

Latin American Sea Turtles In Partnership with WIDECAST Latin-American Program



News Bulletin December 2014

Happy New Year

As we begin the new year, LAST/WIDECAST would like to say "Thank You" to all of our friends and supporters and what you've done for us in 2014.

Your dedication to helping sea turtles is inspiring, and we are grateful to have you as part of the LAST/WIDECAST family all year long.

May your Holidays be joyous and your New Year be happy and healthy!

We are pleased to end the year by sharing with you our bulletin full of the latest activities and achievements of LAST/WIDECAST and look forward to working together over the next year as we move forward in achieving our goal to protect and conserve sea turtles in Latin America.

A quick glance of the exciting updates you will read about in this issue:

[ADOPT A TURTLE](#) [VOLUNTEER TODAY](#) [STRANDING WORKSHOP](#)
[OSA PROJECT](#) [GREEN TURTLE TRAGEDY](#) [BINATIONAL PROJECT](#)
[PROMEC](#) [MORE GOOD NEWS](#) [CONTACT US](#)
[COLABORATION & AKNOWLEDGEMENTS](#)



HELP US CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR

Give the gift of conservation all year long! Adopt a Sea Turtle



Looking for a meaningful gift for any occasion? Look no further. Looking for a meaningful gift for any occasion? Look no further. By adopting a sea turtle through LAST you will help protect these endangered species by supporting our conservation efforts. Whether you would like to adopt a baby sea turtle, an entire hatchery or even place a satellite transmitter on a sea turtle, the LAST adoption program has options for all of your friends and family on your list.

[Click here](http://latinamericanseaturtles.org) or visit latinamericanseaturtles.org to adopt a sea turtle with LAST!

Join our Team. Volunteer Today!



Looking for something exciting to start of the 2015 New Year? Although the holiday season is a time for giving, the majority of people who give throughout the year is the driving force for our projects!

LAST is looking for **Research Assistants and volunteers for 2015**. Come join our team and experience this amazing opportunity to work hands on with endangered sea turtles. LAST offers volunteer opportunities from one week to several months at our two project sites (Osa In-Water Project or Pacuare Nesting Beach). A volunteer fee of \$45 per day covers food and lodging during your stay. Research assistants pay a fee of \$5-\$10/day which may be waived depending on prior experience.

For more information please contact:
volunteers@latinamericanseaturtles.org.

REGIONAL STRANDING WORKSHOP



Last June, members of LAST/WIDECASST attended a **Regional Sea Turtle Stranding Workshop** in Guatemala in order to address the urgent need to improve the capacity of sea turtle conservationists in the region to respond to sea turtle stranding events. 48 participants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama participated in the event.



The objectives of the workshop were: to establish a methodology to document and determine the cause of sea turtle strandings and best practices for resuscitating and treating live stranded turtles; gather information on previous strandings in the region in order to determine possible causes and share with public and decision makers; prepare an Action Plan identifying information gaps and how to fill them, responsible institutions and organizations and possible financing.

Workshop participants identified additional **priority actions to be addressed in order to effectively respond to regional strandings**, including:

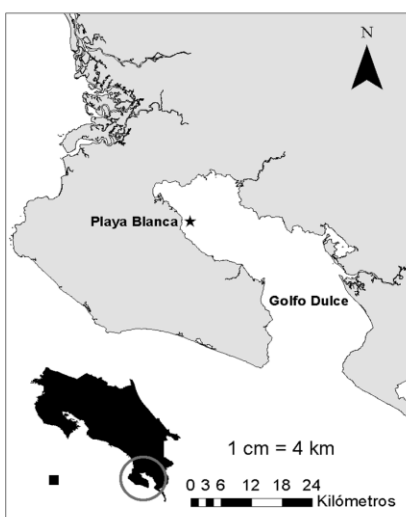


- Create a brochure that stresses the 5 key stranding data points to be collected: stranding location, species involved, size of specimen, external lesions (photos), and state of decomposition.
- Capacity building for researchers and field personnel to collect standardized data and samples and how to perform necropsies.
- Prepare a detailed report on the 2011 and 2013 strandings in Guatemala and El Salvador.
- Prepare a regional stranding report and distribute it to key actors in the region asking for their cooperation in documenting and preventing future events
- Ensure that all Central American countries are sharing and submitting stranding data via the Obis Seamap website.



