

# NEWS BULLETIN

## 2018 – No.33



### RECORD PARTICIPATION IN THE IAC 11th CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS MEETING (CCE11)

The Eleventh Meeting of the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts (CCE11) was held in March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018. The meeting was carried out from the IAC Secretariat *Pro Tempore* office at the United States Fish and Wildlife Service headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia, using the Videoconference software Vidyo. This technology allowed a record participation of 43 representatives from 14 of the 16 countries of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), including the delegates representing NGOs, Scientific, and Industry sectors.

The CCE11 updated its work plan (2018-2019), agreed on the modifications to the IAC Annual Report to follow up on the implementation of Resolution CIT-COP7-2015-R3 Conservation of Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*), and Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R2 Reduction of the Adverse Impacts of Fisheries). A working group to revise the guidelines for the IAC financial operation will present a proposal to update Resolution CIT-COPE1-2007-R2 in the next meeting in 2019.





A mechanism between the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts and the IAC Scientific Committee was defined to increase engagement with the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). The CCE also adopted the Proposal for a pilot study to record environmental parameters on nesting beaches under Resolution CIT-COP4-2009-R5 Adaptation of Sea Turtle Habitats to Climate Change. An invitation to participate in the pilot will be sent to the IAC Parties through the IAC Secretariat *Pro Tempore*. During the intersession period, the CCE will be working on a proposal to update Resolution CIT-COPE1-2007-R2 Guidelines for Financing the Operation of the IAC.

The IAC EP Leatherback Task Force coordinator, Mr. Bryan Wallace, presented a summary of activities, and the joint efforts with the Laud OPO network, which the IAC is a part. Updates on the Laud OPO network activities were presented, as well as next year work plan. This plan will focus on strengthening and aligning Laud OPO efforts with those of the IAC, promoting compliance with the Resolution on the Conservation of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle. The Task Force continues working actively and it also expects to increase its participation in RFMOs meetings.

The exchange of experience among the IAC Parties was also highlighted by Mexico and Peru, as it is fulfilling the Convention purpose of building capacities and exchange information among Member Countries. Costa Rica reported progress on the development of their Strategy for the Conservation of Sea Turtles, which has now been adopted.





## PARTICIPATION OF THE IAC IN THE 38th ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON SEA TURTLE BIOLOGY & CONSERVATION IN KOBE, JAPAN

The Secretary *Pro Tempore* of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles participated in the International Sea Turtle Society 38th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation held in Kobe, Japan between February 18 and 23rd, 2018.



The theme of the Kobe Symposium was “Beyond Protection of the Sea Turtle”. It focused on keep sigh of the missions and goals of those working on sea turtles conservation considering that as researchers and conservationists, it is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day activities of work and that it is important to take the efforts beyond protection to continue recovering sea turtle populations.

Representatives from IAC countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Curacao, Ecuador, Panama, Uruguay, The United States and Venezuela presented their projects results. Ms. Neca Marcovaldi, a delegate from Brazil, presented the achievements of Tamar’s project over the last 30 years by changing social behavior towards sea turtle conservation, providing livelihood alternatives to the communities. These efforts granted Ms. Marcovaldi the ISTS Lifetime Achievement Award 2018. The United States delegates, Alexis Gutierrez and Jeffrey Seminoff, focused in the conservation of the loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and presented the results of the successful cooperation between Japan, Mexico, and the United States.

Other presentations focused on the progress of the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) conservation during the 24th Meeting of Latin America Experts on Sea Turtles – RETOMALA.



Left. Brazil delegate, Ms. Neca Marcovaldi, sharing Projeto TAMAR’s achievements the last 30 years in a panel of experts. Right. USA delegate, Ms. Alexis Guierrez, presentin the results of the colaboration between Mexico, USA and Japan for the protection of the loggerhead turtle.



## IAC COUNTRIES PRESENTATIONS DURING THE 24TH MEETING OF LATIN AMERICA EXPERTS ON SEA TURTLES – RETOMALA 2018



On February 18, 2018, the 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Latin America Experts on Sea Turtles – RETOMALA, was held within the framework of the 38<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation in Kobe, Japan. This year's theme was the Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) feeding grounds and nesting beaches in Latin America, including status, threats, and conservation.

Researchers from the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) countries such as Brazil, Curacao, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, Argentina, and Uruguay presented the current status of investigations on hawksbill in their countries. Curacao presented the progress of the project on monitoring and nesting that began in 2014 with the support of the IAC.

