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

## Leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) reborn in Manabí- Ecuador

In mainland Ecuador, from 1983 through to 2014 there was no evidence or records of births of leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*), but in 2015 and later in 2017 sea turtles started showing evidence of their occurrence when nesting females were recorded in Puerto Cabuyal, Crucita (Manabí), and in Las Palmas (Esmeraldas). Despite the efforts to protect the clutches none of the nests were successful but they were a good sign of what was about to come.

On November 26, 2020, 3 years since the last nesting, in Manabí – Ecuador, a leatherback turtle was reported arriving in San Clemente beaches (Manabí) again by the local volunteers from the “*Contamos Contigo Ecuador*” foundation. Immediately the officials of Ecuador’s Ministry of Environment and Water, together with a technical team made up of government personnel and IAC experts from Mexico and Ecuador joined forces, to establish the actions to protect the clutch and increase the chances of successful hatching.

The team, involving the technical assistance of Mexico’s National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP in Spanish) through its National Program for the Conservation of Sea Turtles Coordinator, the IAC Ecuador Focal Point (the Galapagos National Park Directorate), the Undersecretary of Natural Heritage, and the MAAE National Directorate of Biodiversity, established a monitoring plan for the protection and monitoring of the clutch *in situ*; and the first *ex-situ* incubation of 12 eggs with *WildAid* financial support. The eggs were constantly monitored by technicians and park rangers of the Wildlife Refuge Isla *Corazón* and *Fragatas*.

The clutch *in situ* and the incubation *ex-situ* were monitored by the volunteers throughout 57 days, with the assistance of the technical team, until they witnessed the birth of 61 hatchlings *in situ* and 9 hatchlings *ex-situ*. In total, this clutch contributed 70 hatchlings to the population. These actions mark a historical milestone regarding the occurrence of the Leatherback on Ecuadorian coasts, highlighting the Government of Ecuador's efforts towards the conservation of this species, as well as the collaborative and synergistic environment for which the IAC has served as a platform, enabling these efforts.

The birth of these turtles in Manabí-Ecuador is encouraging for both the species and all the people involved in the efforts for the conservation of the Eastern Pacific leatherback turtles, and is directly related to the compliance with the IAC objectives at a regional level, where member countries of the Convention support each other by sharing their technical experience, resulting



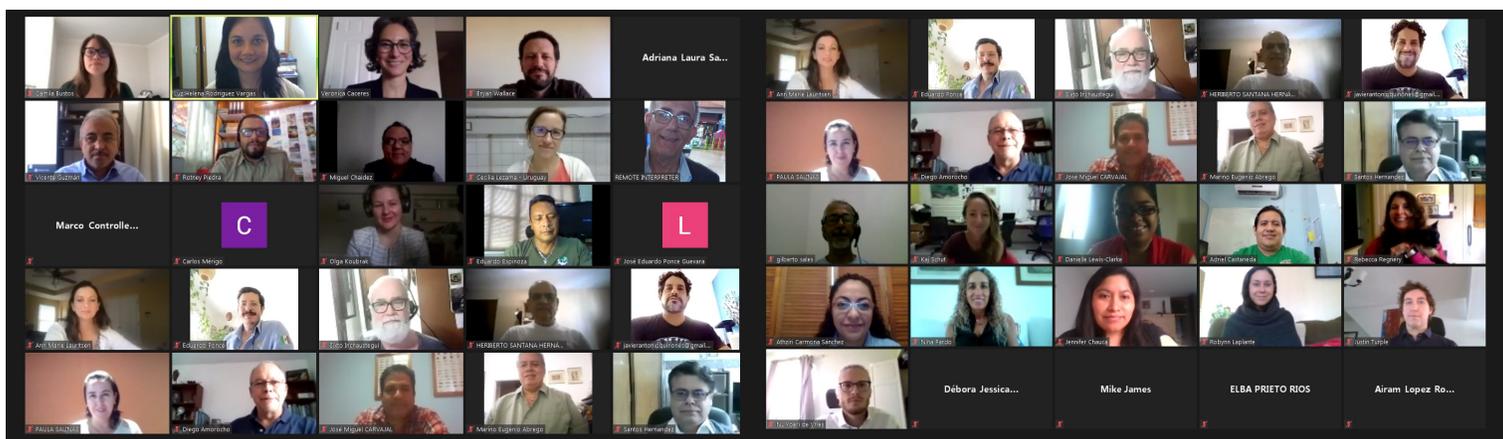
in important achievements such as this successful nesting, as an evidence of their commitment to the conservation and protection of sea turtles in the Americas.

Full note: <http://www.iacseaturtle.org/noticias-eng.htm#28>



Measuring hatchlings © Kevin Reyes; Leatherback hatchling born in Manabi, after 32 years © Cristian Soledispa

## 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts



The fourteenth meeting of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles Consultative Committee of Experts (CCE14) was held on March 4-5, 2021 via videoconference. The delegates from 14 IAC country members participated in the meeting representing Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Caribbean Netherlands, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay, as well as the CCE sectorial members and observers from Canada and Trinidad & Tobago governments.

