

A large sea turtle is seen from above, swimming in the upper half of the frame. Below it, a coral reef is visible with several small, striped fish swimming around. The background is a deep blue ocean.

INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES

NEWS BULLETIN

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INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES (IAC)

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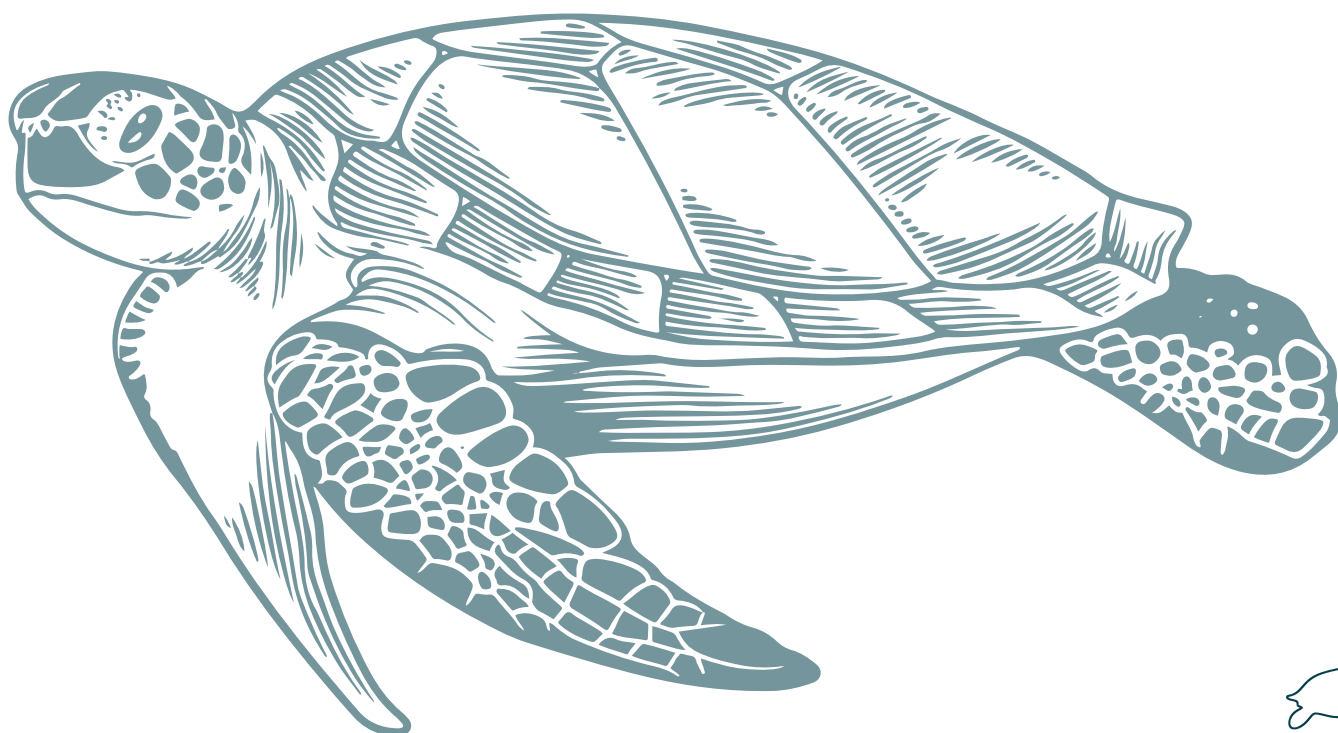
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Presentation IAC and IATTC at the Workshop on Bycatch, Common Oceans Tuna Project

January 27th-29th, 2025

The publication "Vulnerability of the Critically Endangered leatherback turtle to fisheries bycatch in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Assessment of mitigation measures" co-authored by IAC and IATTC, was presented by our colleague from IATTC staff Dr. Jon López, at the Workshop on Bycatch of the Common Oceans Tuna Project held from January 27-29, 2025, at the FAO-Rome. The IAC Secretariat requested to the workshop organizers ICCAT to include this agenda item to bring attention to sea turtles. The presentation successfully showcased the science generated by IAC in collaboration with IATTC to share our conservation efforts and inspire future collaborations within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding that IAC signed with other RFMOs present at the workshop. The publication is available at this link: Endangered Species Research, vol. 53, pp. 295-326. <https://doi.org/10.3354/ESR01305>