RETOMALA is the oldest meeting of the International Sea Turtle Society and is a flagship of the Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation where the Latin-American community has an exclusive space to present results and progress of their research.



Presentations of Venezuela (Left) and Panama (Right) in RETOMALA 2018. Kobe, Japan



## IAC PRESENTATION DURING A WORKSHOP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES IN PERU



The final workshop to finish the development of the National Plan for Conservation of Sea Turtles in Peru (PNC in Spanish) was carried out on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018 with the participation of the public and private sectors. The process lead by the National Forest and Wildlife Service (SERFOR in Spanish) from the Ministry of Environment and Irrigation, in coordination with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Production has the support of the National Service of the State Natural Protected Areas (SERNANP in Spanish), WWF Peru and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC). The development of the PNC was also possible with the support of Peru's Sea Institute (IMARPE in Spanish), and the NGOs Pro Delphinus, Acorema, Ecoceanica and Planet Ocean.



Presentation on the IAC during the 3rd workshop for the development of the Peru's PNC Sea Turtles

A total of 47 representatives from the different sectors provided their final input to be included in the PNC. Peru's delegate to the IAC Scientific Committee, Mr. Javier Quiñones, presented the commitments of the country before the Convention, focusing on the implementation of the strategic actions for the conservation of the critically endangered leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*). The actions within the framework of the Resolution for Conservation of the Leatherback CIT-COP7-2015-R2 applicable in Peru include reduction of bycatch, identification of areas of high interaction with fisheries, define and protect important areas for the leatherback survival, and eliminate consumption and illegal use.



Javier Quiñones, Peru delegate to the IAC Scientific Committee

The vision, objectives, and activities of the PNC were approved during the workshop. Once the results are consolidated, SERFOR will proceed to submit the document for the consideration of the Ministries aforementioned. Finally, all the organizations and institutions representative participating in the workshop reaffirmed their commitment to promoting the implementation of the PNC, once it is approved.



Work group of the third workshop for the development of Peru's PNC Sea Turtles



## UNITED FOR THE CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES: 35 MILLIONS PROTECTED

Source <http://bit.ly/35milTAMAR>  
21-04-2018 Projeto TAMAR

At the beginning of April, 2018 Projeto TAMAR commemorated the protection of 35'000.000 of sea turtles in Brazil.

After 38 years of efforts in conservation, awareness, environmental education, social inclusion and sustainable development Brazil's dearest project gathered friends, partners and supporters to celebrate the results and deliver a positive message despite of the threats that the ocean is currently facing.

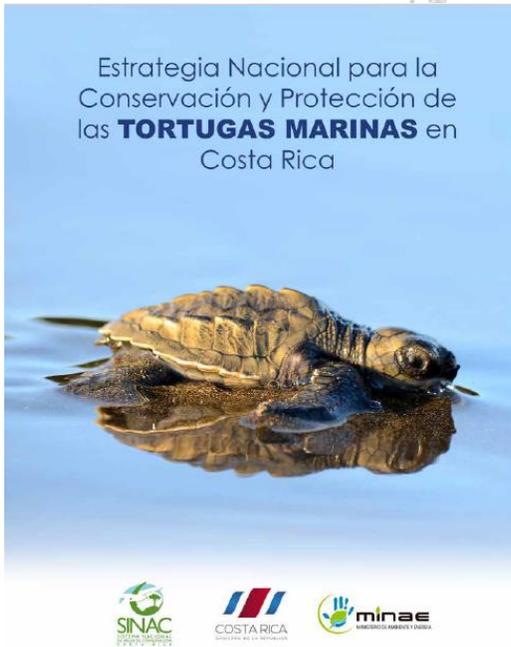
This wonderful celebration was replicated during a weekend that will stay in the memories and hearts of hundreds of people from eight states and 25 beaches where TAMAR is present. Hatchlings in Fernando de Noronha-PE did not hatch on time therefore the celebration there was on May 5th. Scientific and conservation activities took place along with music, videos and more.

Since 1980, TAMAR has a team carrying out research and conservation. They began working with the fishermen and locals living in the beaches, which was crucial to establish the first sea turtle nesting areas in the country. Later, an agreement with Petrobras to obtain fuel for the jeeps became a 35 year sponsorship. Other sponsor and supporters have joined the cause up to this day, and the participation of people has been critical as everyone is responsible for the protection of the ocean and the Brazilian and the World natural patrimony.



