

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

Celebrating its
10th Anniversary



WIDECAST Annual Meeting
10-11 April 2011, San Diego

Activities 2010-11

- ✓ 3rd Consultative Committee Meeting, Belize
- ✓ 7th Scientific Committee meeting, Panama
- ✓ 4th Consultative Committee Meeting, Brazil
- ☐ 5th Conference of the Parties, Bonaire –June
- ✓ Increased participation in Regional meetings
- ✓ Increased outreach to Caribbean nations
- ✓ MOU IAC-IATTC in negotiation

3rd and 4th Consultative Committee Meeting

IAC Membership and Scope

- Outreach to Caribbean nations: Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Colombia
- Nicaragua, El Salvador (Pacific Hawksbills)

MOU's

- MOU: IAC-IATTC in progress

Fisheries Working Group

- Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, Mexico, USA and OSPESCA
- TED technology and compliance in the IAC parties
- Review fisheries interactions pursuant to Art. IV of the Convention Text

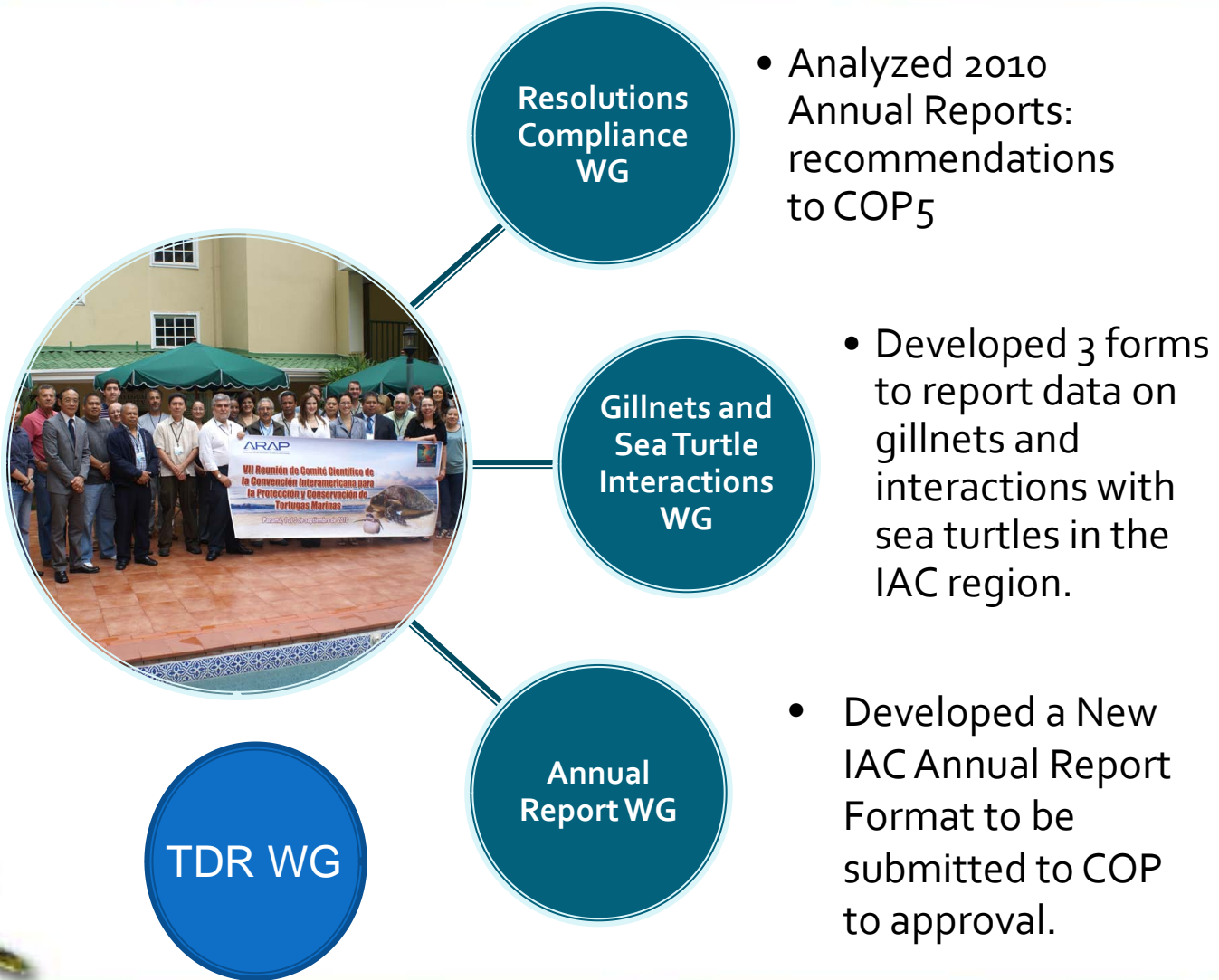
Reflect 10 year anniversary

- Compliance with resolutions: IAC annual reports

Exceptions

- Procedure to report exceptions by Parties that allow extractive use of sea turtles.