Presentation IAC at the Workshop on Mitigation Measures for the Bycatch of Sea Turtles, CIBBRiNA Project - European Union

February 2nd-5th, 2025

IAC was invited to present the progress in the implementation of the Resolution on mitigating the impacts of fisheries on sea turtles, and the work of the IAC Scientific Committee on the "Manual for Handling and Release of Sea Turtles Incidentally Caught in Fishing Operations". The workshop was held by video-conference from February 3-5, 2025. The Secretary Verónica Cáceres was the speaker. The workshop was attended by 20+ scientists, mainly from the Mediterranean region, and the organizers were ICES, CIBBRiNA, REDUCE, and Marine Beacon. This was an opportunity to share the significant progress of IAC and its members in reducing threats to sea turtles and to nurture new alliances with experts from other regions. The topics discussed included: the assessment of the impact of interactions and associated mortality, and mitigation measures

CIBBRiNA stands for "The Coordinated Development and Implementation of Best Practice in Bycatch Reduction in the North Atlantic, Baltic, and Mediterranean Regions".

It aims to minimize the bycatch of endangered, threatened, and protected species in the North-East Atlantic, Baltic, and Mediterranean regions, working collaboratively with fishers, authorities, scientists, and other relevant stakeholders to achieve this. More information about the project can be found on their website: <https://cibbrina.eu/about/>





IAC Secretariat attends the Joint Monitoring and Assessment Open Ended Working Group and Sargassum Working Group Workshop

March 18th-20th, 2025

The workshop between the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Monitoring and Assessment of the LBS Protocol and the SPAW Sargassum Working Group is an initiative to enhance regional coordination and integration between the AMEP and SPAW sub-programmes to address the challenges posed by Sargassum inundations and nutrient pollution. The meeting took place in a hybrid format with the in person part carried out in Trinidad and Tobago. IAC Secretariat attended in virtual format.

Associated biodiversity

Clinging fauna

- Turtle hatchlings, crabs, shrimps, sargassum frogfish, sargassum pipe nudibranchs, polychaete worms, and

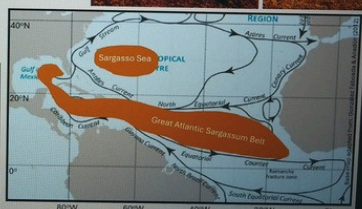


Sargassum distribution

- Restricted to North Atlantic Ocean
- Historically confined to Sargasso Sea
- New consolidation area in NERR (since 2010)
 - An area of highly complex currents
- Seasonally expands to form Great Atlantic Sargassum Belt (GASB)

Implications

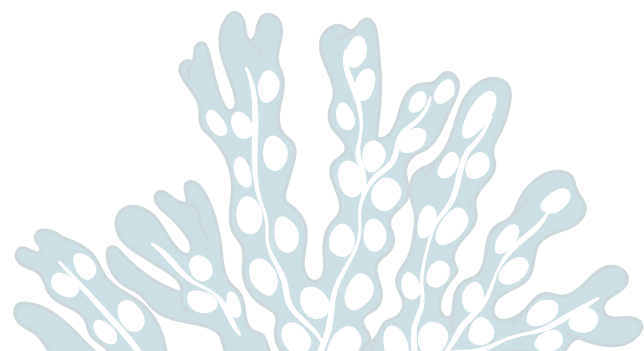
- High Seas origin and transboundary travel a special management challenge
- Now regularly inundates coasts of Caribbean and West Africa
 - International issue and HAB?





The objective of the workshop was to provide a comprehensive overview of Sargassum influxes in the Wider Caribbean Region and their potential links to nutrient pollution, identifying key data gaps and research needs to improve regional monitoring and assessment efforts. A key outcome was the identification of joint activities for inclusion in the Sargassum Working Group's Action Plan, this document included activities to collaborate with the IAC, strengthening the integration of thematic linkages between nutrient pollution, eutrophication, and marine biodiversity conservation. Additionally, the meeting provided technical recommendations to be considered at the upcoming SPAW Scientific and Technical Advisory Committees (STACs), reinforcing regional strategies to mitigate nutrient enrichment, manage Sargassum influxes, and enhance the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems.