We are excited at this initiative for regional collaboration in order to better manage future events and eventually prevent them.

OSA IN-WATER PROJECT

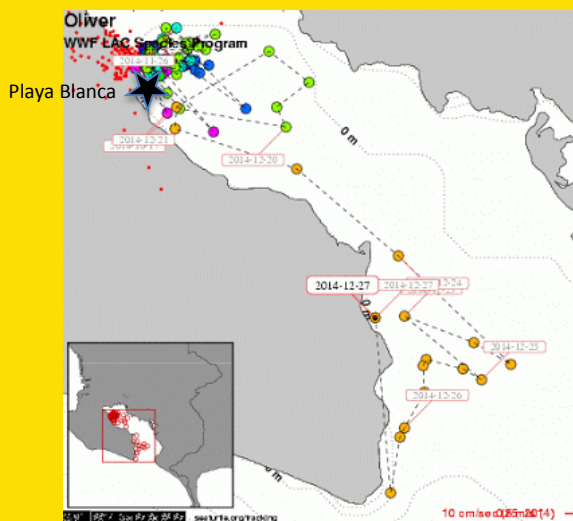


SATELLITE TRACKING OF MALE HAWKSBILL AT PLAYA BLANCA, GOLFO DULCE, COSTA RICA

LAST/WIDECAST, with the assistance of WWF's Latin American Program, released a male hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) with a satellite tracker into the waters of Golfo Dulce in Costa Rica in order to **learn more about the habitat use, reproduction and migration of the critically endangered specie.**

“**Oliver**”, the male hawksbill, was caught on October 15 of 2014 at Playa Blanca, Osa Peninsula, located on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica and his curved carapace length (CCL) measured 70 cm. Oliver was caught three times at Playa Blanca before the transmitter was placed. He was first caught on January 15 of 2012 and measured 59 cm (CCL). His first recapture was on June 26 of 2013 and measured 67 cm (CCL), and was recaptured a second time on August 28 of 2013 and measured 67.4 cm (CCL). Oliver has also been tagged on his front flippers with metal tags PC762 and PC763.

Oliver was release with a satellite transmitter at sea near Playa Blanca on October 16, 2014 and seems to be moving outside of the Gulf. We look forward to seeing what his next move will be! **Please join us in tracking Oliver's movements by clicking [here](#).**



LAST/WIDECAST would like to thank Diego Amorocho, Species Program Coordinator of WWF's Latin America and Caribbean Program who has worked alongside our organization to investigate connectivity of Eastern Pacific hawksbill populations through genetic studies and satellite tagging, thus guiding regional conservation management over a large area and strengthening protection of migratory turtles.

OSA IN-WATER PROJECT



Photo: Brad Nahill



IN-WATER MONITORING

Thanks to the hard efforts of our research team and volunteers, we have had quite a successful year and have captured and collected data on a total of **238 turtles, 181 green and 57 hawksbill turtles!** This data continues to provide valuable information on the Gulf's use as an inter-migratory feeding ground for endangered sea turtles.

This season the project caught the **smallest green sea turtle** to date measuring 57.3 cm! This emphasized how important the Gulf is as a feeding ground for juvenile sea turtles.

OSA'S RESIDENT BIOLOGIST TRAINS IN BERMUDA

LAST's resident biologist, Alice Mockford, was selected to be trained at the [Bermuda Turtle Project](#) sponsored by the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo and the Sea Turtle Conservancy.

In Bermuda, immature green turtles occur in the complete absence of adults, thus offering an excellent opportunity to study green turtles of this age in their natural habitat. Each year a handful of biologists and resource managers are selected to participate in a 2-week course which builds regional capacity for the management of endangered sea turtles through lectures, discussions, and extensive field work. Emphasis is placed on understanding how biology impacts management decisions and conservation outcomes. The course allows participants to use the knowledge learned to **make better conservation and management decisions** in their home countries.



