



# IAC BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE PRO TEMPORE SECRETARIAT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES (IAC)

## 28th International Sea Turtle Symposium

The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation was held from January 19-26, 2008 in Loreto, Baja California Sur, Mexico. Over 1,000 sea turtle researchers and conservationists gathered from around the world to share the latest news and report their progress on sea turtle monitoring and conservation. This year's theme "Native Oceans" recognized the importance of indigenous conservation in conservation success. The Seri Indians of Sonora participated in the symposium by sharing their special leatherback ceremony. A few research highlights:

- Tracking data on leatherback foraging off California, USA shows urgent need for protecting Californias/Eastern Tropical Pacific.
- Baja California Sur's efforts to reduce bycatch.

- Global warming: the past, present and future of sea turtles – new research from Australia.

- Hawksbill sea turtles are ecologically extinct in the Eastern Pacific Ocean: a new review places them near the top of the region's most endangered ocean animals.



Matthew Godfrey

The symposium was combined with the Grupo Tortuguero meeting as well as its associated and regional meetings: Africa, Indian Ocean & Southeast Asia, IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, Mediterranean Sea, RETOMALA (Latin America) and WIDECAS (Caribbean). In an effort to minimize the ecological impact of the

event, symposium attendees followed the LIVBLUE Challenge. Tactics include camping and home stays, using public transportation or walking, reducing waste, and sustainable organic/local eating choices. Energy was sustainably produced with a solar trailer for recharging attendees' laptops, and cell phones. Even the tequila was organic! In the symposium's honor, the world's first organic tequila, 4 Copas Tequila, produced a Limited Edition Sea Turtle Bottle, all proceeds went to [seaturtle.org](http://seaturtle.org). For more symposium information: <http://iconferences.seaturtle.org>



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### IN BRIEF:

- **Panama has ratified the IAC!** It is our pleasure to inform you that on January 4th, 2008 Panama ratified the Convention in their national legislation (Law No. 8). A copy of that instrument is being sent to Venezuela, the official depository of the IAC. Once it is delivered, the Convention will enter into force. Congratulations to those whose efforts have made this possible.
- **1st IAC Extra-ordinary Meeting of the Parties.** The COPEL Meeting Minutes and approved Resolutions: CIT-COPEL-2007-R1 *Establishment and Operation of a Permanent Secretariat* and CIT-COPEL-2007-R2 *Guidelines for Financing the Operation of the IAC* are now available: [www.iacseaturtle.org/iacseaturtle/English/conf.asp](http://www.iacseaturtle.org/iacseaturtle/English/conf.asp)
- **IAC Regional Hawksbill Workshop.** The designated steering committee has begun organizing a workshop with recognized experts in order to evaluate the current condition of hawksbill populations in the Greater Caribbean and Western Atlantic. This mandate was established in Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R1. Check the IAC website soon for further details.

## Turtles & Tourism

Planning a vacation? Hoping to see sea turtles? Human visitation to nesting beaches in the form of ecotourism has increased dramatically over the past decade. Tourism can be positive for sea turtle conservation and surrounding communities, however, insensitive tourism can present serious threats to sea turtles and their habi-

tats, especially at nesting beaches. Marine Conservation Society and its associates have produced an entertaining and educational cartoon "Turtles in Trouble". The video is for UK tourists planning a vacation in the Mediterranean, but includes advice relevant to all destinations with sea turtles. It demonstrates how small changes in our behavior can make big differences to sea tur-

gles found at tourist destinations.



Check out the video at:

[www.mcsuk.org/marineworld/turtles/](http://www.mcsuk.org/marineworld/turtles/)

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### NEW RELEASE:

SWOT Report Volume III includes:

- State of the World's Hawksbills, Worldwide Hawksbill Nesting Map & Trade Routes for Tortoiseshell
- Turtle Mother and other Indigenous Tales
- Shifting Shorelines
- Plastic Threats to Marine Life and Much More!



[www.seaturtlestatus.org](http://www.seaturtlestatus.org)



## Turtles & Tourism continued...

### Cuba ends harvesting of hawksbills.

Cuba has banned the harvesting of all marine turtles, according to a Ministerial Resolution, which passed in January of 2008. This ends Cuba's long standing harvest of 500 critically endangered hawksbill turtles/year, thus benefiting turtles throughout the Caribbean that regularly feed in Cuban waters. This is a joint effort by the Cuban Ministry of Fisheries and WWF, with financial support from CIDA. [www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)



"This decision reflects the political will of Cuba to join the call of the international community to adopt measures that guarantee marine turtle conservation" Dr. Elisa Garcia, Director of Fishing Regulations.

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Ocean Conservancy launched its new conservation tourism program, Sea Turtle Ecological Expeditions (SEE Turtles). The program informs travelers on sea turtle locations where local conservation efforts exist, resulting in support for sea turtle protection while increasing community resources to help residents thrive and value sea turtles in the wild. It also provides turtle watching guidelines to travelers to reduce negative

impacts on turtles and the host community. Going beyond the ecotourism mantra of tourists not impacting the environment they visit, Ocean Conservancy suggests that travelers should make a positive impact through conservation tourism. SEE Turtles is founded on the premise that the growing business of sea turtle viewing and tourism must be developed with the goal of protecting sea turtles as well as generating revenue. The program will begin in Baja California Sur, Costa Rica

and Trinidad and Tobago. For more information on how to become a more responsible vacationer, this program, its destinations and guidelines check out [www.oceanconservancy.org](http://www.oceanconservancy.org) or [www.seeturtles.org](http://www.seeturtles.org).



# SEEing is believing

## Fourth International Fishers Forum

The Fourth International Fishers Forum was held in Puntarenas, Costa Rica from November 12-14, 2007. The first time this event was held in Latin America. The international meeting of 250 fishermen, management authorities, industry representatives, fishing technology experts, marine ecologists and fisheries scientists facilitated the sharing of information and experiences on sustainable fishery practices and ap-

proaches to minimize interactions with sea turtles, seabirds, sharks and cetaceans in longline and gillnet fisheries. A key outcome of the meeting was the decision by Central American government representatives and regional non-governmental organizations to join efforts to exchange legal, fishing and scientific information about fisheries resources. Both the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and the

Central American Aquaculture and Fishing Sector Organization expressed their support of this initiative. The Puntarenas Declaration was adopted to express their agreement for implementing 12 specific actions to improve fisheries sustainability, including reduce incidental catch and improve post-release survival rates for sea turtles. For more information on this event visit [www.fishersforum.net](http://www.fishersforum.net).

## Species Update . . .

The National Marine Fisheries Service and Southwest Fisheries Science Center, together with international partners in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, tracked a leatherback swimming from Indonesia across the Pacific to a foraging area off the coast of Oregon, USA. This female was tracked for 647 days over a distance of 12,774 miles before the signal was lost, setting a **new record for sea turtles**. Further research shows nesters from the western Pacific metapopulation, the last sizable nesting population in the Pacific, mi-

grate through Philippines, South China Sea and Japan, into the Southern Hemisphere. This once again proves the urgency for protecting Pacific leatherbacks through international cooperation. For more information: [www.seaturtlestatus.org](http://www.seaturtlestatus.org).



Map: Stephen Nash / Conservation International

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