The participation of IAC Secretariat supports the implementation of the letter of intent between IAC and SPAW signed in July 2024 with the objective of aligning efforts and avoid duplication, the IAC Scientific Committee also has a Working Group on Sargasso, and this workshop facilitates greater cooperation between regional and international partners, ensuring coherent policy development and technical collaboration. The action plan finalized in the meeting will contribute to more effective mitigation strategies, supporting the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems across the Wider Caribbean Region





IAC Legal Working Group meeting

March 26th

The meeting was held in a virtual format with the participation of WG members from Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and Ecuador. The objective was to follow up on the progress made by the WG-Legal and the IAC Secretariat in the implementation of the financial strategy to raise funds to support the operations of the Convention Secretariat. The participants proposed recommendations to facilitate the progress of the efforts in each country to provide the financial resources that the IAC needs to sustain its activities and fulfill its work plan. The recommendations will be sent to the Chair of the IAC COP12.



New version of the IAC Annual Report Online

On March 19, the UNEP-WCMC and the IAC Secretariat officially launched the new version of the online reporting system for IAC Focal Points to submit their National Annual Report to the IAC by April 30, 2025. UNEP-WCMC has been working closely with the IAC secretariats in support of a new Online Reporting System (ORS). The new ORS has been designed to streamline national reporting, improve data accessibility, and facilitate more efficient collaboration within Parties amongst those contributing to national reporting





The new system represents a substantial improvement in functionality and user experience compared to the previous ORS system. The redevelopment was guided by experts and consultations with IAC Secretariat and Parties to ensure a focus on responding to users' needs. The new ORS is designed to provide:

- **A Streamlined Reporting Process:** Simplified user roles (Secretariat, Main Respondent, Collaborator) reduce complexity, allowing respondents to access and consolidate past data submitted by their party easily.
- **Improved collaboration capabilities:** Party respondents can more easily collaborate with others on questionnaires, track team progress, and copy specific question assignments from one reporting cycle to the next. The experience for those collaborating within parties has also been streamlined and improved.
- **Advanced Questionnaire Management:** Secretariats can edit questionnaires so that parties are only shown questions which are applicable to them at each reporting cycle, reducing unnecessary reporting burden.
- **Trend & Analysis Dashboards:** Parties and secretariats can use graphic data visualizations to facilitate understanding of key trends across reporting cycles, supporting data-driven decision-making.



Laura Sarti: An Immortal Legacy in Sea Turtle Conservation

April 7th



More than four decades ago, a young biologist embarked on a path that would transform the landscape of sea turtle conservation in Mexico. Today, after 44 years of tireless dedication, Adriana Laura Sarti Martínez bids farewell to the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (Conanp), leaving behind a legacy that transcends generations and that we are sure will continue to set the course for many years to come.

From her first days in the field, her passion for leatherback turtles led her to become an indisputable reference in the conservation of this species. For 17 years, as a professor of Field Biology at the Faculty of Sciences of the UNAM, she trained hundreds of students, some of them now occupying diverse and important positions in conservation, inside and outside of CONANP; she directed professional and graduate courses, promoting the publication of scientific articles written by her students, with topics that are still current today, and at that time were at the forefront. Her own work has been a pillar in the dissemination of knowledge about sea turtles. Her commitment led her to become a member of the Marine Turtle Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as well as an advisor to the scientific and advisory committees of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles.



In 1996 she founded the emblematic Leatherback Project, coordinating it until 2021, thus contributing significantly to the study and protection of this endangered species. Her impact also reached the Lora Project and the Olive Ridley turtle arribadas in Escobilla, marking a before and after in the management of these populations.

In 2007, she assumed the position of Technical Coordinator of the National Sea Turtle Conservation Program at Conanp, where she led the development and implementation of action programs for the protection of all sea turtle species. Her strategic vision fostered the creation of organized groups such as the Leatherback Network, strengthening collaboration between scientists, communities and authorities.