Comemoration of 35 millions of sea turtles protected by Projeto TAMAR in the last 38 years  
Photo © Projeto TAMAR – Brasil <http://bit.ly/35milTAMAR>

## COSTA RICA NOW HAS A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF SEA TURTLES



On early May 2018, Costa Rica announced that the document with the [National Strategy for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles](#) is now available. The development process of the strategy began in 2015 as a response to the need for an instrument guiding sea turtles matters by articulating strategic actions and efforts in the country, including actors from the academy, non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions.” Workshops with experts, convening the actors previously mentioned, provided the information to build the strategy.

The general objective of the strategy is a comprehensive management of Costa Rica actions with an active participation of the different actors regarding conservation, protection, management, and recovery of populations of sea turtles and their critical habitats. The strategy includes six specific areas: 1) protection, control and institutional management of sea turtles conservation status, 2) nesting sites and marine habitats, 3) sea turtles research and monitoring, 4) climate change, mitigation measures and adaptation, 5) information, environmental education and awareness towards conservation, and 6) participation of the civil society.

After the strategy is adopted, next steps will include the creation of the National Program for the Conservation of Sea Turtles in Costa Rica. The Program will be in charge of monitoring and manage the implementation of the strategy, as well as ensure compliance with the resolutions of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC).

## INAUGURATION OF “EL CHAPETÓN” HATCHERY IN SANTA ROSA, GUATEMALA



Aiming to promote the exchange of knowledge between the fishing community and sea turtle conservation projects in the area of *El Chapetón*. Guatemala’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Regulation Direction –DIPESCA in Spanish- opened the sea turtles hatchery “*El Chapetón*” in Santa Rosa County, Guatemala Pacific Coast last August 3<sup>rd</sup>.



Led by DIPESCA, the construction of the hatchery had financial support from the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), the Government of Taiwan, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. It is expected that “*El Chapetón*” is a precedent to recover other hatcheries requiring improvement and that along with training for local communities on best practices to manage hatcheries this is an opportunity for the conservation of sea turtle eggs threatened by poaching



*El Chapetón* hatchery opening ceremony – Santa Rosa, Guatemala





## FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE IAC SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE IN TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS



Group Photo © MiAmbiente Honduras

With the support of Honduras Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs, the Scientific Committee of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) carried out their 15th meeting in Tegucigalpa, Honduras on September 17-19. Minister of Environment Mr. José Antonio Galdames, and the Vice-chancellor Mr. José Isaías Barahona from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the participants and emphasized on the importance of protecting migratory species such as sea turtles across borders.



Right. Honduras Minister of Environment - Mr. José Antonio Galdames © MiAmbiente Honduras.  
Left. Honduras Vice-chancellor from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Mr. José Isaías Barahona © MiAmbiente Honduras



Working groups during the IAC 15th Scientific Committee Meeting (Right: WG Exceptions; Left: WG Fisheries)

There were 41 participants attending the meeting including the delegates from Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Caribbean Netherlands, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and the United States, the Chair of the Consultative Committee, Mr. Paul Hoetjes, representatives of Honduras Natural Resources and Environment Secretariat and Sea Turtle National Committee, and accredited observers.



The discussion included the analysis of nesting data 2009-2018 in the IAC region, updates on the use of Sea Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in IAC countries, conservation status of the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) in the Northwest Atlantic as well as in the Eastern Pacific, and strategies to work with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and other International Organizations. From the discussion, the Scientific Committee will develop recommendations concerning the decline in nesting of leatherbacks in the Northwest Atlantic, and the Green Turtle in Galapagos. Argentina delegate Dr. Diego Albareda was re-elected as Chair of the Scientific Committee, and Costa Rica delegate Mr. Didier Chacon was elected as Vice-Chair.

Recommendations from this meeting will contribute to forward the development of effective strategies for the conservation of sea turtles in the Americas, aligned with the compliance with the IAC objectives. Our gratitude to Honduras for their warm welcome and excellent performance as host of this important meeting.



IAC Parties Delegates during the 15th Scientific Committee in Tegucigalpa – November 17-19, 2018

## THE IAC SECRETARY PT MET WITH EL SALVADOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND FISHERIES AUTHORITIES TO ENCOURAGE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE SEA TURTLE CONVENTION

With the objective of resuming the dialogue with El Salvador Governmental Agencies to encourage the ratification process to the Inter American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles that began in 2009, the IAC Secretary Pro Tempore, Ms. Veronica Caceres met with relevant government authorities and NGOs that play an important role in the conservation of sea turtles in El Salvador. The meetings took place in San Salvador on September 25 – 28, 2018.