Participants are given the opportunity to better understand how to improve monitoring and the collection of data specific to their country that will allow for better decision-making.

OSA IN-WATER PROJECT

MANGROVE REFORESTATION AND SEA GRASS MONITORING



Photo: Brad Nahill

4760 mangrove propagules and seeds have been collected and planted in our nursery by our hard working students and volunteers. This includes three different species of mangrove: 410 *Languncularia racemosa*, 1276 *Pelliciera rhizophorae* and 3074 *Rhizophora mangle*. A total of **665 *R. mangle* saplings** have been planted in our designated reforestation areas and their success is being studied.

We continue with our **sea grass program** and have marked several new transects that are being monitored quarterly to determine their abundance.

A **new mapping system** is being implemented to better monitor the success of these two projects.

SEA TURTLE RESCUE AND REHABILITATION

In addition to treating injured and debilitated sea turtles, LAST/WIDECASST helps **educate future veterinarians** by providing them with hands on veterinary experience at our sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation center. We provide lectures on basic sea turtle anatomy and physiology, proper sea turtle handling and examination techniques and data collection. This year alone almost **100 prospective and veterinary students** have participated in our program.

LAST/WIDECASST welcomes **Estefania Mendez, a veterinarian from Colombia**, who will carry out research for her Master's thesis at our project! Over the course of one year, Estefania will be looking at residency, habitat use and feeding of our Hawksbill population by looking at stable Nitrogen and Carbon isotopes.

With the hard work of volunteers and generous donations, we are currently rebuilding our center to better serve our sea turtle population. We would like to thank Lindsay Venable of Broadreach for the donation of an industrial freezer needed to conserve cadavers and important samples for our research.



GREEN SEA TURTLE FISHERIES TRAGEDY

A **big beautiful female green sea turtle**, measuring 88 cm in carapace length, was brought to the WIDECAST/LAST Sea Turtle Rescue Center at Playa Blanca, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica by the Coast Guard on July 11th.

The animal was found **floating on top of the water, entangled in a gillnet**. Upon arrival at the center the animal was given a general physical exam and started on fluid therapy with vitamins since the turtle was too weak to even lift her head. The patient was dry docked the first night and placed in water under observation the next day when it gained some energy back. The turtle began to swim around and take good breaths, but it began floating to one side, which is a sign off possible pneumonia, lung tear or gas. The turtle was started on antibiotics and continued to receive fluids since she was not eating.

The animal was to be transported to a larger facility where it would have the opportunity to continue treatment and get x-rays to confirm that a hook had been swallowed or not and confirm the suspected diagnosis of pneumonia. Unfortunately, the turtle passed away and was later transported to the Puntarenas Marine Park.

A necropsy was performed by the Park veterinarians and revealed a **two meter long nylon monofilament line with a broken hook at the end (2cm) in the small intestine, probably from artisan fishing**. The line caused ulceration and plication of the upper segment of the small intestine. Large amount of gas was found in the large intestine, causing great affection to the mucosa. Unfortunately this lead to a series of complications and was more likely the cause of the animal's death.

We want to thank all of those who helped out in saving this turtle: Osa Wildlife Sanctuary Foundation, Puntarenas Marine Park, SINAC, MINAET and SENASA.

LAST/WIDECAST continues to work for more sustainable fisheries. Please help us by supporting our campaign “yes to a sustainable fishery”!



Veterinary students from the Broadreach program helped maintain the tanks and assisted with the sea turtle treatments.



www.sialapescasostenible.com
www.facebook.com/sialapescasostenible

BINATIONAL PROJECT - PACUARE



PACUARE BEACH MONITORING

This year we recorded a **low season for leatherbacks**, with **only 162 nests recorded**, however, this was experienced along the Caribbean coast in general. Good news is that **18 female hawksbill and 192 female green turtles** were also recorded. Biometric data was collected and tags were read or placed on all turtles observed. All nests encountered while being laid were recorded and relocated to our hatchery.

