



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

News Bulletin No. 14

March 2012

32nd Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation Workshop on the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

The IAC was invited to participate in the workshop that was held from March 11-12 before the Symposium's main event. Experts and scientists from 9 countries (México, Peru, Costa Rica, Panamá, Ecuador, USA, Chile, Nicaragua, Colombia) and different sectors (Government, Universities and NGO's) participated in the event. The objective of the workshop was to design a regional Action Plan to save the leatherback turtle in the eastern Pacific, touching on the following subjects: the current nesting status for this species in the region and threats, trends and perspectives for its conservation; the current status of incidental capture in South America, the impacts of artisanal fishing fleets and mitigation efforts. Two working groups were formed (Protection of nesting beaches and Bycatch reduction) in order to:

- Define the main goals of a regional action plan to help conserve this population.
- Identify the challenges to overcome in order to fulfill its main goals, increase awareness and address information gaps: population demographics, feeding grounds, impacts caused by threats to their critical and/or priority habitats.
- Identify prioritization criteria through strategies, specific projects and conservation and research activities for this species and assess its level of impact.



Based on the most recent scientific evidence, the participants identified leatherback mortality from industrial and artisanal bycatch as a threat that requires urgent attention. They also identified several priority activities to be carried out on nesting beaches and ways to reduce bycatch that should be taken into consideration when creating a Regional Action Plan for this species. A general consensus was reached that there is still time to save the eastern Pacific leatherback and that international cooperation is essential to doing this through carrying out joint activities that favor its recovery. This type of cooperation must be promoted through existing international conventions that protect these animals. The executive summary of this workshop is currently being prepared and will be available soon.

32 International Sea Turtle Symposium

The Symposium was held in Huatulco, Mexico from March 13-16 where more than 400 individuals dedicated to studying the world's sea turtles participated in the event. This year's theme was "time for innovation", which focused on new and creative techniques for approaching sea turtle conservation. Mr. Luis Fueyo Mac Donald of Mexico's National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) inaugurated the meeting by highlighting Mexico's National Sea Turtle Conservation Program, which has been running for over 45 years. Mr. Fueyo also stressed the importance of cooperation between governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations and the scientific community in order to be most effective and show results on the recovery of these endangered populations. The first day was dedicated to presenting sea turtle research being done in Mexico followed by general sessions on sea turtles and tourism, nesting beaches, fisheries, genetics and international cooperation and conservation policy. We congratulate CONANP and the International Sea Turtle Society for a successful event.

WIDECAST Annual Meeting

The WIDECAST annual meeting was held from March 10-11 in Yucatán, México, with approximately 60 colleagues from around 30 countries of the Wider Caribbean attending the event. Immediately following their meeting, from March 12-17, WIDECAST offered for the first time, a Sea Turtle Field Forensics Workshop, the newest module within the [Coral Reef "CSI" Initiative](#). The workshop was a great success and trained participants in forensic techniques used to collect evidence in the case a crime has been committed against sea turtles, their parts and/or products.



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Strengthening Efforts Through Our MOU's

Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS)

XVIII Meeting of the Consultative Group of the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the South East Pacific

Within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between the IAC and CPPS, the IAC *Pro Tempore* Secretariat participated as an observer in the XVII Meeting of the Consultative Group, which was held from February 28 - 29 in Guayaquil, Ecuador. During the meeting, the countries Party to the Action Plan of the Lima Convention made decisions regarding the Sea Turtle Conservation Program for the South East Pacific Region and took a look at cooperative efforts currently being carried out with other organizations. The members of the consultative group (Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Panama and Peru) presented their report for 2010-2011 on implementing the Action Plan, which includes a component that is dedicated exclusively to sea turtle conservation. The countries also mentioned the preparation of a National Sea Turtle Diagnostic done for each country in addition to holding a workshop in Panama on the standardization of data collection at nesting beaches. The IAC *Manual of Management Techniques for Sea Turtle Conservation at Nesting beaches* was used as the base document for discussion during this workshop. Their 2012 - 2013 work plan was also approved, identifying joint activities that can be carried out with the IAC, for example, creating forms to help collect data on sea turtle bycatch in fisheries of the south Pacific region.

XVIII Meeting of the General Assembly of the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the South East Pacific

The meeting was held on March 1 in Guayaquil, Ecuador. The Parties approved the decision on activities to be carried out within the sea turtle action plan, highlighting the following:

- Prepare a regional diagnostic on sea turtles
- Create forms for collecting fisheries data
- Organize national training workshops for standardizing data collection on nesting beaches
- Promote collaboration with the IAC on the activities mentioned above .

The IAC *Pro Tempore* Secretary gave a presentation of the status of the Convention as it celebrated its 10th Anniversary and the activities being carried out by its Party countries in order to implement the Convention's resolutions. The Secretary identified synergies with the work being done by CPPS and the IAC's intention to continue collaborative efforts.

Memorandum of Understanding between the IAC and CPPS

The IAC signed a MOU with CPPS in March of 2009. Among the joint activities carried out to date are two workshops held on standardization of collecting sea turtle data and reporting (December 2009 and November 2010 in Guayaquil) . CPPS is a Regional Maritime Body designated with the task of coordinating marine policies of its Member States: CHILE, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR and PERÚ. <http://www.cpps-int.org>

Next IAC Meeting

5th Consultative Committee Meeting

The 5th Meeting of the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts will be held from May 30 – June 1 of this year in West Virginia, USA. For more information visit our website www.iacseaturtle.org.



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Good News for Sea Turtles from around the Americas!!

USA

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) increases protection for the **leatherback sea turtle** (*Dermochelys coriacea*) by designating additional critical habitat areas on the U. S. west coast. The designated areas comprise approximately 41,914 square miles of marine habitat in the Pacific Ocean off the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington. This regulation is available by clicking on the United States [Federal Register link](#).



Guatemala

The government of Guatemala (CONAP) working with USAID's Regional Program for the Management of Aquatic Resources and Economic Alternatives and ICAPO, are reviewing their sea turtle conservation efforts carried out on the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of Guatemala. One of the objectives of this project is to review the effectiveness of sea turtle conservation activities within the framework of the National Sea Turtle Strategy approved by CONAP in 2002 and especially the current mechanisms in place for donating eggs and their commercialization as well as evaluate its short term and long term socio-economic and ecological sustainability. Furthermore, efforts being carried out by ICAPO are directed at researching possible hawksbill turtle nesting and foraging sites at the beach and at sea in order to provide CONAP and other decision makers with the information necessary to make future strategies adequate for managing the sea turtle resource in Guatemala. The results of this analysis were presented by CONAP/ARCAS during the 32nd Annual Sea Turtle Symposium and will be discussed during a national workshop with all stakeholders involved.

Prepare to Celebrate World Sea Turtle Day on June 16th

World sea turtle day is celebrated on June 16 in honor of Dr. Archie Carr, the "father" of sea turtles, who founded the Caribbean Conservation Corporation (now called the Sea Turtle Conservancy) in 1955 in order to conserve sea turtles nesting in Tortuguero, Costa Rica, which today is the longest running project in the western hemisphere. Through his research, teaching and writing, Dr. Carr is responsible for a great part of what is known about the biology and life cycle of sea turtles today. He is credited by many for bringing international attention to the plight of sea turtles through his world renowned book "The Windward Road". We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those working towards sea turtle conservation and ask that you help us celebrate this day by organizing activities that create awareness and favor conserving this species. For more information on Dr. Carr and his achievements or to get ideas for activities on how to celebrate this day visit the STC website. www.conserveturtles.org



STC
Dr. Archie Carr, Photo: STC