Right. Meeting with CENDEPESCA Director Mr. Gustavo Portillo, Ms. Licda. Silvia de Larios, Biodiversity Director and their staff at CENDEPESCA offices. Left. Meeting with El Salvador Vice-Minister of Environment, Mr. Ángel Ibarra, representatives from the Direction of Biodiversity, CENDEPESCA, FUNZEL, and FIAES.

The IAC Secretary PT met with Mr. Gustavo Portillo, Director of El Salvador Fisheries Authority the National Center for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (CENDEPESCA) accompanied by his technical team, and Ms. Silvia de Larios Director of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Biodiversity Department at CENDEPESCA's office. The second meeting took place at the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources office, with Dr. Angel Ibarra, Vice-minister of Environment and Natural Resources of El Salvador, and also in attendance were officers from the Direction of Biodiversity, CENDEPESCA, FUNZEL, and FIAES. During this visit, both Governmental agencies stated their support for El Salvador to become a member of the IAC. The Vice-minister of Environment stated that the next step for his office will be to send a communication to the Minister of Foreign Relations with their positive opinion about the IAC, and requesting their support to move forward.

Ms. Caceres also meet with local NGOs Pro-Costa Director Mike Liles and Ms. Zulma Ricoy de Mendoza from Funzel. Technical information on important nesting sites for the Eastern Pacific Hawksbill was discussed along with an update of 2011 results from efforts that Funzel carried out to support the IAC ratification with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

Sea Turtle conservation in El Salvador is very meaningful for species such as the critically endangered East Pacific Hawksbill Turtle, becoming a Party of the IAC would enhance the efforts that are ongoing in the country and in the region.



## SEA TURTLE SYMPOSIUM – ECUADOR 2018

Ecuador’s Sea Turtle Symposium was carried out on December 4-5, 2018 at Santa Elena Peninsula State University. The event was Organized by the Ministry of Environment and sponsored by the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles and Galapagos National Park Direction.

The event was attended by more than 300 participants representing four national universities, rangers from all marine protected areas in Ecuador, Non-Governmental Organizations, the Undersecretary of Fishing Resources and the Ministry of Environment.

There were 30 oral presentations and 11 posters presenting insights of research on topics such as monitoring and protection of nesting beaches, reproduction, and foraging areas; in water studies, impacts of interaction with fisheries, marine pollution and climate change, citizen participation in sea turtle conservation and the assessment of the Ecuador National Sea Turtle Conservation Plan. Some of the presentations included that of Ms. Johanna Moreira who spoke about the LaudOPO network and of representatives from Galapagos National Park showing progress on sea turtle monitoring techniques in the park.



Posters presentation and attendees in Ecuador’s Sea Turtle Symposium – December 4 and 5, 2018. Pre



Sponsored by the IAC, Dr. Joseph Flanagan a senior veterinarian from Houston Zoo and sea turtle expert participated as keynote speaker in the symposium and shared information on the causes of stranding and sea turtle rehabilitation. Also, there was a recognition to a scientist who pioneered sea turtle conservation in Ecuador awarding the IAC Scientific Committee delegate Mr. Eduardo Espinoza.





During the Symposium closing remarks the IAC Secretary *Pro Tempore*, invited as keynote speaker quoted the words of the sea turtle conservation pioneer Dr. Archie Carr and closed the event saying *“It is possible that a world in which sea turtles cannot survive may soon become a world in which humans struggle to survive. If, however, we learn from our mistakes and begin changing our behavior, there is still time to save sea*



*turtles from extinction. In the process, we will be saving one of the earth’s most mysterious and time-honored creatures. We might just be saving ourselves too”*

The wide participation in the event demonstrated great interest and commitment of researchers in the conservation and protection of sea turtles in Ecuador and other countries in the region which are part of important migratory routes to the Eastern Pacific leatherback turtles as well as to other sea turtle species protected by the IAC Convention.





## WORKSHOP ON SEA TURTLE FIRST AID AND NECROPSY TECHNIQUES



Within the framework of the Sea Turtle Symposium in Ecuador, carried out on December 4-5, 2018 at the State University Santa Elena Peninsula, Dr. Joseph Flanagan senior veterinarian from Houston Zoo and expert in sea turtle rehabilitation visited Ecuador sponsored by the IAC.

In addition to participating as a keynote speaker during the Symposium sharing information on rehabilitation and sea turtle stranding, on December 6, Dr. Flanagan led a workshop on sea turtle first aid and necropsy for the marine protected areas rangers and marine biology students from the USEP. Following the workshop, the attendees visited Machalilla National Park Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Center.