42 leatherback, 11 hawksbill and 24 green sea turtle nests were protected in our hatchery and over **10,000 baby turtles** were released! Although we are proud to say we protected almost 100% of the endangered hawksbill nests, we lost 67% of the leatherback and 45% of the green turtle nests to the hands of poachers. We are grateful to all of our hardworking volunteers who helped us in our protection efforts, however, we need to continue to increase our protection and education efforts to protect these endangered species.



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

As a part of Pacuare's environmental education and outreach program **five sea turtle workshops** were held and one visit was made to all six schools in Pacuare. Kids learn about the species, their threats, conservation work and will visit our project at the end of the sessions. All of the children that participated live close to the beach, are aware of the illegal harvesting of eggs and female turtles during the season, and some have even eaten eggs before, but all are aware that we must protect our sea turtles from extinction and are eager to participate in our program – hoping to make a change. Some of the students were able to gain hands on experience by helping out at our hatchery, measuring and releasing hatchlings and participating on night patrols.

We believe that these experiences will help the younger generation understand the importance they play in the role of conserving and protecting nature.



BINATIONAL PROJECT – CAHUITA & SAN SAN



CAHUITA NATIONAL PARK, COSTA RICA

71 leatherback turtle nests were recorded this season in Cahuita National Park. Unfortunately this number was very low and due decreased park guards, 57% were lost to the hands of poachers.

On the other hand **81 hawksbill nests** were recorded from March to October 2015; August had the highest number of nests. Historical nesting data from 2001-2014 shows that this has been the **highest nesting season** recorded so far and confirms that this is **Costa Ricas most important nesting site for hawksbills**. This might be due to the large amount of coral reefs found offshore in the area – an important feeding ground for hawksbills.

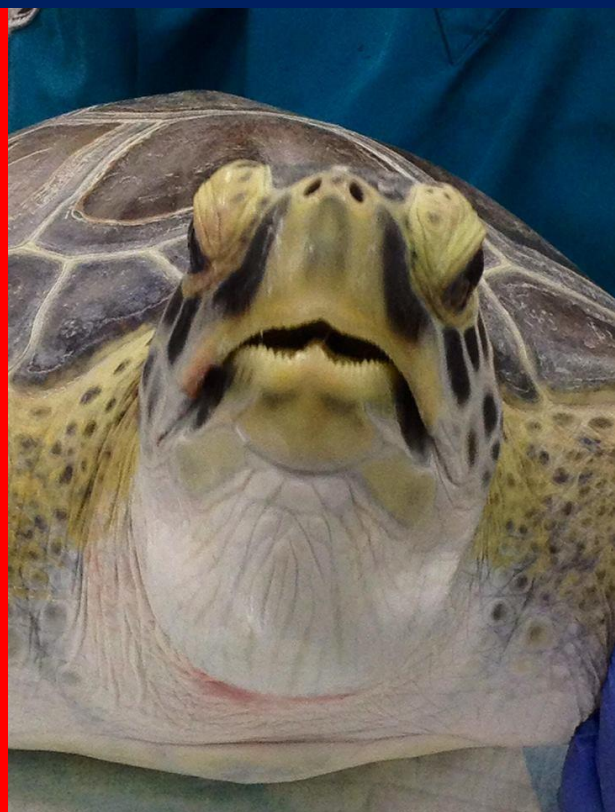
It is clear that this important nesting site is **threatened by sea level rise** which both erodes nesting beach and washes over incubating nests. It is important to take necessary actions to protect this site. **LAST is working with the Costa Rican government to protect this beach.**

PLAYA SAN SAN, PANAMA

177 leatherback turtle nests were recorded this season in Playa San San. Similar to the other Caribbean beaches, this was one of the lowest seasons on record. Thanks to increased public-private relationships, only 7% were lost to poaching

19 hawksbill nests and 4 green sea turtles were recorded. We are excited to report that this was the **highest number of hawksbill nests** recorded so far and it is clear that this beach is an important nesting site for this critically endangered species.

Despite closure of the Binational Project, LAST will continue to work together to conserve and protect these species in the region through the participation of local communities and governmental organizations.