The items agreed at this meeting to present to the IAC 10th Conference of Parties included the recommendation to amend the Resolution for the conservation of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle CIT-COP7-2015-R2, the presentation of an analysis of the first year of data on the interactions between sea turtles and industrial longlines, and the recommendations from the Consultative and Scientific Committees on the implementation of the Resolution on Exceptions in Costa Rica, Panama, and Guatemala.

The Consultative Committee updated its work plan including the implementation of a bi-national pilot project in Chile and Peru on the collection of data regarding the interactions between fisheries and sea turtles, the activities of the working group on artisanal fisheries to use catch/mortality, and effort indices, and the activities of the Northwest Atlantic which include mapping areas of importance to this population.

The implementation of these activities will facilitate addressing issues such as documenting and mitigating the interactions between sea turtles and fisheries, and the protection of their habitats.

## Inter-sessions meeting in preparation for the CCE14 – Artisanal Fisheries Working Group



The Consultative Committee of Experts Artisanal Fisheries WG held its 3rd meeting in preparation for the 14<sup>th</sup> Consultative Committee of Experts on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The products to present to the CCE14 agreed during the meeting included the recommendations to begin the harmonization of data gathering in fisheries using mortality and fishing effort indices as the base unit, and to start a bi-national pilot project between Chile and Peru, the objectives of which are to:

characterize artisanal fisheries using longline or nets in both countries, develop a self-report form to quantify sea turtle bycatch to be used by observers at port and fishing bosses, train artisanal longline and gillnet fishers in the identification and handling of sea turtles, and quantify the interactions between longline and gillnet fisheries and sea turtles.

## IAC and CPPS plan joint activities within the framework of the Sea Turtle Technical Scientific Committee of the Southeastern Pacific Permanent Commission

The IAC Secretary *PT* participated in the II EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE SEA TURTLE TECHNICAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE SOUTHEASTERN PACIFIC with a presentation of the IAC priority projects, on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, to identify joint activities to collaborate within the framework of the MoU between the IAC and CPPS. The countries part of the CPPS Action Plan - Chile, Panama, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia agreed that the items to collaborate with the IAC included in the Sea Turtle Technical Scientific Committee of the Southeastern Pacific Permanent Commission are sustainable management, protocols to record stranding, capacity building on best practices for sea turtle handle and release, development of a sea turtles experts directory and activities to support sea turtle's conservation in the Eastern Pacific.



## Participation of the IAC Secretary *PT* as an observer in the SPAW Protocol Pre-STAC meetings

The IAC Secretariat *PT* participated as an observer in the SPAW Protocol Pre-STAC virtual meetings held on March 1,



8, and 9, 2021. The Species Working Group presented its recommendations, including those regarding sea turtles. The IAC has been invited to form part of this working group within the framework of the MoU between the IAC and the SPAW Protocol.

## Monthly meetings of the IAC-IATTC technical team to coordinate the EASI-Fish Model Phase II and the EP Leatherback Habitat Distribution Model

Technicians and advisors from Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, USA, Panama, and Ecuador who are members of the technical team, the IATTC scientific staff, and the member of the LaudOPO network (photo) under the coordination of the IAC representative, Dr. Bryan Wallace, have been meeting twice a month since January 2021, to collaborate with data for the models and make decisions on the scenarios to be tested, based on the IATTC Resolution [C-19-04](#) that came into force on January 1, 2021.



The Resolution prohibits sea turtle retention in all vessels and requires their immediate release using the best practices for sea turtle handling and release and suggest other potential technical options of mitigation that have demonstrated reducing the frequency and severity of interactions between longline fishing gear and sea turtle, including usage of large circle hooks and fish as bait.

The data-gathering phase has finished, to now start the modeling process by the IATTC scientific staff.

## Recommended publications

### ♦ Ramsar Sites and Sea Turtles, a state of the art

Ramsar announced the publication by the experts on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar site) and sea turtle conservation to support the implementation of Resolution XII.24, on February 8, 2021. The publication was prepared by the French biologists Jacques Fretey and Patrick Triple with the support of France's focal point to Ramsar. The report is available on the IAC website and will be available in other languages by mid-2021.

[http://www.iacseaturtle.org/docs/tecnicos/Rapport\\_Tortues\\_marines\\_et\\_Sites\\_Ramsar-Web.pdf](http://www.iacseaturtle.org/docs/tecnicos/Rapport_Tortues_marines_et_Sites_Ramsar-Web.pdf)

### ♦ Impact of 2020 COVID-19 lockdown on environmental education and leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) nesting monitoring in Pacuare Reserve, Costa Rica

Quesada-Rodríguez, C., Oriente, C., Diaz-Orozco, J., & Sellés-Ríos, B. (2021). Impact of 2020 COVID-19 lockdown on environmental education and leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) nesting monitoring in Pacuare Reserve, Costa Rica. *Biological Conservation*,

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006320721000331>

Contact us  
Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles  
5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Virginia 22041-3803, USA  
contact@iacseaturtle.org  
www.iacseaturtle.org  
Twitter: @IAC\_SeaTurtles  
Foto: [Giachen's World](#) on [Unsplash](#)