This activity complies with the IAC objective for enhancing the capacities of the technicians and all those in charge of sea turtle conservation in the region, which translates into increased levels of protection and proper management.





## VOLUNTEERS TRAINING IN CRUCITA, MANABÍ (ECUADOR)

Within the framework of the Sea Turtle Symposium in Ecuador, carried out on December 4-5, 2018 at the State University Santa Elena Peninsula, Dr. Joseph Flanagan senior veterinarian from Houston Zoo and expert in sea turtle rehabilitation visited Ecuador sponsored by the IAC.



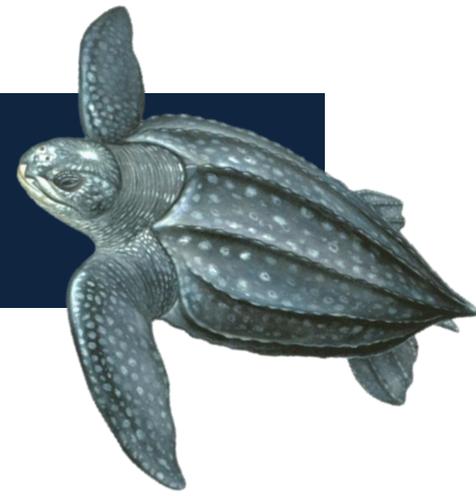
After leading a workshop on sea turtle first aid and necropsies, Dr. Flanagan took part at the beginning of the volunteers training organized by the Ministry of Environment and Portoviejo's GAD. This training was provided within the framework of the awareness and monitoring training regarding sea turtle occurrence in Crucita, a tourist beach in Manabi Province.



During the three days training, the Biologist and IAC Scientific Committee delegate Mr. Eduardo Espinoza was the main instructor on sea turtle monitoring for volunteers. This event is an example of the cooperation between governmental and sectional agencies in non-protected areas where sea turtle occur. This training will enhance monitoring of these highly migratory and threatened species frequently visiting Ecuadorian coasts and endangered in this coastal community.



# EAST PACIFIC LEATHERBACK PRO-CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES



## TRAINING OF ECUADOR'S MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OFFICERS IN MEXICO ON NESTING LEATHERBACK TURTLES



Theoretical training in Mexico

On December 2017, three nests of leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) were reported in Ecuador coast. This unusual events attracted national and international attention. The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) within the framework of **Resolución CIT-COP7-2015-R2** Conservation of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and supporting Ecuador's government actions to comply with the Resolution strategy of reducing the species mortality in marine habitats and the protection of nesting sites and nesting

females to increase reproductive productivity; coordinated a collaboration with Mexico's Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources. Mexico's technical assistant included an *in situ* training between March 11 – 17, 2018, of two technicians from the areas in Ecuador where nesting was reported, in Cahuitan and Tierra Colorada, index beaches for nesting leatherbacks in Mexico.

Ecuador's Ministry of Environment Officers trained were Ms. Johanna Moreira from Manabí Provincial Direction and Ana Semisterra from Esmeraldas Province. The trainees learned about monitoring, and hatcheries management in Mexico. This exchange of knowledge strengthens Ecuador's actions for the conservation of this species as well as the management techniques that can be used in case new leatherback nests are found in Ecuador.



Night patrols in hatcheries

Promoting the efforts of the Parties to protect and conserve this species is critical to the IAC. The Eastern Pacific leatherback population is listed as *Critically Endangered*, also the species is in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix I, the Migratory Species Convention (CMS) Appendix I and II, and is considered as a conservation priority by several intergovernmental organizations such as FAO.



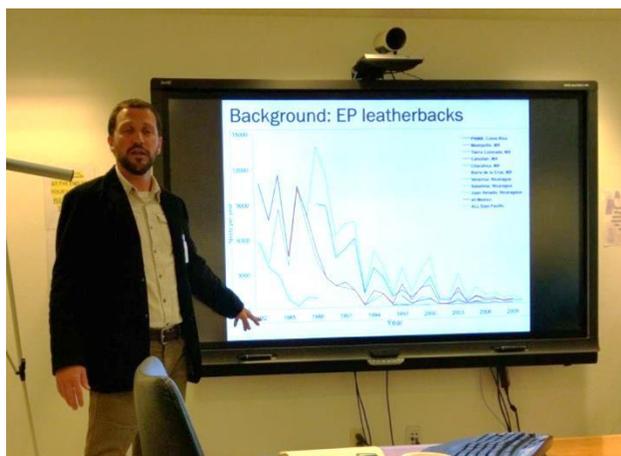
Training on environmental education



Nest excavation



## IAC PRESENTATION IN WASHINGTON D.C. ON THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF THE EASTERN PACIFIC LEATHERBACK