To read the full article published by CONANP from the newsletter El Aullador: To read the full article published by CONANP from the newsletter:

<https://elaullador.conanp.gob.mx/index.php/2025/04/07/laura-sarti-un-legado-inmortal-en-la-conservacion-de-tortugas-marinas/>

Video interview with Laura Sarti here:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=CONANP+videos++2025+laura+sarti&mid=20D992B27021CC610DF620D992B27021CC610DF6&FORM=VIRE>

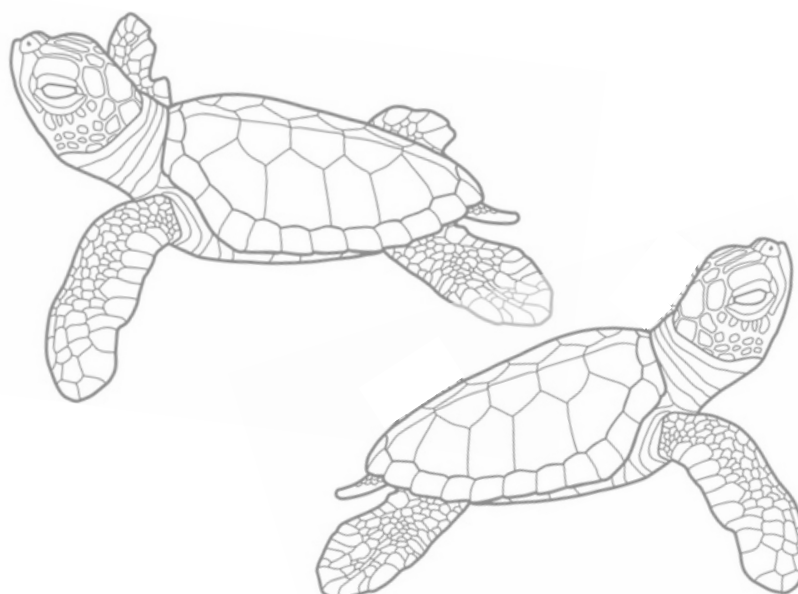


Historic record: the 2024/2025 green turtle nesting season in Fernando de Noronha already exceeds 750 nests



The reproductive season of the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) in *Fernando de Noronha* has already made history! So far, 772 nests have been recorded, a number that is expected to increase until June, when the nesting cycle comes to an end. The previous record, from the 2022/2023 and 2016/2017 seasons, which recorded 430 and 420 nests respectively, has been beaten by a wide margin.

The monitoring is led by *Centro Tamar do Instituto Chico Mendes para a Conservação da Biodiversidade (ICMBio)*, in partnership with *Fundação Projeto Tamar*, as part of the Sea Turtle Biodiversity Monitoring Program. The breeding season lasts until June, and the collaboration of locals and visitors is essential. When you come across a nest identification stake or see a laying female, observe from a distance and avoid any interference.





According to researcher Claudio Bellini, environmental analyst at *Centro Tamar - ICMBio*, the growth of spawning has been constant over the years. *"If we compare the current season with the first ones in the 1980s, we observe a multiplicative increase of about 20 times. This is a promising trend, which has also been documented in other spawning grounds around the world,"* he explains.

Although the main spawning beaches are protected by the *Parque Marinho de Fernando de Noronha* Integral Conservation Unit, challenges remain. *"We have no data on the size of the original population of breeding females before the archipelago was discovered, which makes a more accurate analysis of the impact of predation and protection difficult,"* Bellini adds.

For Rafaely Ventura, coordinator of the *Fundação Projeto Tamar* in *Fernando de Noronha*, this milestone reflects decades of dedication to conservation. *"A fundação was born with the mission of recovering sea turtle populations in Brazil. Now we are seeing the fruits of that work,"* he celebrates. Read more: [Centro Tamar/ICMBio](#) .





Meeting of the Working Group on the Terms of Reference of the Scientific and Advisory Committee

April 25th

The Working Group members from Argentina, Mexico and the Secretariat met on April 25 to prepare the document of changes to the Terms of Reference of the IAC Scientific and Consultative Committee that will be presented for review at the 18th Meeting of the Consultative Committee.

