



# NEWS BULLETIN

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

## *Conservation Highlights: A Year in Review*



Photo: K. Barrientos-Muñoz

*“Wishing you  
joy and  
happiness in  
the New Year”*

*IAC Pro Tempore  
Secretariat*

*None of these  
achievements  
would have  
been possible  
without the  
generosity of  
those who  
support our  
work.*

*Thank you for  
your  
commitment  
to the IAC.*

**In 2013 the IAC strengthened sea turtle conservation efforts in the Americas through building the technical capacity of its member countries.**

This year the IAC actively supported several member countries that requested assistance with sea turtle conservation matters in order to improve their implementation of the Convention.

The IAC's PT Secretariat and members of the Scientific Committee, Didiher Chacon (Costa Rica) and Alex Santos (Brazil) collaborated with the Department of Biodiversity of the Honduran Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment in holding a workshop that provided participants from different governmental sectors and academic institutions with an opportunity to improve their knowledge and exchange experiences on topics related to the sea turtle's life cycle, current status and threats. A talk was given on how to design a monitoring program for sea turtle nesting beaches in order improve Honduras' capacity to monitor their sea turtle population and report biological data in the IAC Annual Reports. The timing for the workshop was appropriate since Honduras is finishing up their National Strategy for the Management of Sea Turtles and the information provided was helpful to this process.

2013 presented the IAC with the opportunity to collaborate with Guatemala and Panama on how to manage their domestic use of sea turtle eggs so that they do not undermine the Convention's objective by providing them with a series of protection measures that range from increasing the percentage of eggs protected to adhering to the highest standard of technical requirements for manipulating eggs and managing hatcheries. The IAC will continue to provide technical assistance to improve compliance with the recommended measures.

In March of this year, the IAC teamed up with WWF to provide technical guidance on the subject of Climate Change and Sea Turtles by offering a webinar. Members from both IAC Committees participated.

The PT Secretariat assisted Chile's Focal Point in preparing a grant to characterize fishing gear that has an impact on the capture of leatherbacks turtles in the artisanal fisheries of Chile. The proposal was submitted to the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund.

The IAC is deeply committed to helping its member countries achieve their commitments to the protection and conservation of endangered sea turtles and looks forward to working together in 2014 to accomplish this goal.



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## IAC Member Countries in the South Atlantic Celebrate Ten Years of Working Together to Protect Sea Turtles

The VII Meeting and VI Conference for Sea Turtle Conservation and Research in the South Western Atlantic ([ASO Turtle Network](#)) was held from November 5-8 2013 in Piriapolis, Uruguay. The event was attended by more than 100 researchers and students from the three countries that form the ASO Network (Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay) and colleagues from other regions. The IAC Secretary was invited to give a presentation on the work of the IAC Scientific Committee and possible synergies with ASO. During the conference, presentations on rehabilitation, bycatch, biology and environmental education were shared. This meeting was a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the ASO Network and integration of the research and protection of sea turtles done by its members.

**What is the ASO Turtle Network?** The ASO region is an important developmental and foraging habitat as well as migratory corridor for 5 species of sea turtles (loggerhead, green, leatherback, hawksbills and olive ridley) that present similarities in regard to the types of threats they face. In order to improve conservation efforts for these species, a regional network of NGOs, scientists, government representatives and fishermen was formed in 2003 with the following objectives:

- ❖ Provide scientific information on the biology, conservation and rehabilitation of sea turtles, and standardize work procedures and scientific protocols.
- ❖ Consolidate activities carried out by different projects and organizations working with sea turtles.
- ❖ Create regional actions for sea turtle conservation along with a mechanism to coordinate implementation.
- ❖ Prepare strategies with the objective of reducing sea turtle bycatch without generating any loss to the fishing industry.





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## ICCAT Adopts Recommendation for Marine Turtle Conservation

Delegates from 43 nations along with observers from international bodies and NGO's gathered at the 23rd meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) held in Cape Town, South Africa, November 2013. The IAC Secretary participated in the event as an observer and presented the Convention's interest in collaboration in support of the work currently being done by ICCAT's Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) on the topic of the Marine Turtle Ecological Risk Assessment. Furthermore, ICCAT adopted an updated recommendation, Recommendation 13-11, on sea turtle by-catch in ICCAT fisheries, which amended an earlier recommendation on the same subject. Changes to this resolution include more detailed technical instructions to maximize the survival rate of sea turtles incidentally caught. This recommendation will enter into force in June 2014.



## 2014 Brings Change to the IAC *Pro Tempore* Secretariat

The month of December brings us to say goodbye yet at the same time welcome a new member to the IAC *Pro Tempore* Secretariat work team. Ms. Belinda Dick, our colleague and friend has successfully completed her studies in Veterinary Medicine in Costa Rica and, in February of next year, will begin a new phase of her professional career. During this time of transition, Belinda will continue to support the IAC in its activities until the end of January 2014. We are grateful for all of her valuable contributions and assistance given to the Convention and its Party countries for the past 10 years she worked with the IAC. We wish Belinda much success in her new endeavor and we know that even in her new line of work she will always be dedicated to the conservation of endangered animals. Both Belinda and her sidekick pet's, Demosthenes and Azrael, will be greatly missed.



Ms. Sofía Méndez has been hired this month to fulfill the position of Technical Assistant to the IAC *Pro Tempore* Secretariat and Parties. In her previous job, Ms Mendez was responsible for preparing the National Strategy for the Management of Sea Turtles in Honduras and has also worked for the Ramsar Convention. We are confident that the IAC will benefit greatly from her experience and help in moving forward with the activities under the MoU IAC-Ramsar. We give her a warm welcome to our team.