On March 20th, the coordinator of the IAC Leatherback EP Task Force, Mr. Bryan Wallace (Left), carried out the presentation “Laud OPO and the Conservation of the Critically Endangered Eastern Pacific Leatherback” in the U.S. State Department headquarters in Washington D.C. The presentation focused on the conservation status of the EP leatherback, within the framework of compliance with the IAC Resolution for the preservation of this species. According to its category of threat, the species could become extinct within the next 10 years.

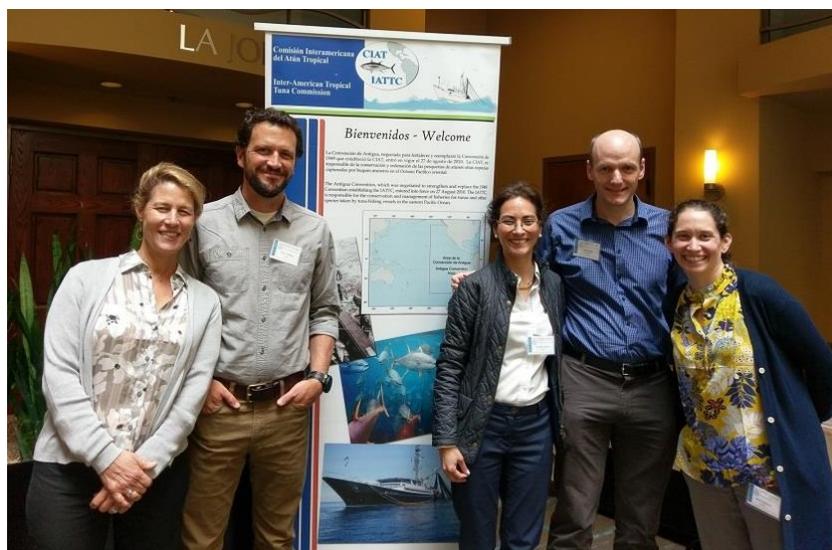
The presentation included an overview of the Laud OPO network –*where we come from, where we are, where we are headed-*. Participants included U.S. State Department officials, representatives from NGOs, and diplomats from the Latin-American embassies of Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, and Nicaragua. The meeting was organized by Mr. Joe Fette, US delegate to the IAC, and Ms. Veronica Caceres, IAC Secretary *PT*. An interesting conversation evolved, where the diplomats expressed their interest and willingness to support circulating the information regarding the current status of the leatherback EP and contributing to the fulfillment of the IAC Resolution. Seeking opportunities to further the leatherback conservation in their countries, follow up will be given with these representatives. In this sense, *the IAC Secretary Pro Tempore* has already met with Costa Rica embassy delegate in Washington, to exchange ideas and identify concrete actions.



On March 22nd, Mr. Wallace conducted this same presentation in the United States Fisheries and Wildlife Service –USFWS- headquarters, in Virginia. Most of the participants are part of the USFWS International Conservation Division, including those managing the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund –MTCF-. This presentation was coordinated by the US Delegate to the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts, Mr. Earl Possardt.



## IAC PARTICIPATION IN THE IATTC 8TH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON BYCATCH AND 9TH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)



1 IAC group participating in the IATTC meetings

The IAC Secretary *Pro Tempore* Ms. - Veronica Caceres and Dr. Bryan Wallace - IAC Leatherback Task Force Coordinator and member of the Consultative Committee attended the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group on Bycatch and 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), on May 10-18 in La Jolla, California.

Dr. Bryan Wallace gave a presentation at the Bycatch Working Group titled “Opportunities for the Leatherback Conservation in the Eastern Pacific”. The following topics were highlighted:

-Core areas used by leatherbacks in inter-nesting habitats between October and March are well defined within 50 km of the index nesting beaches in Mexico, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. These areas are highly important and offer an opportunity for the conservation of the species.

- Well defined areas are known in migratory corridors and in coastal foraging areas (adults and sub-adults)

- A lot of information is known regarding bycatch of leatherback in fisheries (longline, purse seine, trawl, nets), but there are knowledge gaps that require better observer coverage and better reporting of the bycatch to target mitigation measures.