Participation of the IAC Fisheries Working Group in the 2nd IATTC Circle Hooks Workshop

April 28th-30th

The 2nd Circle Hook Workshop was organized by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission by videoconference on 28-30 april, 2025. The meeting aimed to meet the objectives identified by the IATTC Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group, specifically:

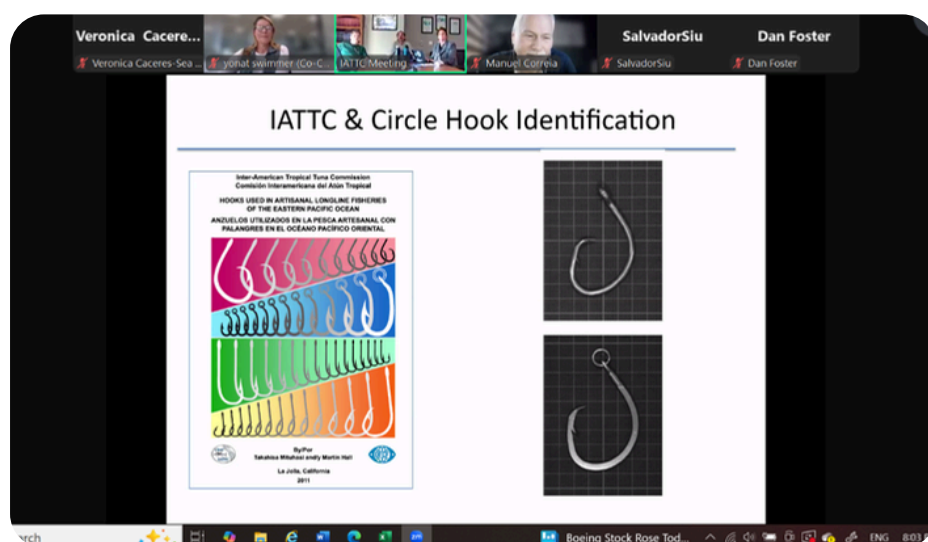
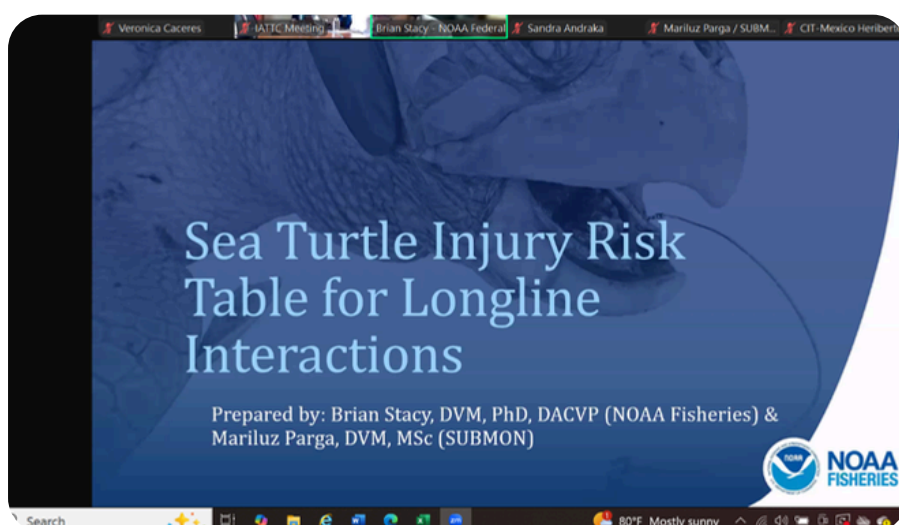
- I. Define the characteristics of a 'large' circle hook.
- II. Provide advice on the impacts of fishing operations on the form and structure (i.e., longevity and integrity) of circle hooks of various sizes and from different manufacturers.



III. Discussion of a third mitigation measure as described in Paragraph 3(d)(iii) of C-19-04 for small coastal multi-species vessel fleets as well as best handling and release practices for sea turtles.

IV. Update the best practices and release guidelines for sallow set long line fisheries.

The IAC delegation attending the workshop was comprised of the IAC Fisheries Working Group Members Dr. Heriberto Santana, Ing. Lezlie Camila Bustos, and the IAC Secretary.





