
INTER AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND
CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES

Fourth Meeting of the Scientific Committee

Held in Antigua, Guatemala, from July 23 to 27, 2007.

1. Opening of the Meeting

1-At 08:35 AM of 07/23/07 the meeting started. The Committee Chair, Jack Frazier, welcomed the audience and requested the presentation of the participants

2. Adoption of the agenda and work organization

2-Following such act, the agenda and the work plan were read, and a request for observations was made. Both were approved.

3-It was informed that the Municipal Council of Antigua had extended an invitation to the attendants for participating in homage and reception for the celebration of this meeting at 18:30 hours of that day.

3. Summary of the current status of the Convention and the Scientific Committee

4-The Chairman made a presentation of the progress made to the date in the meetings of the Scientific Committee.

- a. The resolution on *Dermochelis coriacea* was finally achieved and the parties were asked to provide follow up to such resolution.
- b. Texts for two new resolutions to be proposed to the parties were written, one on *Eretmochelis imbricata* and the other one concerning the interaction between fisheries and sea turtles.
- c. The format for the Annual Reports to be submitted to the IAC was analyzed, but it was noted that not all the party states submit such document. The format of such report will be discussed again.
- d. Concerning the standardization of information, it is necessary for this information to be comparable both within and outside of the countries providing it.
- e. Recommendations with regard to the use of turtle excluding devices (TED) have been issued.
- f. Work plans have been very succinctly made, with very few resources and receiving requests both from the COP and the Consultative Committee.

- g. Collaboration and synergy are necessary for advancing during the period between meetings. It is also convenient to procure support from other persons and entities.

5- The Pro Tempore Secretary, Marco Solano, presented a summary of the 3rd Meeting of the COP, held in Mazatlan, Mexico, in October 2006.

6-He remarked that the strategic plan presented to the Consultative Committee (which met prior to the COP3) was left pending, given that there is neither a budget for its execution or a Permanent Secretariat. It was agreed that such plan was to be discussed once more at the extraordinary meeting in Lima, Peru, in October 2007. At such meeting, topics concerning financing and establishing a Permanent Secretariat will be analyzed.

7-Concerning the financing for the IAC operation, the current situation is that the United States, Mexico, Guatemala and Costa Rica have collaborated with this, but there are still no established contribution fees. During the current year, the contribution decreased by 80%. As for the proposed meeting on the Carey turtle, the required budget is not yet available.

9-With regard to incidental fishing of sea turtles, terms of reference need to be proposed for facilitating the operation on behalf of the countries.

10-The appointment of the 9 sector representatives of the Consultative Committee is reported.

11-Two understanding memos were signed, one with OSPESCA (Central American fishing organism) and the other one with the SPAW protocol of the Cartagena Convention.

12-It was reported that Uruguay approved incorporation to the IAC, while Chile is about to approve its incorporation. On the other hand, Panama and Argentina are willing to be partly counterparties. Conversations have been held with the government of the Dominican Republic about the exploitation of the hawksbill turtle in their coasts; the Government was found to be willing to organize such exploitation.

13-The Pro Tempore Secretariat was invited to a meeting on the hawksbill turtle in the Pesca 2007 event held in Cuba, to which Marco Solano and the Vice-president of the Committee, René Márquez, attended. Cuba is interested in moving the hawksbill turtle from appendix I to II of IACES. Cuban government representatives indicated that due to political reasons they are not able to sign the IAC, although they are willing to collaborate and decided to ban hawksbill turtle fishing, which represented approximately 700 t/year.

14-René Márquez reported that there is a sea turtle conservation program in Cuba since the 70's, while Alberto Abreu reported that there was a moratorium for sea turtle fishing declared in Cuba since 2007.

Julia Horrocks asked whether there were other non-Hispanic countries interested in joining the IAC, to which Marco Solano answered that communications have been sent to Surinam, without any answers from them so far.

15-The Caribbean countries participate more with the SPAW protocol, and we reach them through this international organism. France is concerned with the financial part, since there are not fixed fees yet that will allow them to assess the cost of participation. Conversations have been held with El Salvador, as well as with the United Kingdom, but there has not been an agreement with the latter due to the fact that Grand Cayman commercializes green turtles.

16-Marco Solano also emphasized the existing debt of the representations of the countries. The parties appoint the members for the Scientific and Consultative Committees and may also remove them. However, the 9 sector representatives are appointed in particular and cannot be replaced.

17-Alberto Abreu indicates that documents are submitted to COP prepared by the Scientific Committee and with suggestions from the Consultative Committee; hence the COP receives the suggestions from each committee.