Based on the technical information presented by the IAC and other experts, the IATTC Working Group on Bycatch drafted preliminary recommendations for the protection of the leatherback including:

a) Time-area management measures in areas adjacent to leatherback inter-nesting habitats for a reasonable period and distance from the beaches during the nesting season that will provide adequate protection, per scientific evidence.

b) Modifying longline fishing methods to mitigate bycatch in pelagic areas, where it is difficult to determine periods and areas where leatherback turtles aggregate, such as requiring the use of circle hooks, deeper setting, or finfish bait.



Additionally, there was a recommendation on increasing observer coverage in longline fisheries, standardizing forms to report bycatch and organizing a regional workshop on sea turtle bycatch and mitigation methods in order to determine the level of interactions with and relative mortality due to different fishing gears (including comparisons to factors other than fisheries), analyze existing scientific information on mitigation.

At this meeting the IAC worked together with the delegate of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) Dr. Igor Debski, in order to present recommendations such as the need to increase the observer coverage in the long line fisheries to gather much needed information on turtle, seabird and shark bycatch to have more robust information to better understand the magnitude of the impact. These recommendations were revised by the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) who decides which can be supported.

IAC Presentation (photo below) on leatherbacks can be found here: [http://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/BYC-08-FADs-03/PDFs/PRES/BYC-08-PRES\\_Opportunities-for-leatherback.pdf](http://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/BYC-08-FADs-03/PDFs/PRES/BYC-08-PRES_Opportunities-for-leatherback.pdf)

Preliminary recommendations of the working group were presented to the consideration of the 9<sup>th</sup> Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). The SAC adopted a recommendation to carry out a workshop to better understand sea turtle incidental catches and mitigation measures. Subject to funds availability.

Documents and presentations from the Bycatch WG can be found here: <http://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/SAC-09/9thMeetingScientificAdvisoryCommitteeENG.htm>



Dr. Bryan Wallace presentation during the Meeting of the IATTC Working Group on Bycatch



## IAC PARTICIPATION IN THE IATTC 93rd MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

The IAC Secretary *Pro Tempore*, Ms. Veronica Caceres, and Dr. Bryan Wallace delegate to the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts participated in the 93rd Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission in San Diego on August 24-30, 2018. IAC representatives attended the meeting supporting the adoption of the proposed Resolution IATTC-93-PROP-K-1A to Mitigate the Impact on Sea Turtles by Vessels Fishing for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (See: [https://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/IATTC-93/PDFs/PROP/\\_English/IATTC-93-PROP-K-1A\\_USA%20Sea%20turtles.pdf](https://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/IATTC-93/PDFs/PROP/_English/IATTC-93-PROP-K-1A_USA%20Sea%20turtles.pdf)).

Prior to the meeting the IAC Focal Point, and the IAC delegates who are also delegates to the IATTC were requested to lobby support for the resolution proposed which recommendations included those made by the IAC. During the meeting the IAC Secretary *PT* read a statement during the meeting supporting the adoption of the Resolution proposed which aligns with the Convention's objectives.

During plenary, each member of the IATTC in favor of the resolution did a presentation, including the delegation of IAC Parties and the European Union. Japan and Korea stated not to be in favor of the proposal due to the lack of scientific evidence in their countries regarding the effectiveness of the mitigation methods proposed in the Resolution, such as the use of circle hooks and the Deep Setting technique. As a consequence, because decisions in IATTC are taken by consensus, the Resolution was not approved.

The plan for next year is that the IATTC Working Group on Bycatch include in their agenda a review of sea turtle bycatch mitigation methods, assess them and develop a report for the IATTC with their recommendations.

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## MEETING OF THE IAC SECRETARY *PRO TEMPORE* WITH ECUADOR'S MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT UNDERSECRETARY OF MARINE AND COASTAL MANAGEMENT



Within the framework of the Sea Turtle Symposium in Ecuador, on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, the IAC Secretary *Pro Tempore*, Ms. Veronica Caceres, met Ecuador's Ministry of Environment Undersecretary of Marine and Coastal Management the Biologist, Mr. Nelson Zambrano Lopez

Right to Left: Biologist Eduardo Espinoza; IAC Secretary *PT*, Veronica Caceres, Ecuador's Undersecretary of Marine Management, Mr. Nelson Zambrano and Dr. Joseph Flanagan.