Male loggerhead turtle monitoring in the MesoAmerican Reef



Belize

The Caribbean region is renowned for hosting vital nesting sites for loggerhead turtles, a fact well-documented in numerous studies. Many of these beaches have been identified and are subject to monitoring efforts, primarily focused on assessing the nesting population of females and the success of hatchings. However, there exists a significant gap in knowledge concerning male loggerhead turtles, despite their crucial role in the reproductive process.

The tagging initiatives of MarAlliance, an NGO registered in multiple countries, including Belize, where most of its long-term monitoring programs are centered, is focused on studying the site fidelity and migratory patterns of sea turtles, with a particular emphasis on male Loggerhead turtles. Unlike females, males do not return to land once they leave their nesting sites; this provides few opportunities to tag and study their movement patterns.

Important questions have arisen about whether turtles use Belizean waters primarily for foraging, mating, or as permanent habitats. To address this gap, our ongoing research concentrates on unraveling the spatial ecology of male loggerhead turtles, aiming to provide answers to essential questions surrounding their activities and behaviors. For example, we know that females migrate over long distances, but we don't know if males also follow the same patterns. How far and how often do they migrate: annually or every few years like the females do?





These are big questions that need answering if we are to fully understand the population dynamics of all species of sea turtles, not only loggerheads. We seek the answers to enable resource managers to develop well-informed management actions for species survival and in some cases rewilding.

The findings of the research so far has underscored the importance of cross-border collaboration in marine conservation, as migratory species traverse national boundaries and are not limited in movement within a specific region of waters.

One male turtle tagged in Lighthouse Reef Atoll, Belize in May 2024 traveled over 192 km in a almost straight line to an area off the coast of Honduras, where he stayed foraging for 9 months before returning to the very same area where he was initially tagged in Belize in February of 2025.





He is the second tagged loggerhead turtle to connect these two areas. These movements coincide with the time known loggerhead mating and nesting season. This is not only linkages being observed across the countries that make up the mesoamerican reef. Having countries such as Belize and Honduras as signatories to the IAC Convention significantly reinforces collaboration efforts aimed at the protection and conservation of migratory species. This alignment not only enhances policy-making but also promotes scientific cooperation among member states.

With an initial two years of tracking data on males, MarAlliance has begun to paint a picture of movement patterns within the region not previously known. These new insights highlight how connected our populations are within the region as we continue to learn more about the previously unknown lives of male loggerhead turtles. You can follow both our turtles and sharks being tracked on our tracking platform at <https://maralliance.org/tracking/>

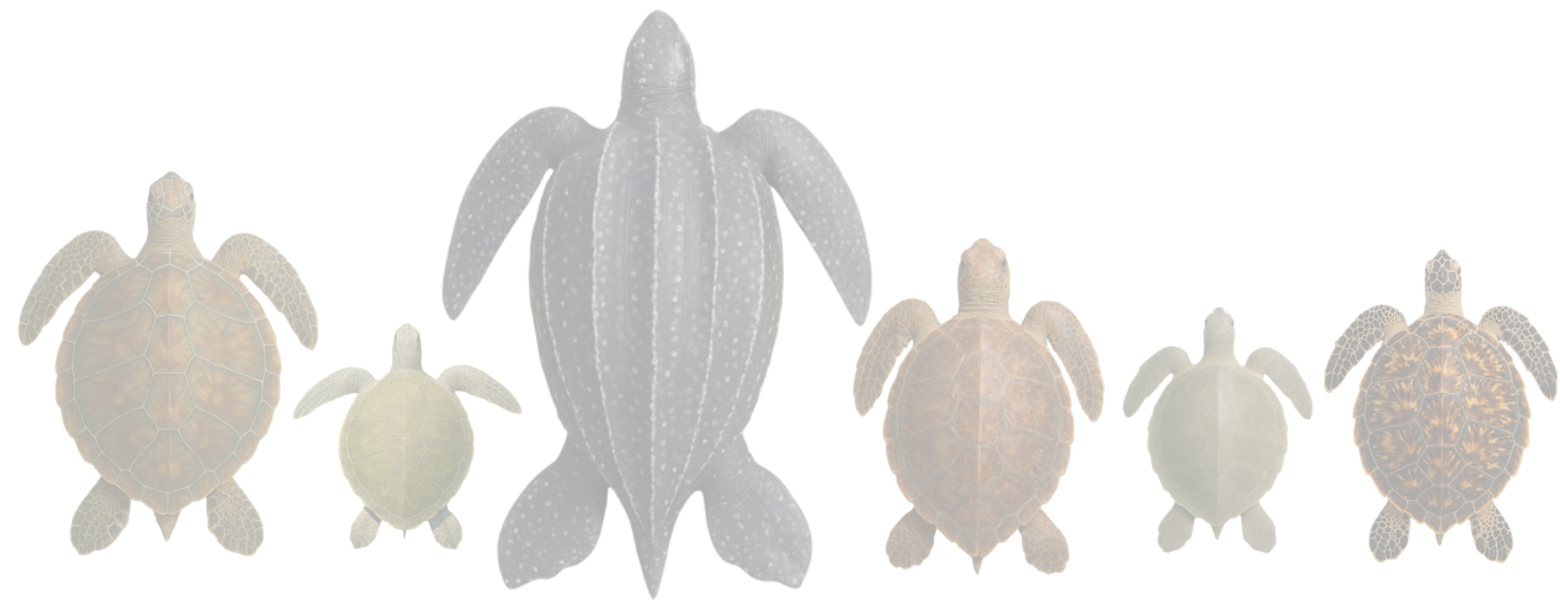
This article was provided by Msc. Kirah Forman-Castillo/ Belize National Coordinator MarAlliance/ Delegate from Belize to the IAC Scientific Committee.