18-J. Horrocks repeats the case of the Caribbean countries, which show more interest in the SPAW protocol, but A. Abreu insists on the fact that, although the IAC is small, understanding memoranda with other larger conventions such as SPAW allow for expanding the action framework between the countries.

19-Fernando Félix emphasized that the Action Plan from the Southeast Pacific was promoted by the Program of the United Nations for the Environment (PNUMA) and that it comprises topics such as protected marine areas, biodiversity and climatic change. The Permanent Commission of the Pacific Southwest has been acting for 55 years. The topic of sea turtles starts in 2005. It has been proposed for the information contained in the national reports to be compatible with the IAC; also reported is the creation of a Scientific Committee. This Commission is comprised by Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Colombia. Costa Rica has shown interest in participating in this initiative.

20-Anabella Barrios asks whether there is another convention involving the Central American countries.

21-J. Frazier answers that there are regional seas under the United Nations intervention, of which the Southeast Pacific Ocean, the Eastern Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea are some examples.

22-M. Solano explains that Nicaragua is a signatory for the IAC but that it has not ratified it. However, it has restricted the extraction of eggs in Las Flores beach, although they have not been able to overcome the problems with the Misquito community, which is an autonomous community. Every year this community benefits from 11 to 13 thousand green turtles and the problems affects Costa Rica as well, without the

government having been able to solve the matter. The situation is less severe in the Pacific side of such country.

23-The Honduran delegate asked for an explanation in the case of Nicaragua. He stated that his country has a similar problem. A ban was attempted in Nicaragua and the Misquitos rebelled against such measure. The situation was counterproductive since the social problem in the coast of Nicaragua was not addressed.

24-With regard to a question from an observer about the need for having a social science expert in the Committee, Alberto Abreu clarified that Jack Frazier submitted a list of experts to COP3 for their incorporation to the Scientific Committee, but that no decisions have been made about the issue.

25-M. Solano clarifies that most of the time the topic of sea turtles is not given much priority due to lack of information from the people. For such reason, he requests all to support the IAC with bibliographical contributions.

4. Follow up of the Resolution about the interaction with fisheries within the framework of the FAO (IAC-COP3-2006-R-2)

26-The COP 3 considered the report on the fisheries – turtles interaction to be very complex and coinciding with FAO directives. However, this calls for the preparation of regional plans. J. Zuzunaga indicates that it seems that the COP 3 has pushed aside the work of the group that wrote such report. Nevertheless, M. Solano clarifies that the text of the COP3 agreement indicates that the recommendations from the Scientific Committee concerning interaction with fisheries have been approved. J. Frazier considers that the parties should receive help for compliance with commitments on incidental capture demanded by FAO and other conventions.

5. Follow up to Resolution “Conservation of the Leatherback Turtle”. (IAC-COP2-2004-R-2)

27-J. Frazier recommended that measures should be pragmatic and that fundamental actions to be carried out for protecting this turtle species must be presented to the parties.

6. Follow up to Resolution “Conservation of the Hawksbill Turtle Carey” (IAC-COP3-2003-R-1).

28-A. Abreu indicated that since 2000 the abundance of this turtle species decreased after a maximum observed in 1999 in Yucatan. In 2005 and 2006 the population density increased, but it decreased once more in 2007, which is an evidence of the fact that the population is not recovering properly. Beaches are 90% protected, hence the problem seems to lie elsewhere. Due to this, it is expected that the desired workshop to be organized provide critical information on this species. Two meetings have been proposed, one technical and the other political for decision-making purposes.

29-The Brazil delegation indicated that, in their region, the density of this species displays a different pattern, since while hundreds of nests were observed annually before, now there are thousands of them.

30-A. Abreu remarked that, undoubtedly, nesting increases have been detected in other regions, which seems to indicate that the problem lies with the Mexican populations. Satellite markers have confirmed that hawksbill populations remain in the waters of such country.

31-M. Solano reported that CITES accepted the IAC proposal of delegating in itself the organization of regional workshops for assessing the hawksbill turtle status.

32-R. Márquez asked about the WIDECASST representation in the IAC. J. Frazier answered that the coordinator of such organization is a member of the Consultative Committee. D. Chacón added that there is a WIDECASST coordinator in each country.

33-A member of the Guatemalan delegation clarified that the local hawksbill population does not migrate beyond the reef and seldom moves towards Mexico or the United States.

