

Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles  
Year 2016 – No. 29

# NEWSLETTER



## THIRTEENTH IAC SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETING

The 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Committee of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (SC13), took place between August 29th and September 1st, 2016, in Belize City, with the support of Belize Fisheries Department and with help from Mr. Isaias Majil (Belize Focal Point), and Ms. Kirah Forman (Belize SC Delegate).



### Report SC13

[http://www.iacseaturtle.org/eng-docs/comite-cientifico/13reunion/SC13\\_Meeting\\_Report\\_CIT-CC13-2016-Doc.7\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](http://www.iacseaturtle.org/eng-docs/comite-cientifico/13reunion/SC13_Meeting_Report_CIT-CC13-2016-Doc.7_Final_Web.pdf)

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### Thirteenth IAC Scientific Committee Meeting (Page 1)

The meeting was attended by 22 delegates from 13 countries. The SC13 updated the committee work plan for 2017-2018. The plan includes activities on sea turtles interaction with fisheries, sea turtle strandings, and exceptions. The committee discussed the information presented by Honduras, concerning the legal, social, economic, and technical aspects of *Lepidochelys olivacea* eggs harvest in *Golfo de Fonseca*, and provided recommendations to improve the data available on this population.

The IAC Sea Turtle Foraging Areas Working Group was formed, and the CC13 provided final comments to two technical documents that soon will be available on the IAC web site called "Status of Loggerhead Turtles (*Caretta caretta*) within Nations of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles" and the "Characterization of Sea Turtle Stranding Information in the IAC Region". Recommendations for monitoring the compliance with Resolution on the Eastern Pacific Leatherback were provided as well. The last day of the meeting the CC13 delegates participated in a beach clean-up at the index beach Baccalar Chico, which was severely affected by Hurricane Earl few weeks before the meeting.



*The IAC Scientific Committee delegates at a beach clean-up activity at the sea turtle index beach Baccalar Chico, severely affected by Hurricane Earl in Belize.*





Photo: Joao Thome

## 36th ISTS SYMPOSIUM ON SEA TURTLE BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION - LIMA, PERU 2016

Sea Turtle researchers from all over the world got together to share their knowledge and experience at the 36th Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. The event was held in Lima, Peru February 29th to March 4th, 2016. Participants from 50 countries attended the meeting.

Crossroads was this year's theme. During the first two days there were regional meetings and workshops followed by talks and poster presentations. The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) *Pro Tempore* Secretary Veronica Caceres and the Scientific Committee Chair Diego Albareda gave presentations at the "Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle" workshop, and Mr. Joao Thomé Vicechair of the IAC Consultative Committee did a presentation at the RETOMALA meeting. The IAC also participated in the "South Pacific Loggerhead Turtle" workshop.



## NEW HAWKSBILL NESTING SITE FOUND IN ECUADOR

Within the framework of the Sea Turtle Conservation Program (2014) and the Marine Reserve Biodiversity Management Program (Ministry of Environment Santa Elena Provincial Direction), nesting site monitoring has been carried out since 2014 at “*El Pelado*” Marine Reserve in *Santa Elena* Province, Ecuador.

*Hawksbill (Eretmochelys imbricata) nesting has been confirmed with 20 nests found.*

Between February 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and as part of the program, the Galapagos National Park Direction, developed training workshops on Sea Turtle nesting and monitoring at *Playa Rosada* in the Commune *Palmar*.

During these practices, the nesting of Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) has been confirmed. Twenty nests have been recorded thus far. Until now, the rangers continue using Hawksbill monitoring and tagging methods as recommended by IAC nesting beach monitoring manual.

### New Publications

#### Advances in Research Techniques for the Study of Sea Turtles

Juan M. Rguez-Baron (JUSTSEA Foundation, Bogota, Colombia), Maria Monica Lara-Uc and Rafael Riosmena-Rodriguez

#### Successful Conservation Strategies for Sea Turtles: Achievements and Challenges

Maria Monica Lara Uc, Juan M. Rguez-Baron and Rafael Riosmena-Rodriguez

## EXPERT WORKSHOP ON SEA TURTLE CURRENT STATUS IN COSTA RICA

During 2015, sea turtle researchers gathered in Costa Rica attended at an “Experts Workshop”, with the objective of compiling baseline information on sea turtle’s current status in Costa Rica. This work also included a social component, allowing local communities to play an important part in the use of resources, conservation and sustainability.