7th SC Scientific Committee Working Groups



IAC Outreach Efforts

Trinidad and Tobago

- Dept Fisheries
- Division of Forestry
- **Observers COP5**
- Nature Seekers
- Grand Riviere



Dominican Republic

- Ministry of Environment
- CODOPESCA
- Grupo Jaragua
- **Observers COP5**



Colombia

- Ministry Environment
- Fisheries
- CI
- WWF



Nicaragua

- Ministry of Environment
- INPESCA Fisheries
- **Observers COP5**



Regional Meetings



KOBE 2

- Bycatch Workshop: Recommendations for 5 Tuna RFMOs on bycatch mitigation, collaboration, data collection-Joint paper with IOSEA-



ICAPO

- Increased nesting of hawksbills in Nicaragua and El Salvador



4th Regional Sea Turtle Symposium Pacific



4th Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative: IAC on Steering Committee. Part of Coastal –Maine Sub committee.

Recommended MOU IAC- WIDECAST



2nd Workshop on Standardization of Sea Turtle Data Guayaquil-CPPS- IAC-Smithsonian

10th Anniversary

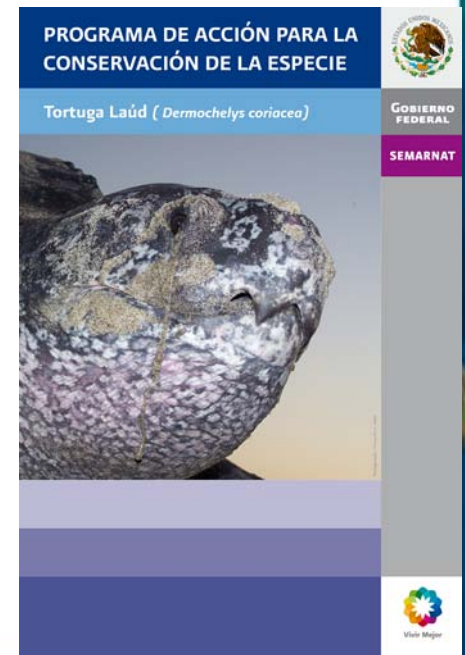
- ✓ Increased reporting: 100% annual reports 2010
- ✓ Special 10 Year Report Country Profiles
- ✓ Increased membership and outreach, 13-15 countries (last two years)
- ✓ Increased outreach activities



10 Years!

IAC Country Achievements

- Community outreach with new visitor centers for tourists, volunteers, national and international students and researchers.
- New Fisheries legislation that helps mitigate sea turtle bycatch :
 - Curaçao prohibits use of gill nets
 - Belize banned the use of shrimp trawls
- Increased activities for satellite tracking programs, monitoring in-water and nesting turtles.
- New areas has been declared as Natural Reserve:
 - Marinera Beach, an olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)
- Observers programs for long line fisheries.
- National Management Programs for Sea Turtles



Cooperating to Protect Sea Turtles: 10 Years



Cooperating to Protect Sea Turtles: Inter-American Convention on the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles (IAC)

Celebrates 10 years!

IAC Structure

The IAC consists of 15 Countries representing North, Central and South America as well as the Wider Caribbean. The IAC is guided by the Conference of the Parties (COP) and its two subsidiary bodies, the **Consultative Committee of Experts**, which includes members from the private sector, NGOs and renowned scientists, and the **Scientific Committee**.

Objective of the Convention:
 "To promote the protection, conservation and recovery of sea turtle populations and the habitats so which they depend, based on the best available scientific evidence, taking into account the environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the Parties."

The Parties and their commitments

- The Parties that belong to the IAC Convention consist to:
- Protect and conserve sea turtle populations and their habitats.
 - Reduce incidental capture, injury and mortality of sea turtles associated with fishing activities.
 - Prohibit intentional capture and international trade in sea turtles, their eggs, parts and products; turtles may be used to satisfy the economic subsistence needs of traditional communities.
 - Foster international cooperation for research and management of sea turtles.
 - Implement any additional measures needed for their protection.