7. Annual reports

34-J. Frazier explains that reports should be digital and user-friendly. B. Dick presented a map synthesis of annual reports, but there is still not an integrating synthesis made of such information. Any recommendations made concerning the format should be incorporated in the 2009 national report, since they should first go to the Consultative Committee and then to the COP for their approval. It was made clear that both countries (Mexico y Guatemala) reported information concerning compliance with resolutions (en particularly that of *D. coriacea*). With regard to this matter, J. Frazier suggested that the work group could propose the way in which the parties should report information on compliance with resolutions. M. Solano indicated that there is already a proposal made for the digital formatting of annual reports. J. Frazier wishes to receive concrete proposals on priority projects applying the pertinent support; likewise, it is desirable to get proposals on how the interaction between groups of interest can be harmonized at a national level and subsequently submit it to the COP.

35-Work was then assigned for the remaining days of the meeting. Four work groups were established: fisheries, *Dermochelis*, *Eretmochelis*, and a fourth group comprised by observers from Guatemala where aspects considered relevant and requiring support from the Scientific Committee were discussed. The groups were comprised by the persons present.

8. Work plan of the Scientific Committee (2007-2008)

36-J. Frazier indicated that in 2006 a small committee issued recommendations about the way for incorporating social sciences to the Scientific Committee. During the COP3, the Mexican Delegation proposed 4 people to act as advisors to the Committee. J.

Frazier took charge and showed a preliminary list of social science experts. It was expected that they could also help in obtaining funds for financing studies. However, not all delegations interpreted the proposal in the same way. As a result, it turned out that, as a Scientific Committee, we are not competent for addressing social issues. There was a voting for selecting the social area participants and its results should have been sent to the focal points. Nevertheless, a decision has not been made yet and there were not any resources for bringing down these people to the current meeting. However, it is essential that the annual report contain information concerning social aspects.

37-J. Zuzunaga clarified that there was not a concrete mandate in the COP 3 regarding the specialists in social affairs in the Scientific Committee. M. Solano added that, despite several meetings held by the COP, no decisions were made about socioeconomic aspects in the Scientific Committee. He considers that the point is not that the parties are reluctant to incorporate social scientists to the Scientific Committee meetings, but that they would rather have a work plan made indicating when the specialists will be needed. He believes it would be best only to invite somebody to the Scientific Committee meetings.

38-J. Horrocks asked what the reason to appoint four people was. It was made clear that this was a proposal from the Chief of the Mexican delegation. J. Zuzunaga indicates that he hopes that the point will be addressed at the Lima meeting because it will show in the budget. The Guatemalan delegate clarifies that the report recommends that there should be at least one representative from the social sciences. J. Frazier considers that some focal points may be asked to support the measure at the Lima meeting. A. Abreu believes that a team could be made, comprised by social science specialists, with which to work, and one of them could be invited to each Scientific Committee meeting. Finally, J. Frazier points out that the work plan will contemplate the way to work with the social science specialists.

9. Other issues

39-A. Abreu suggested that the cost of the meetings is high and it is estimated at US\$125 per person-day, all included, while in Mexico it could be obtained for US\$ 75.

40-B. Dick made a presentation compiling information from national reports. Maps per species have been made as an aid for the countries. He indicated that for 2008 there will be a special digital format. The data base was organized in the following way: important SIG sites, where nesting or migration sites are shown. There are maps with nesting sites per species with the description of each site. When the Pro Tempore secretariat detects some aspect that seems to be an error, it should report it to the Scientific Committee, which in turn will correct it and will inform the focal point on the necessity of making corrections.

41-Dates were established for submitting the pending documents in order to compile them and submitting them to the parties.

42-M. Solano wishes us to inform the focal points on the aspects discussed in this meeting.

43-The standardization group wishes to emphasize that, when a nesting site is reported, the longitude (the distance between the sea and the sandy supralitoral) of the beach should be indicated, as well as its width. The fisheries group also considers that there should be a standardization of terms concerning fishing aspects.

Version prepared by:

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(Rapporteur CC-IAC 2004-2008)

ANEX I

Provisional Agenda

Opening of the meeting.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

Summary of the present status of the Convention and the Scientific Committee:

Advances and pending work of the Scientific Committee;

Summary of COP III;

Collaboration and synergy with other instruments and organizations (e.g., CITES);

The organization of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parties;

Priorities for the Scientific Committee.

Follow up on the Resolution on interaction with fisheries within the frame work of FAO, in particular COFI 2005/7 and COFI/2005/Inf. 15, Appendix E (CIT-COP3-2006-R2).

Follow up on the Resolution on the conservation of *Dermochelys coriacea* (CIT-COP1/2002/R-5).