## BEGINNING OF GALAPAGOS ISLAND NESTING SEASON

The Galapagos National Park Direction (DPNG in Spanish) rangers and volunteers have been aware of the arrival of sea turtles nesting in the Park since January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Two monitoring camps were installed by the DPNG at the index beaches of *Las Bachas (Santa Cruz)* and *Quinta Playa (Isabela)* to compare data with historic records, and the impact of tourism activity taking place only in *Las Bachas*.

This year the monitoring team has focused on the El Niño event, and the Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). They have been counting turtles, their nests, measuring the reproduction effectiveness, and observing their behavior in the area.

Eduardo Espinoza, Galapagos National Park ranger and IAC Scientific Committee delegate, in charge of marine ecosystems monitoring, pointed out that the El Niño event affects all marine organisms, and that sea turtles are reptiles that depend on atmospheric conditions. For instance, they prefer warmer beaches, therefore it is important to do research and gather information on the effect caused by El Niño.

For more information contact Eduardo Espinoza: [eespinoza@galapagos.gob.ec](mailto:eespinoza@galapagos.gob.ec)

## CHANGES TO THE LISTING OF GREEN SEA TURTLES UNDER THE U.S. ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES ACT.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced that, after considering public comments, they have finalized their U.S. Endangered Species Act listing their determinations for the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). The listing's with the determinations and our responses to public comments in the final rule, can be seen here <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/turtles/green.htm>.

We found that the Green Sea Turtle population is composed of eleven distinct segments that qualify as "species" for listing under the ESA. We are removing the current range-wide listing and, in its place, listing eight distinct population segments as threatened and three as endangered under the ESA (Figure 1)

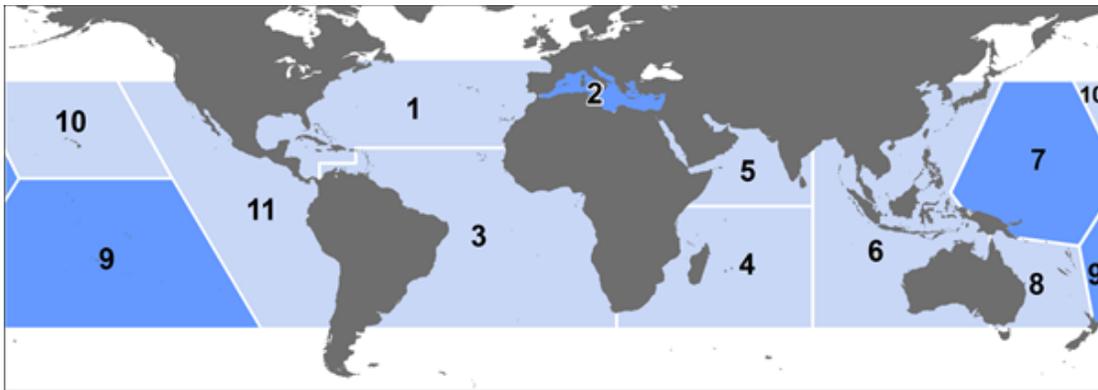


Figure 1. Threatened (light blue) and endangered (dark blue) Green Turtle distinct population segments: 1. North Atlantic, 2. Mediterranean, 3. South Atlantic, 4. Southwest Indian, 5. North Indian, 6. East Indian-West Pacific, 7. Central West Pacific, 8. Southwest Pacific, 9. Central South Pacific, 10. Central North Pacific and 11. East Pacifica.