Strategic Partnerships Working Group Meeting

The Working Group made up of members from Argentina, Chile, Peru, United States, Ecuador and Mexico met on January 15 to finalize the proposed technical document entitled “Electronic Monitoring in Fisheries for the Conservation of Sea Turtles”. This document will be presented to the IAC Consultative Committee and Scientific Committee for adoption.



Atlantic Leatherback (Baula Atlántico) Working Group Meeting

The Working Group comprised of members from the United States, Brazil, Argentina and observers from the Government of Canada and the NGO Sea Life Law held three meetings between January and March 2025 to prepare their terms of reference and a work plan for the biennium. Their work will be presented at the 18th Meeting of the IAC Consultative Committee.



UPCOMING IAC MEETINGS:

18th Meeting of the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts


29th-30th May, 2025

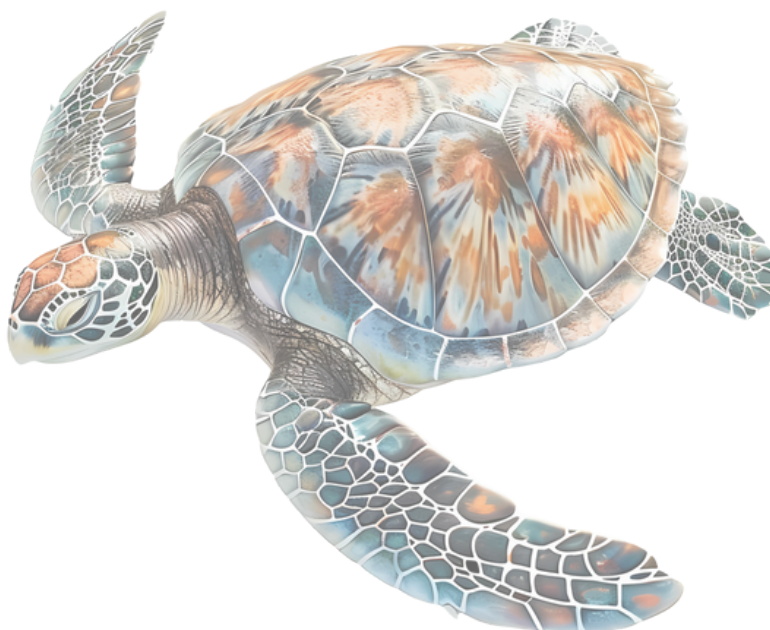
You can access the Convention bulletins at this link:

<http://www.CITseaturtle.org/boletin.htm>

Contact us:

Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea
Turtles 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Virginia 22041- 3803, USA
1 (703) 358-1828

www.iacseaturtle.org



Design and edition of the IAC News Bulletin:

Danilo Afonso Nogueira Costa

Centro TAMAR/ICMBio - Vitória - ES - Brazil