Follow up on the Resolution on the conservation of *Eretmochelys imbricata* (CIT-COP3/2006/R1),

Recommendations for the organization of a workshop on the status of conservation of *Eretmochelys imbricata* in the Greater Caribbean.

Annual Reports:

Analysis of the format and instructions;

Evaluation of content;

Standardization of procedures and information provided;

Harmonization with the reports of SPAW, Action Plan of the South Pacific, and IOSEA;

Integration of information relevant to the resolutions adopted:

Conservation of *Dermochelys coriacea* (CIT-COP1/2002/R-5);

Conservation of *Eretmochelys imbricata*(CIT-COP3/2006/R1);

Interactions with fisheries (CIT-COP3-2006-R2).

Work plan of the Scientific Committee (2007-2008), including integration of specialists in the social sciences;

Date and venue of next meeting.

Other matters.

Closure.

ANEX II

HAWKSBILL WORKING GROUP REPORT – FINAL 10/Sept

Coordinator – Alberto Abreu (MEX)

Relator – Luciano Soares (BRA)

Participants:

René Márquez (MEX)

Vicente Guzmán (MEX)

Julia Horrocks (NethAnt)

Ivan Tarasco (Guate)

Laura Sarti (MEX)

Resolution on Hawksbill conservation (CIT/COP3/2006/R-1)

A. Follow-up on the Implementation of Resolution CIT/COP3/206/R-1.

The working group (WG) attempted to extract information regarding the implementation of Resolution CIT/COP3/2006/R-1 from the 2007 Annual Reports that were available. However, it became clear that the present format of the Annual Report does not allow for the extraction of this information. Even though members of the working group were aware that some Parties already had active projects or were carrying out actions focusing on primary measures in the Resolution. Because of this, the WG recommends the use of a specific table annexed to the Annual Report form (see attached), for reporting on actions/measures that each Party has taken or is initiating in relation to the points included in the resolution. The table would complement the Annual Report form, soliciting details on projects and actions that might be found in the Annual Report itself but with less detail and specificity (e.g., Sections 2 and 4.1). Also, by having the separate tabular summary, it will make future evaluation by the Scientific Committee more effective.. Once the Annual Report form is simplified and more

advanced, it might be advantageous to integrate the points included in the annex into the main body of the Annual Report form. However, while the Annual Report form is being revised, a separate annex is the most effective way to insure that there is an adequate reporting mechanism for follow-up on resolution CIT/COP3/206/R-1.

Regardless, the WG envisages that future evaluation of implementation progress will require indicators to be developed for individual actions so that a quantitative analysis can be carried out.

Finally, the WG would like to stress to the Parties that this Resolution has the ultimate goal of achieving the recovery and/or stabilization of hawksbill populations and their habitats in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic region. For this reason it urges Parties that future, evaluations of implementation be expanded to incorporate indices that specifically assess progress in this regard.

B. Hawksbill workshop

1) Update on the status in the Yucatan nesting hawksbill population

Mexico's request for the Convention's intervention in resolving or clarifying its hawksbill population crisis was central to the initial drafting of the Resolution by the IAC Scientific Committee WG at IAC SCIII. The working group therefore first reviewed unpublished results from ongoing research in Mexico, addressing key issues of hawksbills' ecology in the Yucatan Peninsula that had been identified as priorities in previous meetings, both of the IAC Scientific Committee and within country. One major information gap for these populations has been the limited knowledge of the species' migratory patterns. To address this, and with financial support from the Mexican Science Foundation (CONACyT) and more recently from NOAA, 10 satellite tags were deployed on female hawksbills after nesting on beaches in Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo. A primary goal was to locate inter-nesting habitats, migratory corridors and foraging sites. Migratory destinations are important since if these are found to be in the territorial waters of other countries, the causes of the current decline could involve incompatible practices outside of Mexico. On the other hand, if all key habitats were found to be within Mexican waters, and if the decline in breeding output was caused by impacts on food abundance or directly on breeders at foraging sites, the location of these habitats needs to be known.