Celebrating 10 Years: The Convention Today

The level of participation of governmental and non-governmental organizations in matters of sea turtle conservation and protection is on the rise although only 14th of the IAC region is represented. Thanks to financial support provided by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service-Marine Turtle Grant, the IAC PT Secretariat was able to develop outreach efforts in several key countries, particularly in the Wider Caribbean Region.

The range of activities undertaken by the IAC and its Party countries over the past 10 years is impressive. Some of the activities conducted include:

- IAC Workshops & Meetings:**
 IAC held a workshop in Tortuguero, Costa Rica (2006) to prepare the draft IAC Manual for Sea Turtle Management and Conservation Techniques in Nesting Beaches of Central America.
 A regional workshop on the hawksbill turtle in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic, organized by IAC, SINAP Protocol and CITES, held in Mexico 2009.
 Four Conferences of the Parties have been held: COP1 (Costa Rica), COP2 (Venezuela), COP3 (Mexico), COP4 (Costa Rica), COP Extraordinary (Peru). Seven SC meetings have been held in Costa Rica, Guatemala and Panama.
 Three SC meetings have been held in Costa Rica, Mexico and Belize.
 The IAC has signed MOUs with: CIESA, SINAP Protocol, CALPESCA, SINPECA and OPS.

IAC Technical Activities:
 Conservation of Hawksbill Turtles.
 Conservation of the Hawksbill Turtle in the Eastern Pacific.
 Reduction of the Adverse Impacts of Fisheries.
 Adaptation of sea turtle habitats to climate change.

Sea Turtle Populations:
 Leatherback Turtle (Dermochelys coriacea)
 Kemp's Ridley (Dermochelys coriacea)
 Green Turtle (Chelonia mydas)
 Hawksbill (Eretmochelys imbricata)
 Laysan/Flatback (Natagalia leviathan)
 Olive ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea)
 Kemp's ridley (Lepidochelys kempi)

Sea turtles in the Americas: A shared resource

The Americas have nesting populations of six of the seven species of sea turtles that occur in the world:

1. Leatherback turtle (Dermochelys coriacea), critically endangered
2. Green turtle, Black turtle (Chelonia mydas), threatened
3. Hawksbill (Eretmochelys imbricata), critically endangered
4. Laysan/flatback (Natagalia leviathan), threatened
5. Olive ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea), threatened
6. Kemp's ridley (Lepidochelys kempi), critically endangered

The coastal and pelagic waters around the Americas provide migration corridors and extensive feeding areas for these six species. The main causes for the drastic population reduction of sea turtles in this region have been human exploitation of their eggs, meat, skin and shell. Recent threats such as incidental capture in long line fisheries, drift nets, and shrimp trawls, as well as the contamination and destruction of their habitats continue to threaten their survival.

Sea turtles fulfill important ecological roles in ecosystems as threats as coastal nests and roosting patterns. Their disappearance could seriously affect the survival of other species of flora and fauna that depend on sea turtles and their eggs for their own survival. In addition to their important ecological role, sea turtles are used by coastal communities as a source of income including ecotourism activities.

Sea turtles represent shared resources in the Americas because they use the waters of more than one nation in the region during their life cycle. Cooperative efforts for a population of turtles in one country can be harmful or benefited by activities in another country.

The beginning of a cooperative effort: the Convention

In 1994, recognizing the regional nature of the threats to sea turtle survival, the nations of the western hemisphere began a collaborative effort to negotiate an agreement for the future survival of these species. In 2003, with the ratification by the eighth country, the IAC entered into force.

IAC addressed the need to implement international measures (coordinate multilateral conservation and protection actions, and oversee the implementation of a regional agenda). The emphasis of the Convention on bilateral and multilateral agreements and the exchange of information and technology represent a cooperative, non-conflictual approach for resolving the problems that sea turtles face.

The future vision is that the IAC will become the leading international cooperative mechanism for achieving the efficient management and recovery of sea turtle populations in the Americas, through ongoing participation, consensual work between its Parties. Subsidiary bodies, private organizations, local communities, NGOs, and other players.

BELIZE

- The Belize Sea Turtle Conservation Network is a consortium of NGOs working with the Fisheries Department to conserve sea turtles in Belize.
- This Network included 8 Invertebrate Sea Turtles Expertise as an exemplar of the Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan (SRAP) in 1992.
- A recently passed law provided full protective status to the 6 sea turtle species known in these territorial waters, and includes the mandatory use of TEDs.
- As of January 11, 2013 a concerted law on tracking in Belizean waters was passed in order to protect sea turtle populations in these zones.
- Promotion of scientific research was initiated in agreement with resolutions endorsed by the IAC COP.