Green sea turtles were previously listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act as threatened, with the Florida and Mexican Pacific coast breeding populations formerly listed as endangered. We have reclassified these formerly endangered populations as members of the threatened North Atlantic and East Pacific DPSs, respectively. We were petitioned to identify the Hawaiian green sea turtle population as a distinct population segment and to delist it. We found this population did constitute a distinct population segment, referred to as the Central North Pacific, but do not find delisting warranted. We are listing this distinct population segment as threatened.

If you have any questions about this listing decision, please contact Jennifer Schultz at [301-427-8443](tel:301-427-8443) ([jennifer.schultz@noaa.gov](mailto:jennifer.schultz@noaa.gov)) or Caitlin Snyder at [703-358-2673](tel:703-358-2673) ([caitlin\\_snyder@fws.gov](mailto:caitlin_snyder@fws.gov)).

## FIRST RECORD IN 25 YEARS OF A LEATHERBACK TURTLE (*Dermochelys coriacea*) NESTING IN SANTA MARTA (Colombian Caribbean)

On April 10<sup>th</sup> 2016, after 25 years of observation, females Leatherback were seen nesting at the Hotel Irotama Resort beach, a tourist area in North East Colombia near the city of Santa Marta.

According to the Sea Turtle and Marine Mammal Conservation Program (ProCTMM in Spanish), who were responsible for taking care of the nests the nest had 177 eggs, of which seventy seven were viable.



Photo: ProCTMM



Photo: ProCTMM

According to the information provided by ProCTMM to the IAC, “after assessing the best option for incubation between *in situ* and a semi-controlled system to ensure higher hatching percentages, the eggs were placed in portable incubators to monitor them at *Mundo Marino* aquarium facilities”

“On June 9th, after 60 incubation days, the first hatchlings were observed. The first born hatchlings are put into a nursery. When maximum growth is reached, they will be released back at the nesting beach”

Considering that this event had not been recorded for approximately twenty five years, during her interview with *El Tiempo* journal, ProCTMM director, Ms. Aminta Jauregui, expressed the importance of this nesting event, “because it could be an indication of this species recovery in the area”.

Source: ProCTMM Group. ProCTMM Press Release and *El Tiempo* <http://www.eltiempo.com/estilo-de-vida/ciencia/tortuga-laud-anido-en-playa-de-santa-marta/16561913>

## NINTH MEETING OF THE IAC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS



The 9th meeting of the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts (CCE) was held on April 19th 2016 by videoconference from the IAC Pro Tempore Secretariat office at the US Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters in Virginia. The meeting was attended by delegates from (10) ten Member Countries, seven (7) sectorial members representing NGO, Scientific, and Private Industry, and the Chair of the IAC Scientific Committee. With participation of 25 delegates this was the meeting with the highest attendance to date. This was made possible by using video conferencing as a

work tool that has facilitated the attendance of delegates from different agencies within the Member countries.

At the meeting the CCE Work Plan 2016-2017 was updated, and there was a discussion on the IAC Scientific Committee recommendations for the collection and report of information on Climate Change and Sea Turtles, as well as on the implementation of the IAC recommendations on exceptions for Guatemala, Panama and Costa Rica. The activities of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Task Force were discussed and new tasks for this group were agreed regarding the identification of immediate strategies to reduce the threats that are causing the decline of this population, and the need of a more detailed examination regarding the compliance of the Resolution for the conservation of this species in the Member Countries. Finally, the NGO sector proposal to create a mechanism for NGOs to submit cases /petitions regarding activities that are a potential threat to Sea Turtle survival or the conservation of their habitats was discussed. The next meeting will be carried out in February 2017.

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### Report CCE9

[http://www.iacseaturtle.org/eng-docs/comite-consultivo/9reunion/CIT-CCE9-2016-Doc.4-REPORT%20ENG\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.iacseaturtle.org/eng-docs/comite-consultivo/9reunion/CIT-CCE9-2016-Doc.4-REPORT%20ENG_FINAL.pdf)

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## THE IAC AT THE 17th MEETING OF THE UN CONSULTATION MEETING ON OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA (13 – 17 JUNE, 2017)



The IAC Scientific Committee Chair Diego Albareda and the IAC Secretary *Pro Tempore* Veronica Cáceres.