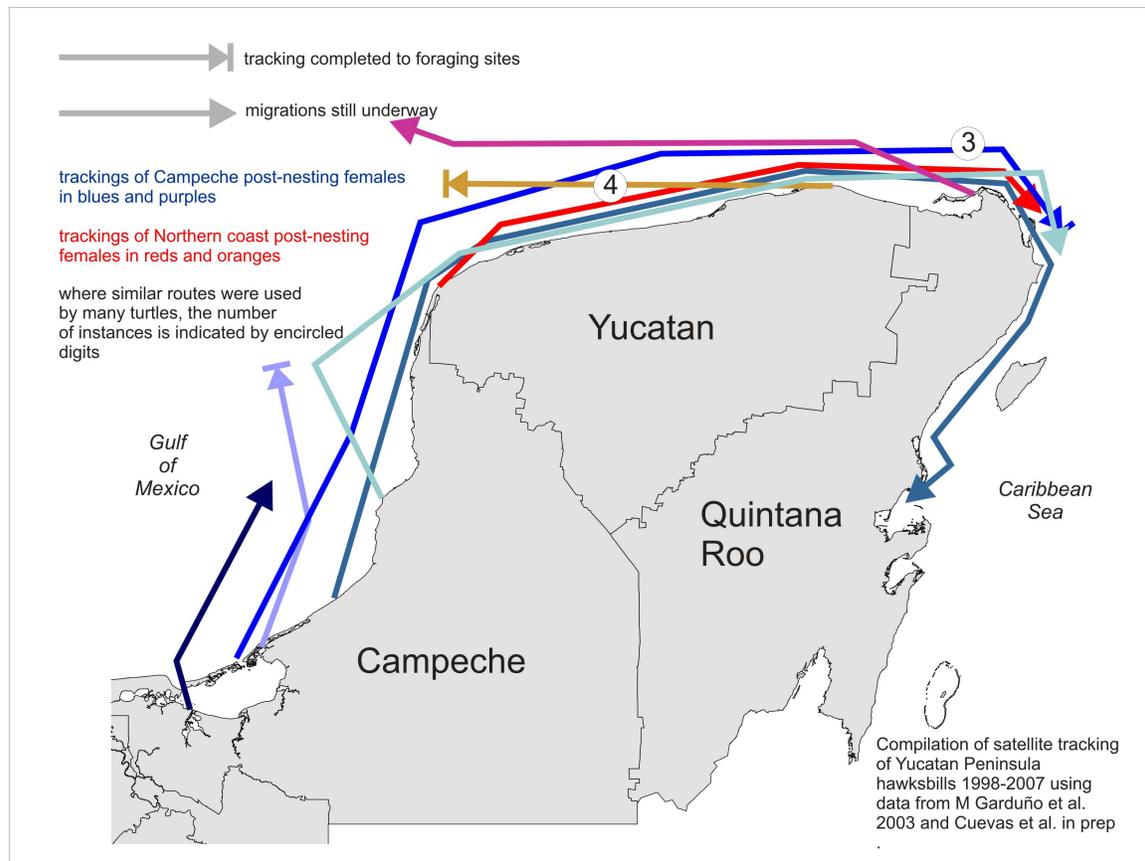


Figure 1. Summary of tracking studies on post-nesting hawksbill females in the Yucatan Peninsula. “Tracking completed to foraging sites” indicates cases where females were tracked to sites where they have remained and are presumably feeding there.

The tracking results (fig. 1) have provided tremendous improvements in our knowledge of the location of foraging sites and migratory routes of female hawksbills breeding in the Yucatan peninsula. These indicate that, at least once they become breeders, their migratory corridors are primarily shallow and near the coast, and remain totally within Mexican territorial waters. It also appears that habitats off Quintana Roo are the predominant foraging destinations of females nesting on the Western coast of the Peninsula, while turtles leaving nesting beaches from the Northern coast (Yucatan and Quintana Roo) seem to travel in the opposite direction. This preliminary conclusion that hawksbills remain within Mexican waters applies only to adult breeders. Since genetic studies have identified Mexican molecular markers in aggregations at foraging habitats in other countries of the Wider Caribbean, at least some portion of the population and during part of their life cycle, Mexican hawksbills still appear to be traversing international waters of other countries.