BRAZIL

- Increased protection and research efforts at the main nesting sites of the 3 species of sea turtles in Brazil: 3 species (CentroCentro, Lepidochelys olivacea and Eretmochelys imbricata) showed population increases.
- Implementation of National Action Plan to monitor and reduce sea turtle bycatch in fisheries.
- The Brazilian Sea Turtle Research and Conservation Program, TAMAR-AMBIO, was founded in 1980 with the primary goal of research, conservation and management. The program serves as a model for other countries because of direct involvement of coastal communities.
- Thousands of community members, full-timers, students and voluntary citizens participate in conservation efforts, and some 1 million people visit the Environmental Education Centers each year.

CHILE

- Chile has implemented a 30 year fishing ban on 61 marine vertebrates, including the 6 species of sea turtles present in Chilean waters. CentroCentro, Chilean marine species, Lepidochelys olivacea and Dermochelys coriacea. Only the Fisheries Sub-Secretary can authorize the capture and export of sea turtles for the purpose of exhibition, recreation, culture or research.
- Since 2003 the scientific follow-up is intensively researched by the Fisheries Institute using highly trained Scientific Advisors and researchers.
- The comprehensive training program for SCs has improved bycatch identification and the quality of information recorded, as well as increase awareness among the fishing crew on the importance of marine turtle conservation.
- Fishing operations have gradually been modified to reduce the release of sea turtles by-gone.

COSTA RICA

- Sea turtle conservation and research efforts in Costa Rica date back to the late 1960s, and resulted in the inclusion of the country's main nesting beaches into their wildlife protected areas.
- In the 1990s, Costa Rica's National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC) and private conservation organizations (including WDFW, SCC, PRETUNA) have worked to conserve, research and protect the different sea turtle populations along both coasts of Costa Rica.
- In 2007 the Manual for the Management and Conservation of Sea Turtles in Costa Rica was published and adopted in an attempt to standardize the management of the country's nesting beaches and hatchery programs. It was written by a multidisciplinary and multi-institutional team from both private and public sectors.
- The manual had been used as guide for other countries in the Latin America region and is now used as a document produced by IAC.

ECUADOR

- In 2010 the country's sea turtle conservation action plan was approved as written by national sea turtle experts. It serves as the backbone for long-term planning strategies and specific conservation actions in which the country must cooperate.
- Supported by various governmental agencies, the Sub-Regional Sea Turtle Management Committee, led by the province of Santa Elena, Ecuador to active legislative measures and implementational actions in favor of the turtle conservation and management.
- The Chone District Foundation began monitoring nesting on the main beaches of Galapagos 7 years ago. The Galapagos National Park Service now has that responsibility.
- The Galapagos are considered to be one of the most important nesting sites of the population of the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Population trends and conservation status of the species are continuously monitored.
- Sea turtle conservation is a challenge undertaken by Ecuador on a daily basis.

GUATEMALA

- In 2003, Guatemala created its National Sea Turtle Management and Conservation Strategy to promote research, tracking and monitoring of sea turtles.
- In 2008 a moratorium on the consumption of hatchling eggs was declared in 2003. It included hawksbill turtle eggs and was established for 5 consecutive years.
- A system to register hatcheries and hatchlings (egg harvesting) was implemented to control the capture and sale of sea turtles and turtle eggs to the countries' hatcheries. A Guide to Hatchery Management was recently published.
- The role of sea turtle was declared in 2008 and is established each year.
- Meetings held with fisheries sector on proper use of TEDs and to coordinate marine monitoring.

MEXICO

- Species Conservation Action Programs (SPAC) are developed by the Federal Government with the participation of academic, public and private sectors involved in sea turtle conservation. Their strategic line of action are: protection, management, education, awareness, health and administration and aim to promote the development of economic activities, strengthen community organization, favor traditional practices and fulfill conservation goals.
- The SPAC have been established for hawksbill, leatherback and green turtles sea turtles.
- In 2008, international experts on bycatch met to discuss leatherback interactions with fisheries. Priority actions and recommendations were made on how to recover Eastern Pacific leatherbacks.
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- In 2010, transmitters were attached to two female leatherbacks at Barro Colorado Island in the State of Oaxaca to track their nesting movements in the ocean. Sea turtles eventually traveled towards the Galapagos Islands where the signal was received.