ECOLOGICAL MONITORING PROGRAMME

PROMECC

LAST is proud to be part of the **Ecological Monitoring Programme for Costa Rica's Protected Areas and Biological Corridors (PROMECC-CR)**. This is a national-scale monitoring of protected areas and biological corridors, which is necessary for the effective management of complex, ever-changing and poorly known ecological systems and is currently being implemented by the National System of Conservation Areas of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Telecommunication.

LAST is working to consolidate a marine ecological monitoring programme for conservation priorities, specifically sea turtle nesting sites and coral reefs, in Santa Rosa and Cahuita National Parks.



SANTA ROSA NATIONAL PARK, COSTA RICA

LAST has worked together to train national park guards from San Jose Island and Playa Naranjo on sea turtle monitoring techniques.

After holding a workshop on sea turtle nesting beaches, park guards began monitoring and implementing PROMECC conservation targets, including sea turtles.

Preliminary results have reported 110 olive ridley, 15 green and one leatherback sea turtle nest in Playa Naranjo. 347 green sea turtle nests have been reported on San Jose Island. **We hope this number keeps up and we expect more than 400 green sea turtles this season!**

MORE GOOD NEWS!



“POR LA VIDA” THE 9TH ENVIRONMENTAL FESTIVAL IN TALAMANCA

The 9th Environmental Festival was organized by the Corredor Talamanca with help from LAST/WIDECAS, Peace Corps Bataan, and many local schools. More than 20 schools participated in the program with poetry, theater, songs and dances. Clowns, artists and informative stands completed the event. Every school got a certificate, dedicated to Jairo Mora. The Festivals slogan was “*Por la vida*”, For the life!, which we should respect and conserve, humans and animals alike as well as our whole planet.

EDUCATION FOR EDUCATORS

We are excited to announce that LAST/WIDECAS educator **Daniela Moeller** was invited to work with educators from the **Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC)**! The GSTC increases awareness of habitat and wildlife conservation challenges and empowers individuals to act locally, regionally, and globally to protect the environment through its education programs.

LAST/WIDECAS also participated in two workshops held for educators; one in Ojochal and another in the Caribbean sponsored by SEEturtles. **LAST/WIDECAS believes capacitating educators will ensure a more effective environmental education program.**



PACUARE FUNDED BY EUROPEAN OUTDOOR CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (EOCA) AND PACSAFE TURTLE FUND

LAST's Pacuare project participated in a conservation project voting contest in the German National Geographic, supported by **EOCA** and, thanks to all our supporters around the world, our project won second place!

This caught the attention of [Pacsafe Turtle Fund](#), who shares our conservation philosophy and decided to step in and help us save sea turtles in Pacuare. Pacsafe supports our hatchery and national and international volunteer and student program. 124 students from schools in Pacuare, Veintiseis Millas, Ramal Siete, Bataan, Goshen and Moín have attended talks, presentations and field trips to the beach, where children are able to participate in hatchling releases, beach cleaning or reforestation projects.



Together we can fight extinction – Pacsafe Turtle Fund supports LAST/WIDECAS in its effort to protect Pacuare.

We would like to share this [video](#) with all the turtle lovers out there!

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COLABORATION AND AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals and organizations have been instrumental in accomplishing these projects. We would like to thank everyone who played a role; it would not have been possible without your continued support and collaboration.

We want to sincerely thank all of our volunteers and research assistants.

Special thanks to:

Disney Conservation Fund, EOCA-PacSafe, USAID-MAREA, Billion Babies from SEE Turtles, WIDECAST Inc, Allemall Foundation, ECOTEACH Foundation, WWF LAC, Animal Experience International, NIPRO, Broadreach

Thanks to:

Manawade cabins, TRACASA Limon, Red Cross Bataan, Gas Station HBQ in Bataan, Bananera Goshen, World Vision Siquirres, USA Peace Corps Bataan, ICE, ACLAC, ACOSA, Vice ministry of Waters and Seas, INCOPESCA, Conservation International, Sea World & Bush Garden, JFF, NEAQ, Baltimore National Aquarium, Sea Turtle Conservancy and Georgia Sea Turtle Center