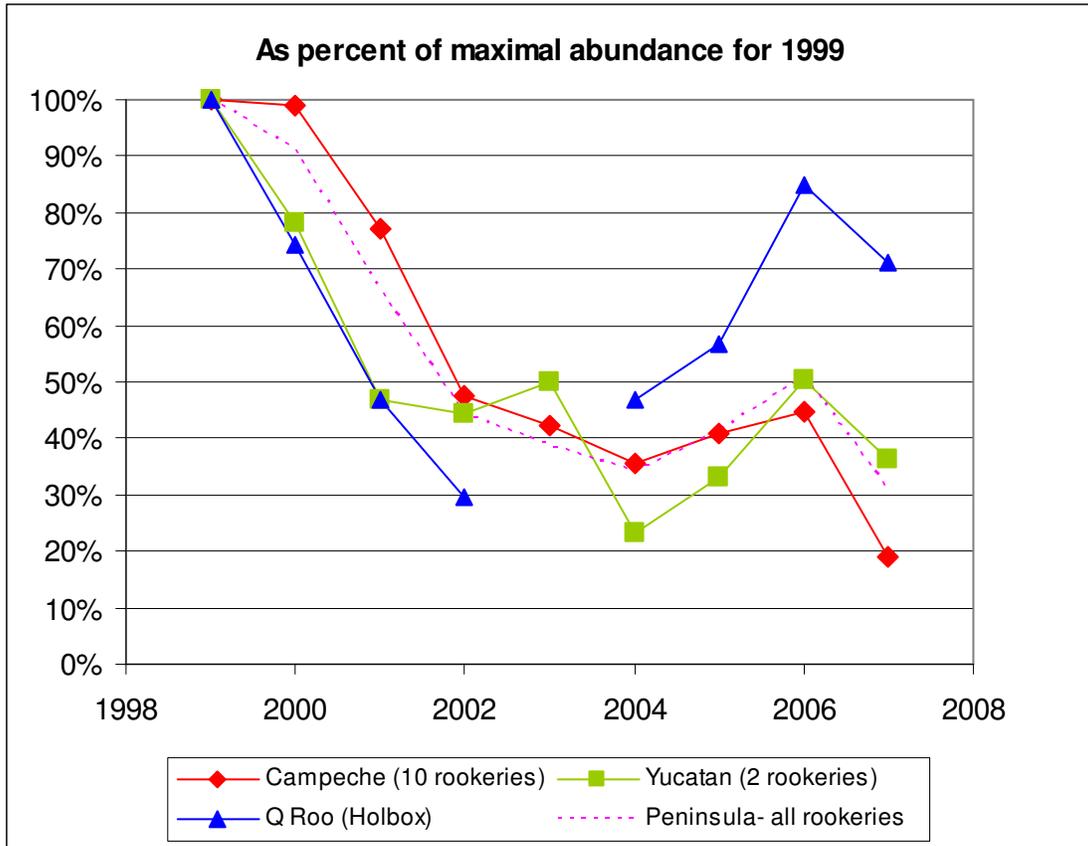


Figure 2. Trends in nesting abundance at the primary hawksbill nesting beaches of the Yucatan Peninsula in the states of Campeche (10 beaches), Yucatan (2 beaches) and Quintana Roo (1 beach) expressed as % of maximal values observed in 1999 of 3,576, 1,262 and 710 nests/yr respectively. Unpublished data courtesy of Vicente Guzman; Eduardo Cuevas; CONANP; Comité Estatal para la Protección y Conservación de las Tortugas Marinas de Campeche; Pronatura Península de Yucatán, A. C.

Judging from the most recent nesting censuses (2007 season), the status of the Yucatan Peninsula populations which represent about 25% of the entire species' Caribbean nesting output, still remains critical. Nesting abundance (fig. 2), in spite of slight increases in the 2005 and 2006 seasons, has declined again to Peninsula-wide levels (taking values for all rookeries; broken red line in fig. 2) below the previous minima of 2004. Results also indicate that whatever are the causes of the decline, the factors and phenomena involved are most probably shared across the entire set of rookeries since trends repeat themselves across the three states: rise to the all-time high in 1999-2000 with a slight drop in 1997 (not shown), steep decline 2000-2004, slight increase 2005 and 2006, drop to all time low in 2007. The level of decline has not been equal; the drop in Campeche nesting is the most dramatic, followed by Yucatan and lastly by the sole rookery in Quintana Roo (Holbox). No reason for these differences has been discovered yet.

2) Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-Rev 1

When the WG reviewed Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-Rev 1 it noted that the scope of the regional hawksbill meeting is not meant to be focused on addressing the causes of the declines of the Mexican nesting populations, as originally set out in the draft resolution produced by the Scientific Committee, but rather requests an evaluation of the species' status in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic, and calls for a presentation of broadly applicable best practices for research and conservation of this species and its marine habitats. While totally agreeing with the need to open the scope of the workshop, the WG continues to stress that a primary focus be on how to obtain information and address issues associated specifically with the decline of the Mexican hawksbill populations. This is because Mexico provides a case study of a situation that could be repeated elsewhere in the region if the knowledge gaps persist. Furthermore, the situation of the Mexican hawksbills represents an unique example of a population that has been extensively protected and monitored at nesting beaches for decades, had robust evidence for increases over several years, but has declined for as yet unexplained reasons unlike other increasing populations in the region..