Discussions during the meeting referred to Ecuador's sea turtle action plan, adopted in 2014 which included the development of the Sea Turtle Symposium – Ecuador 2018 carried out on December 4 and 5 at State University of Santa Elena Peninsula. Aiming to collect information to enrich the National Plan implementation and identify knowledge gaps two discussion panels took place during the Symposium expecting to revise and adapt the document to the input from the attendees.

This visit was also part of the strategy to increase knowledge and implement conservation actions of the critically endangered Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle. Ecuador's delegate to the IAC Scientific Committee, Mr. Eduardo Espinoza, and Dr. Joseph Flanagan, a sea turtle expert, also joined the meeting.

## GRANTS

### USFWS - Marine Turtle Conservation Fund



The US Fisheries and Wildlife Service Marine Turtle Conservation Fund awarded the IAC with a Grant to carry out the project “Strengthening regional sea turtle conservation through the support of regional decision makers meetings and outreach activities of the Inter–American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC)”.

The goal of this project is to strengthen sea turtle conservation efforts and help the recovery of these species in the Americas creating spaces for proper decision making based on the best scientific evidence available, and strengthening the capacity to implement the Convention in the Parties.

Funding will be used to support the Dominican Republic Government as host of the COP9, the highest decision-making body of the Convention, and the Caribbean Netherlands Government to carry out the 12th IAC Consultative Committee of Experts meeting which advises and guide the Conference of the Parties for compliance with the mandate of the Convention.

Outreach will be also implemented through experiential activities aiming to increase awareness and building capacities at all levels, from fishermen to decision makers.

## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITIONS – 2018

On February 2018, Dr. Neca Marcovaldi, IAC Scientific Committee Delegate from Brazil, was awarded with the ISTS Lifetime Achievement Award 2018.

On September 2018, Dr. Didiher Chacón, Vice-chair of the IAC Scientific Committee was awarded with one of Ford Environmental Grants.

¡Congratulations!



Dr. Didiher Chacón – Ford Environmental Awards

## PUBLICATIONS - 2018

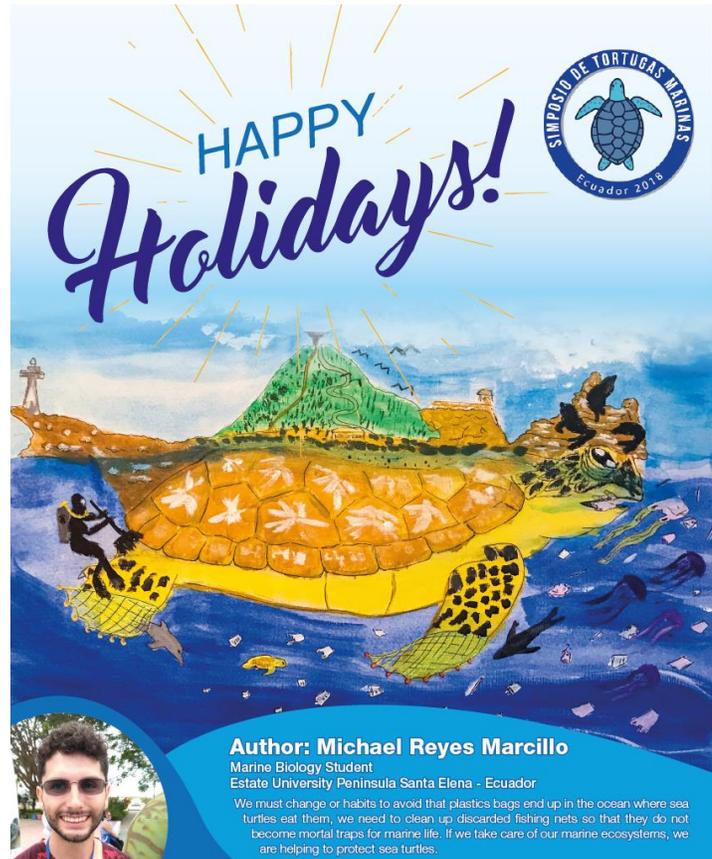
**EP LEATHERBACK PUBLICATIONS** - Rodríguez-Baron, J.M. Williard, A., Abrego, M. E., Tobón, A., Bermudez, D., y Arriatti, Y. (2018) Building Bycatch Solutions from the Ground Up for the East Pacific Leatherback. SWOT Report No. 13. P 36-37.



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

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We must change our habits to avoid that plastics bags end up in the ocean where sea turtles eat them, we need to clean up discarded fishing nets so that they do not become mortal traps for marine life. If we take care of our marine ecosystems, we are helping to protect sea turtles.

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