PERU

- The capture of all species of sea turtles is prohibited in Peru.
- The institutions of the IAC, encouraged Peru to build awareness in order to promote national efforts, and exchange research information among all of their members with sea turtles in Peru.
- Government sponsored training programs (Fishermen Outreach Program) and non-governmental education programs increase awareness and participation of the local population in activities involving sea turtle conservation.
- A plan to study the population structure of sea turtles inhabiting the Pacific coast with nesting ecology was started in 2010. To date, the project has analyzed 40 Eastern Pacific green turtles (Chelonia mydas olivacea) and has established the basic scientific and regulatory controls of the fish, which is important for both juveniles and adults. This type of information will allow the research to establish alternative incomes for both the fishermen and reduce the pressure to exploit alternative incomes for their protection.

NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

- As a result of the ratification of the IAC, the Netherlands Antilles has supported the initiation or continuation of sea turtle monitoring programs on the islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten.
- St. Maarten and St. Eustatius nesting beaches are monitored yearly by the national park foundations (inventories of WIDECAST), and provide quantitative data on nesting activity and frequency.
- The Sea Turtle Conservation Society (STCS) now includes in-water monitoring of foraging turtles. A satellite tracking program has tracked 30 sea turtles, mostly hawksbill, but also some green.
- In 2009 the Island of Curaçao passed legislation prohibiting the use of gillnets in coastal waters in order to reduce sea turtle bycatch and poaching.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- Passage of the Marine Turtle Conservation Act (MTCOA) provides the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with funds to support conservation activities.
- Between 2003-2011 the MTCOA has provided more than \$18 million for 114 projects in more than 50 countries. Of this amount, over 2.5 million has gone to over 165 projects in alignment with the goals of the IAC. In Mexico, Mexico's 10 Wildlife Service (SEMARNAT) has provided more than \$10 million to support IAC projects in alignment with the goals of the IAC. In Mexico, Mexico's 10 Wildlife Service (SEMARNAT) has provided more than \$10 million to support IAC projects in alignment with the goals of the IAC.
- Since 2000, NOAA has conducted aerial surveys to document leatherback distribution and abundance off the US West Coast and, more recently, in the northern-most leatherback foraging area along the Oregon and Washington shores. This region has been proposed for leatherback turtle critical habitat designation in support of the Endangered Species Act. This was the first attempt to systematically survey all northwest waters used by leatherbacks, surveys will continue in order to gather additional seasonal and annual trends of leatherbacks in this area.

URUGUAY

- The National Department of Aquatic Resources (DINARA) monitors sea turtle bycatch in longline fisheries and assisted the IATC in developing regulation measures among their signature countries.
- DINARA is currently assessing the efficiency of circle hooks to reduce incidental capture in this fishery.
- DINARA has been studying the movements and habitat use of juvenile leatherback turtles in the Southwestern Atlantic since 2008.
- In the Center for Marine Research and Conservation is monitoring incidental capture at coastal bottom-trawl fisheries to determine conditions that cause the highest catch rates and mortality.
- Since 2003, Esterházy has been evaluating sea turtle bycatch in artisanal fisheries, by involving the direct participation of fishermen in search of alternative, and solutions.

VENEZUELA

- Venezuela is the official depository of the IAC since 1998.
- In 2010 the IAC Annual Report indicates the preparation of a National Sea Turtle Conservation Program, to include conservation and scientific activities, monitoring illegal use of sea turtles and protection of nesting grounds and nesting sites.
- The program will ensure that all of the stakeholders involved with sea turtles will work together towards one common goal: the conservation of sea turtles. Venezuela currently carries out monitoring and conservation of green turtles populations in the Isla Araya (Margarita) as well as other beaches and nesting sites (species found in Venezuela).
- Sea turtle rescue and medical attention is provided by the sea turtle working group of Hermeto (STTM-GV).
- The Sea Turtle Research and Conservation Center (ICTMAR) provides training and technical assistance to conservation operators, teachers, and communities.



Next Steps

1



Years!

Analysis of the work from the past 10 years, to learn from successes and overcome the challenges

Define **priority actions** in conservation in the light of the resolutions and the best scientific advice

Continue to work on outreach and extending the membership with focus in Caribbean nations

Next meetings:

- V Conference of the Parties (COP5):
Junio 1-4, Bonaire
- VIII Scientific Committe meeting:
August -September

IAC Contact Information

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