The Chair of the IAC Scientific Committee, Mr. Diego Albareda, gave a presentation at the 17th Meeting of the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea whose topic this year was “Marine Debris, Plastics, and Microplastics”, also representing the IAC the Secretary *Pro Tempore*, Ms. Verónica Cáceres attended the meeting. The IAC took part in the discussion on the environmental, social and economic dimensions of marine debris, plastics and microplastics, as well as on the challenges, lessons learned, best practices and way forward to prevent, reduce and control pollution from these materials.

During his presentation, Mr. Albareda highlighted the importance of the South American coasts for nesting, migration and development of five species of sea turtles. He explained how all the IAC Countries have reported negative interactions of sea turtles with plastic such as ingestion; the lethal and sub-lethal impact of these interactions, and the challenges while implementing mitigation measures in nesting beaches affected by plastic accumulation.

Mr. Albareda also explained how, compared with other species such as sharks, dolphins and whales, sea turtle research is much wider because scientists have easier access to study them and they are considered excellent indicators of the marine ecosystem status, highlighting the role of the IAC facilitating specialized human and technical resources in response to the needs in different countries on marine debris impact to sea turtles.



## WORKSHOP ON SEA TURTLE STRANDING, FIRST AID AND NECROPSY (BELIZE)

The “Workshop on Sea Turtle Stranding, First aid, and Necropsy” took place from 25th to 26th of August, 2016 at Belize Fisheries Department headquarters in Belize City. The workshop was organized by the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) Secretariat *Pro Tempore* jointly with the Fisheries Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Environment and Sustainable Development of the Government of Belize. The workshop is one of the capacity building activities promoted by the IAC in response to the needs of the member countries. The workshop lectures were taught by DMV Brian Stacy (NOAA) and DMV Diego Albareda (Buenos Aires Ecopark and Chair of the IAC Scientific Committee).



During day one of the workshop, participants learned the basic principles of stranding and mortality investigation; the pathology and common parasites of Sea Turtles; postmortem examination and human interaction. During the necropsy lab, the participants were trained in the techniques to perform a necropsy in field conditions, and how to collect tissue samples. Necropsies were conducted on sea turtles found stranded in the months prior to the workshop. On day two, the workshop focused on first aid and basic care techniques of stranded Sea Turtles by field responders, initial evaluation, diagnosis, therapeutics, and sedation.



Representatives from “Las Lisas” community (Guatemala) strengthening their knowledge on hatcheries management (above). Visit to a hatchery (below)



## GUATEMALA STRENGTHEN SEA TURTLES HATCHERIES MANAGEMENT

A new activity to strengthen capacities in member countries of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), took place on November 29-30, 2016 in Guatemala. The workshops “Developing Technical Capacities for the Management of Sea Turtle Hatcheries in Guatemala” were sponsored by the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the IAC and the non-governmental organization ARCAS.

The first workshop (November 29th) took place at the Pacific Navy Force Command, with the participation of twenty five representatives of twelve hatcheries from San Jose Port community. Activities during the workshop included visiting the hatcheries of the Navy Command (CONAPAC) and *Monterrico*, managed by the Conservation Studies Center (CECON). The second workshop (November 30th) took place at the community *Las Lisas*; there were 16 participants representatives of six hatcheries from this community. Participants visited “*Las Lisa’s*” hatchery, managed by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Agency DIPESCA/MAGA.

Mr. Didiher Chacon, delegate of the IAC Scientific Committee provided information about sea turtle biology and threats, hatcheries construction and management, sand quality, egg incubation temperature, hatchling release, nests exhumation and data gathering for monitoring. During the Q&A session participants clarified their questions on local issues on management of their hatcheries. The workshops meet the objective of strengthening the capacities of those in charge of sea turtle hatcheries for the specie olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) in Guatemala, and helped the implementation of the IAC Exceptions Resolution.

## IAC TWITTER ACCOUNT

Stay Updated on the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles activities by following our Twitter account

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