



IAC News Bulletin

IAC Secretary PT Participated at the Expert Workshop to Prepare Practical Guidance on Preventing and Mitigating the Significant Adverse Impacts of Marine Debris in Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Habitats



Marie Chambers
Inter-American
Convention for the
Protection and
Conservation of
Sea Turtles (IAC)

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held an expert workshop on December 2 - 4, 2014, in Baltimore, USA. The objective of this meeting was to prepare practical guidance on preventing and mitigating the significant adverse impacts of the marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats that can be applied by the CDB Parties and other government agencies in the implementation of the coastal and marine biodiversity work program. Ms. Verónica Cáceres, IAC Secretary PT was invited to participate in this workshop to provide inputs on the impacts of marine debris on sea turtles across the IAC region and to propose mechanisms for collaborative work between both conventions. The participants identified the following elements for practical guidance on preventing and mitigating the adverse impacts of marine debris: (1) Empower communities and relevant stakeholders at the local level, (2) Partner with Industries, (3) Mainstream within the national governments, (4) Enhance International Cooperation, (5) Increase efforts to address abandoned, lost and discarded Fishing Gear and vessel-based pollution, (6) Inclusion of marine debris consideration in labeling and certification schemes among others.



*Group of experts attending the Baltimore workshop.
Photo: Courtesy of the CBD Secretariat.*

The IAC Scientific committee has a working group on marine debris comprised by Argentina, Caribbean Netherlands, Chile and Ecuador that are collecting information on this topic within the IAC region. They can provide information to improve the understanding of these processes and to identify people in the region that can work collaboratively with other conventions, governments and local stakeholders. The marine debris problem requires the collaborative work among various agencies of each country in order to improve its management. The IAC is pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this dialogue. The workshop documents are available on the following Web Page:

<http://www.cbd.int/doc/1?meeting=MCBE M-2014-03>



Bulletin No. 24
December 2014

Argentina Held Workshop to Prepare “The National Action Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles”

The Environmental Policy and Planning Sub-secretary, Dr. Silvia Révora and Dr. Gabriela Navarro, Fisheries and Aquaculture Sub-secretariat, Ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry and Fisheries provided opening remarks in the Workshop to prepare the “National Action Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles” held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on November 26, 2014. Dr. Révora highlighted the importance to begin the collective work for the development of this plan, which is expected to be included in the inter-ministerial program known as Pampa Azul, which addresses the challenges to understand and protect our seas. On the other hand, Dr. Navarro invited the participants to continue to work in collaboration between fisheries and environment agencies to achieve an ecosystem based management strategy, which will contribute aim to the reduction of the fisheries interactions with sea turtles, marine mammals and sea birds.

Day one discussions focused on the analysis of the two main threats affecting the sea turtles in Argentina: incidental captures and the ingestion of marine debris. Ms. Jorgelina Oddi, from the Aquatic Resources Working Group and IAC Focal Point gave an overview of the Convention and its implementation at the national level. Ms. María Laura Tombesi talked about the development of other national action plans. On behalf of the Research and Fisheries Development National Institute, Dr. Victoria González Carman gave a presentation on sea turtles conservation status and threats. On behalf of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sub-secretariat, Dr. Laura Prosdocimi talked about fisheries and sea turtle interactions.

The marine debris problem was addressed by Dr. Diego Albareda (Buenos Aires Botanical Zoo / PRICTMA, in Spanish) and Chair of the IAC Scientific Committee, Dr. José Luis Esteves (FPN, in Spanish) and Dr. Nora Gómez (ILPLA, in Spanish).



Pictures during the National Action Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles Preparatory Workshop. Photos: Courtesy of Dr. Diego Albareda.



On day two, the participants worked in two groups, one for each threat, and objectives and specific actions to work together were developed. The results of this workshop will provide baseline information to develop the National Action Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles in Argentina.

The workshop was sponsored by the IAC and the following agencies were in attendance: the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sub-secretariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Protected Areas Working Group, the Directorate of Wild Life and the Integrated Solid Waste Management, under the coordination of FREPLATA. The local Agency for Sustainable Development, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Rio Negro Secretary of the Agriculture, Husbandry and Fisheries Attended on behalf of the provincial organizations. Representatives of NGO's, Universities and Research Institutes such as INIDEP (in Spanish) also attended the workshop.

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SPAW Protocol COP8 Acknowledges IAC Report on Concerns About Legal Take of Hawksbill Turtles in the Eastern Caribbean

On Monday Dec. 8, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol met in Cartagena, Colombia. The Committee discussed the listing of new species on the SPAW annexes, evaluated and recognized 13 protected areas under the SPAW protocol of particular importance to the Wider Caribbean Region. The Committee also reviewed the work of the SPAW program of the past two years and the work plan for the next biennium. Paul Hoetjes, delegate of the Netherlands, attended the meeting and brought the work of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) to the attention of the STAC. In particular, he communicated the concerns voiced in the recently completed report on the conservation status of hawksbill turtles in the Caribbean by Dr. Cathy Campbell, commissioned by the IAC, about ongoing legal take of hawksbill sea turtles, in particular in the Eastern Caribbean, and including parties to the SPAW Protocol who are under obligation to protect sea turtles. The intervention by the Netherlands led to the following recommendations from the STAC, endorsed by the SPAW COP8 the following day:

The SPAW COP remind all SPAW Parties of the requirements of the Protocol and call on Parties that are allowing legal take of sea turtles, that this is not in compliance with the Protocol and should either be stopped or only allowed under the criteria for exemptions provided in the Protocol, in which case they should enter into the process of reporting such an exemption to the STAC in order for the STAC to assess its pertinence.