3) Potential synergy with other multilateral regional organizations

During its deliberations, the WG was conscious of the fact that Parties to CITES at COP14 had discussed how best to support regional approaches to the management and conservation of hawksbill turtles in the Caribbean. These discussions led to the adoption of decision CITES CoP14 Com. I. 11 which specifically aims to create linkages with regional conventions (namely IAC and SPAW) in order to facilitate collaboration with CITES and the realization of a regional meeting on hawksbills. The decision instructs the CITES Secretariat to

Provide support to, and collaboration with, the IAC and the SPAW protocol in

raising funds for a meeting on hawksbill turtles in the Wider Caribbean region to promote collaboration, planning and information sharing in the region, and

cooperating with other organizations and multilateral agreements that have a mandate concerning the conservation for this species in the region

Request the IAC and SPAW to include issues related to illegal trade in hawksbill turtles in the regional meeting's agenda

enable the participation of the CITES Secretariat in the regional meeting as an observer as well as the participation of CITES Parties of the Wider Caribbean

provide a report which would include the results of the meeting as well as, if available, information about the progress made regarding the implementation of national management plans

Noting the above, the working group recognized the existence of a unique opportunity to promote synergy between the three major multilateral instruments with interests in the conservation and management of the hawksbill in the Wider Caribbean region. Further, if the regional meeting is successfully achieved with effective collaboration between SPAW and CITES, implementation of recommendations could be made by States not Party to the IAC, leading to truly region-wide benefits for the species.

4) Status of hawksbills in the Eastern Pacific

During the plenary discussions, mention was made of the critical state of hawksbill populations in the Eastern Pacific and that their condition could also be included in the issues dealt with by the regional meeting. While agreeing that this is a critical issue which comes under the mandate of the Convention and should be addressed, the consensus was that the meeting already had a full enough agenda without expanding it further.

5) Recommendations specific to the technical workshop

The WG then reviewed and updated the goals and themes proposed for the regional meeting, using as its base the outline proposed by the Third meeting of the Scientific Committee (Annex 4- Report of the Working Group on the Status of the Hawksbill Turtle). It identified both short- and long-term goals, as well as specific critical issues that should be addressed by the workshop:

LONG TERM GOALS

Achieve the recovery and stability of the species throughout the region

Develop and maintain long-term monitoring, using standardized procedures, of key/index habitats (nesting, migratory, inter-nesting, resting and foraging) throughout the region

Assure that use (consumptive and non-consumptive) by any State or territory in the region does not negatively impact on opportunities for use (consumptive or non-consumptive) by another State or territory in the region

Develop and support existing measures and networks for collaboration, planning and information sharing among States and territories within the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic region

SHORT TERM GOALS

Make full use of lessons learnt from the decline in Mexico to avert further decline in-country, and to avoid possible repetition in other populations in the region

Increase awareness of the ecological, social, economic, and political problems caused by declining populations

Identify and address knowledge gaps critical for effective conservation and management programs

Adequately address social and economic impacts on local communities of conservation measures for hawksbill populations and their habitats; and involve coastal inhabitants as partners in conservation initiatives.

Through compilations provided by speakers on key themes, provide sea turtle biologists and managers, with effective management and research tools with which to understand hawksbill population dynamics and to begin addressing declines in hawksbill populations

The application of best management and research practices broadly throughout the region

Impress upon all participants the relevance of the IAC and the importance of regional collaboration

Ensure that besides expert presentations in priority themes, countries with experience in long-term monitoring and the additional themes identified below actively participate. Countries in the Wider Caribbean region where focused and long-term work on hawksbills is, or has been, carried out include the following (in alphabetical order). All of these are members of CITES and their inclusion will further address this organization's request (mentioned above) that CITES Parties be included in the workshop:

Antigua

Barbados

Belize

Bonaire

Brazil

Colombia

Costa Rica

Cuba

Dominican Republic

Guatemala

Honduras

Jamaica

Martinique/Guadeloupe

Mexico

Nicaragua

Panama

Puerto Rico/USVI

Venezuela

The WG spent a great deal of time “brain-storming” on the focus and issues to be addressed at the meeting and produced a list of major themes relevant to hawksbill conservation in the region. However, because there are too many issues to address in a single meeting the group prioritized the items to emphasize those considered to be most critical to improving the conservation status of the hawksbill as well as providing States with the means for applying the best conservation and management practices. The results are as follows:

PRIORITY THEMES TO BE DEVELOPED AT THE MEETING (those considered by the WG to be of highest importance are in bold)

Synthesis of updated information on the status of hawksbill populations of the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic (this also addresses one of CITES requests)

Synthesis of findings and recommendations produced at the Mexican Hawksbill technical workshop to be held in November, 2007

Extent and impact of trade, especially illegal trade (likewise, addresses a CITES request)

