used in the IAC region was updated with new information and legislation on measures that limit or prohibit trawling in Ecuador and Costa Rica.
- The technical document “Selecting Index Nesting Beaches in the IAC Region and Data Collection Guidelines” was prepared along with a preliminary list of index beaches for IAC Party countries.
- The Sea Turtle Stranding Working Group was created for the purpose of compiling existing protocols to make recommendations on their implementation within the IAC region.
- Results from the pilot project to collect information on sea turtle bycatch in gillnets in Chile and Argentina were presented.
- Information was gathered to prepare a technical document in collaboration with the Ramsar Convention on the benefits Ramsar sites provide to sea turtle conservation.

We would like to thank the Government of Honduras for organizing this meeting through their Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Biodiversity Directorate of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The meeting report will be available soon on the IAC website.



Participants SC10



Visiting a sea turtle hatchery at Venado Beach in Marcovia



Staff responsible for managing the hatchery at Venado Beach



Workshop on designing a sea turtle conservation program at nesting beaches

The IAC collaborated with the Department of Biodiversity of the Honduran Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment and, with the assistance of Didiher Chacon, IAC Scientific Committee delegate, held a workshop on September 9th in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. This event provided an important opportunity for all 22 participants from different governmental sectors and academic institutions to acquire a better understanding and exchange concerns and experiences on different topics related to the sea turtle's life cycle, current status and threats as well as the how to design a monitoring program .



Activities within the IAC Region

Venezuela Celebrates World Sea Turtle Day (June 16) through Environmental Education

Two workshops on sea turtle conservation and first aid for marine animals were held in Aragua, Venezuela. The events were organized by the El Mácaro Rural Academic Institute as part of their educational activities offered to students in their last semester and to celebrate world sea turtle day.

On June 19, the first workshop was held in the village of Cuyagua, Gold Coast municipality, with over 60 participants including the Fishermen's Association, college students at the Central University of Venezuela and the Bolivarian University of Venezuela, local residents and merchants as well as tourists. It was also attended by park rangers from the National Parks Institute (INPARQUES), assigned to the Henri Pitter National Park who were able to georeference and record information on five nests reported by locals and tourists.

Similarly on Thursday June 20, a second workshop was held at the José Casanova Godoy School in the village of Chuao, Santiago Mariño Municipality. More than 50 people attended the workshop, including teachers, high school students, members of the Chuao Community Council and local residents. Information on the biology and threats of sea turtles in the area was gathered. The speakers were biologist Mary Cisnero, veterinary Ernesto Pulgar Hahn and local merchant Ottoniel Diaz. Preserved hatchlings and eggshells from hatched eggs were on exhibit in order for attendees to have a better visual concept of the subject.



Taller de Conservación y Primeros Auxilios en Varamientos de Tortugas Marinas
Cuyagua, Venezuela 19 de Junio de 2013



Foto: Edmar Pulgar Hahn



Foto: Edmar Pulgar Hahn



Foto: Mary Cisnero





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Training on Sea Turtle Monitoring in Marine Protected Areas by Ecuador's Network for Protected Areas

Through the training workshop on monitoring, management and mitigation of anthropogenic effects on sea turtle nesting, Eduardo Espinoza of the Galapagos National Park Service (DPNG) and IAC focal point, launched a program that aims to duplicate the successful conservation and management experiences that have been developed in the Galapagos Islands at all Marine Protected Areas (MPA) throughout continental Ecuador.

Under this initiative the DPNG in conjunction with the Sub secretary of Marine Coastal Management has coordinated a series of training workshops to replicate successful experiences in monitoring, control and management of protected areas in the Galapagos. The three day workshop was attended by 19 park rangers from 9 Marine Protected Areas including Galera San Francisco, Rio Muisne, Machalilla National Park, and Morro, Churute, REMACOPSE, Heart Island, Pacoche, and El Pelado beaches and consisted of a training program and planning for nesting sites monitoring, as well as the implementation of mitigation measures for the anthropogenic impacts faced by these nationally protected species.



The Galapagos Archipelago is one of the main nesting sites for green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), which is classified as an endangered species by the IUCN, and has consistently monitored this population for more than 10 years. The results of these studies have served to establish management measures such as limiting access to nesting sites, controlling boats and national and international policies.

Along with this training, a series of workshops were initiated whose topics range from: Research and Monitoring, Control and Surveillance, Tourism and Animal Rescue. This is necessary to strengthen the National Network for Protected Areas and systematically standardize management and control measures that the environmental authority is responsible for.





Meetings in the IAC Region

The VI and VII ASO Sea Turtle Meeting– Uruguay

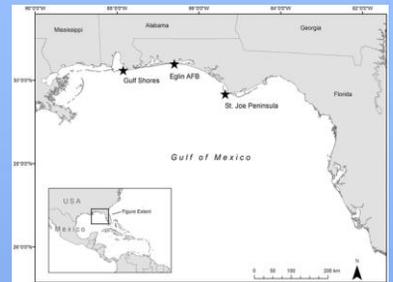
The VI and VII Sea Turtle Conservation and Research Meeting in the South Western Atlantic (ASO) will be held from November 5-8 2013 in Piriapolis, Maldonado, Uruguay. For more information (in Spanish) check [here](#).



New Studies on Sea Turtles

During Nesting Season, Loggerhead Sea Turtles Use Multiple Beaches and At-Sea Habitats in Areas That Overlap with Known Threats

A new USGS study looking at loggerhead sea turtles' use of marine habitats between their nesting events (the inter-nesting period) found that they nested at more sites and greater distances apart than existing studies suggested. The goal of this study was to examine loggerhead movements and use of in-water habitat between nesting events, information important for determining the species' critical habitat needs. Satellite-tagged loggerhead females breeding in 2011 and 2012 nested in the northern Gulf of Mexico on beaches separated by as much as 250km. Between these nesting events, turtles made use of in-water habitats within 33 Km of shore. Results suggest that loggerheads have broader critical habitat needs than previously thought. Furthermore, the study found that the areas of in-water use between nesting events overlapped significantly with commercial trawling and oil and gas extraction activities. The study, "Movements and Habitat-Use of Loggerhead Sea Turtles in the Northern Gulf of Mexico during the Reproductive Period" can be found [here](#).



From Hart KM *et al.* 2013. Study sites (stars) where adult female loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*) were intercepted, sampled, and satellite-tagged in 2010 (n = 4), 2011 (n = 13), and 2012 (n = 23).

Marine turtle threats in Uruguayan waters: insights from 12 years of stranding data

The first study conducted in a wide spatio-temporal scale on marine turtles strandings over a 12-year period in Uruguay is presented. Five species were recorded *Chelonia mydas* (N=643, 58.1%), *Caretta caretta* (N=329, 29.7%), *Dermochelys coriacea* (N=131, 11.8%), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (N=3, 0.3%), and *Lepidochelys olivacea* (N=1; 0.1 %). The first three species stranded throughout the Uruguayan coast, but differences in distribution patterns were detected among species. Although occurring year round, stranding records show a clear seasonal pattern with variation in monthly distribution among species. Strandings provide indirect evidence of threats to marine turtles in Uruguayan and surrounding waters, particularly fisheries and marine debris. The results demonstrate that Uruguayan coastal waters likely serve as a foraging or development area for at least three endangered marine turtle species in temperate waters. The article can be found in *Marine Biology* (June 2013), Vélez-Rubio, G.M. *et al.* (2013) or write to Gaby Velez: pinzy@gmail.com.



Photos: Karumbé