Further collaboration with the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention on Sea Turtle Action Plan (STRAP) development and other sea turtle activities in the workplan to ensure that work is not duplicated.

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*Plenary at the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee.
Photo: Courtesy of Paul Hoetjes.*



Utría Natural National Park: a Cradle to Hawksbill Turtle in Colombia

A group of scientists from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Center for Research and Development and Environmental Management (CIMAD, in Spanish), and the Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative (ICAPO), with the support of National Park Office in Colombia visited the Utría Natural National Park in the northern Pacific coast, in the Choco Biogeographic Province.

During three days of free diving in La Aguada coral reef, also known as the “El Riscal de La Chola” eleven hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) were observed, from which 8 were captured. The turtles were measured, tagged with metal flipper tags, and released back to the ocean. Satellite transmitters were installed in two turtles, named as “La Chola” and “Utría” to monitor their movements, which are now recorded at the NOAA/ICAPO Web Page.

http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/index.shtml?tag_id=121984

http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/index.shtml?tag_id=121983

This finding helped to identify the area as an important foraging site for hawksbill turtles in the Pacific region and within a protected area. At present, the IAC Secretariat PT is working with Colombia to become a member of the IAC. Once this is achieved, the protection of this species can be strengthened by implementing the Resolution for the hawksbill turtle conservation CIT-COP3-2006-R-1.

The Utría Natural National Park, also has important nesting sites for the olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) and a monitoring program started recently at “San Pichi” nesting beach, one of the most abundant nesting sites for this species in Colombia.

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Capture of a juvenile hawksbill turtle
Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Diego Amorocho



Satellite transmitters installed in two hawksbill turtles.
Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Diego Amorocho



Group of scientists working at PNN Utría
Photos: Courtesy of Dr. Diego Amorocho



Protection of Sea Turtles, Rays and Sharks in the Ecuadorian Coast

During the COP11 of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animal (CMS), the Ecuadorian Environment Ministry (MAE, in Spanish) presented its plans and programs for the protection of marine species, including the conservation of sea turtle nesting sites for the olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*). The MAE Marine and Coastal Management Sub-Secretary, Eliécer Cruz, highlighted the preparation of the Sea Turtle National Conservation Plan, a national effort sponsored by Conservation International. This plan is consistent with other international initiatives, allowing joint efforts to protect this species beyond the country's territorial waters.

The plan includes conservation actions within the 16 marine and coastal protected areas in Ecuador, protecting important nesting beaches for sea turtles. The Plan also includes a collaborative work with other ministries focused in the reduction of fisheries interaction that negatively affects sea turtle populations. The Plan foresees the implementation of a rescue center that would help in determining the causes of dead of sea turtles and other marine species suffering from human impacts, pollution, fishing gear or accidents with boats.

It is expected that proposed education and outreach actions will increase the active participation of nearby communities in the sea turtle conservation, particularly those next to nesting sites.

During this meeting, the scientist Andrea Marshall highlighted the need of protecting other migratory species such as sharks and rays, which are abundant in the Ecuadorian waters, particularly at Manabi and Galapagos islands. She mentioned that efforts to protect rays, sharks, humpback whales and sea turtles require collaboration at all levels, and so Ecuador promotes the inclusion of these species in the CMS Appendix II.

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Portada del plan nacional de conservación de tortugas marinas del Ecuador.
Foto Eduardo Espinosa.





Recent Publications

Plos One a free online publication that recently published a work on identification of coastal habitats, population parameters and residence time of green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) aggregations in two regions in Peru from 2010 to 2013. One is located in the upwelling site of El Niño in the tropical ecotone, and the other is the Paracas region within the subtropical ecotone. In the northern site, the turtles were mainly sub-adults, while in the southern site they were mostly juveniles. Both sites showed healthy turtle populations suggesting that coastal water conditions are contributing to the recovery of this species. This is one of the few works conducted in Peru in natural populations, despite the threats caused by interactions with artisanal fishing and with tourism most recently. The full document can be accessed in the following link:

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0113068>

The US National Library of Medicine and the US National Institute of Health through the web portal PubMed published in September 2014 a work about the tumor-forming disease fibropapillomatosis (FP) associated to the herpes virus, a disease that prevails in coastal and eutrophic waters. The scientists found that tumors were notably elevated in glycine, proline, alanine, arginine, and serine and depleted in lysine when compared to baseline samples. They found they were related to the intake of macro algae in eutrophic sites that contained elevated arginine compared to macro algae from oligotrophic sites. In their research, scientists estimated that adult turtles foraging at eutrophied sites increase their arginine up to 14 times the background level, and may metabolically promote latent herpes viruses and cause FP tumors in green turtles. The full document can be accessed in the following link:

<https://peerj.com/articles/602/>

We invite you to send us news on courses, research and other activities related to sea turtles and their conservation.

Submit your article in a Word file and photography in JPG format to the e-mail:
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MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR !!!



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