Protection of nesting habitat, especially mitigation of development at coastal/beach zones and prevention of beach erosion

Genetic structure of the populations/management units

Population dynamics of nesting populations (mortality, recruitment, remigration cycles, mark-recapture studies)

Population dynamics of foraging aggregations (including age composition, recruitment rates, sex ratios, evaluation of breeding status of adults)

Population modeling as a management tool, with emphasis on information necessary to develop models for management purposes

Trophic ecology at foraging sites (including the identification and status of prey species and their habitats, relationship to breeding status of adults and the ecological role/value of hawksbill turtles)

Identification of incorrect methods of research and conservation, particularly those used in nesting beach and rookery conservation, with clear and practical recommendations for correcting these problems

Migratory behavior and dispersal of the species and different patterns among sub-regions (covering the different life-stages)

Impacts of global warming on hawksbill populations and their habitats

Impacts of fisheries and boat collisions (assuring that all life-stages are considered)

Mitigation of negative impacts of protection measures on former sea turtle fishers and alternative livelihoods

The following topics were discussed and, though considered to be important, in view of the limitations on time and resources for the meeting, they were considered best left for a future initiative:

Capacity building

Analysis of hawksbill strandings (including networks and information that can be derived from clinical analyses, including necropsies)

Develop a widely accepted definition of “recovery” for this species and the protocols used in some countries to reach this goal

Impacts of the oil industry (seismic exploration, pollution by oil slicks and tar)

Impacts of invasive and feral species on eggs, hatchlings and nesting females

Law enforcement

Environmental education

Expected outcome and uses for the report produced by the meeting:

Provision of assistance for the region’s managers to develop or update national and regional conservation and management plans for the hawksbill, based on:

Updated information on the conservation status of the region’s hawksbill populations

Updated information on tools and new knowledge to assist in both species and habitat conservation

Provision of technical assistance to Mexico, and other countries in the region with declining trends in hawksbill nesting numbers

Provision of a framework for collaboration and information exchange among the range states

Enhancement of the capacity of range states to meet their obligations within multilateral environmental agreements

Suggested characteristics for the meeting/s

Number of meetings. Considering the time and financial constraints and the desirability to include attendance from the key countries in the region identified above, the WG favors the organization of one technical meeting. This meeting could involve presentations from invited specialists on the key issues and the attendance of technical personnel from the countries listed above. Of relevance here is the fact that Mexico will be organizing a national meeting at the end of 2007, involving all sectors implicated in hawksbill conservation to analyze an updated information set on the species' status in the Yucatan Peninsula. The conclusions and recommendations from the Mexican meeting should be seen as a significant input for the regional meeting.

Participant profile- Assuming a single technical meeting, participants should reflect broad geographic and thematic representation, and expert presenters should be of prominent status in relevant areas (e.g., population ecology, fisheries, coral reef ecology, physical oceanography, climate change, natural resource economists, and social sciences (depending on final themes selected). With the intention that countries and regional organizations "buy-into" the meeting and its outputs, participants from countries in the list presented previously should be of prominent technical status and commissioned to attend by their respective management authorities

Organizers: IAC & SPAW Secretariats

Number of participants: About 20-30 participants, including presenters, organizers (IAC and SPAW), country representatives and observers (CITES);

Duration of the meeting- 4 to 5 days

Tentative dates- Not before spring 2008. An earlier date is not possible because the national meeting on the status of the Yucatan Peninsula hawksbills must be held with sufficient time for the proceedings to be made available as input to the regional workshop. Furthermore the IAC pro-Tempore Secretariat has a previous commitment to organize the Extraordinary COP meeting in Lima during Oct 2007.

Location- Mexico, which has been widely agreed amongst Parties to IAC.

Strategic steps in the development of the meeting

Establish a committee (IAC/SPAW) to oversee development of the technical meeting

Convene the national Yucatan hawksbill status meeting, compile results and conclusions, and distribute proceedings.

Coordinate actively with SPAW Secretariat to ensure maximum participation by countries in the region and to coordinate efforts and timing

Invite CITES Secretariat to meetings

Seek alliances with the Mesoamerican Reef Project (SAM), WIDECAST inter alia

Select assistance from NGOs who have expressed interest in the process

Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles
FOURTH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE, to be held July 24th – 27th, 2007 in Antigua, Guatemala
Convención Interamericana para la Protección y Conservación de las Tortugas Marinas
CUARTA REUNIÓN DEL COMITÉ CIENTÍFICO para celebrarse el 24 al 27 de julio del 2005 en Antigua, Guatemala
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