



MARINE AND SPECIES PROGRAM IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

A LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONSERVATION AGENDA

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EASTERN PACIFIC

WWF, in alliance with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and other partners, is carrying out a program to reduce the bycatch of sea turtles on longlines that capture tuna, sharks, swordfish and mahi-mahi. A program to exchange J-type fishhooks for circular ones that capture fewer turtles includes training about the proper handling and release of turtles aboard vessels. The program includes fishery agencies, fishers and NGOs of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. This program is essential for making bold steps toward the sustainability of this fishery.

More information:

www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/latin_america_and_caribbean/our_solutions/sustainable_fisheries/intro/index.cfm, Julio Mario Fernández, Communications Coordinator for the Bycatch Program, jmfernandez@wwf.org.co, Tel + 57 (2) 558 25 77 Ext 117

ATLANTIC

WWF coordinates an alliance of partners for the conservation of the Atlantic leatherback, focusing on designing measures to reduce bycatch through knowledge about the migration routes of these reptiles. More than 24 satellite transmitters have been deployed on turtles in Panama, Surinam, Brazil, Uruguay, Gabon, and in international waters by the project. Previously unknown migration routes for leatherbacks in the southern Atlantic have been revealed. Argentina will be attaching transmitters on leatherbacks for the first time in the coming months.

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WIDER CARIBBEAN

WWF and the MacArthur Foundation are advancing the regional program for adaptation to climate change for sea turtles and their ecosystems. In addition to compiling and organizing scientific information about the impacts of climate change on seas and coasts, the program is trying out measures for adaptation to increasing temperatures and sea level on nesting beaches, such as Junquillal beach in Costa Rica.

More information:

www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/latin_america_and_caribbean/our_solutions/marine_turtle_programme/projects/climate_turtles/index.cfm, Carlos Drews, Marine and Species Program Coordinator, cdrews@wwfca.org, tel. +506-22348434.

CUBA

Cuba is currently the only nation on the planet that meets WWF criteria for sustainable development, minimizing its ecological footprint while preserving a healthy quality of life. WWF focuses its marine conservation efforts on the promotion of tourism and sustainable fisheries, as well as strengthening the creation of a network of marine protected areas. Moreover, it supports alternatives for fishing communities that have given up the capturing of sea turtles due to a 2007 governmental resolution, including improvements to their fishing gear and the exploration of ecotourism options based on nesting turtles.

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MEXICO

WWF finances and equips projects and activities for the conservation of species and habitats in the Gulf of California, which has been described as the world's aquarium. It promotes the use of better fishing technologies to prevent harm to ecosystems and the incidental capture of species, encourages cooperation among institutions, and it helped reform the General Law of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture (2007). It also supports the consolidation of organizations such as Comunidad y Biodiversidad, A.C. and helps communities improve their quality of life with economic alternatives and incentives such as the eco-certification obtained by the red lobster fishery of Baja California. It has a conservation program for marine species (whales, dolphins, turtles, sharks, billfish and Gulf of California porpoises). In the Mesoamerican Reef, the second most important barrier reef in the world, WWF supported the Action Plan that led to the establishment of the Inter-governmental Program for the Mesoamerican Reef System; developed best fishery practices for spiny lobster capture; strengthened fisher cooperatives through ecosystem-based management and training in methodologies for gathering scientific information, certification, monitoring and best fishery practices; and encouraging the conservation of spawning fish aggregation sites and the responsible use of natural resources. It promotes alternative economic activities like ecotourism and carries out hurricane impact assessments. In both ecoregions WWF supports the consolidation and creation of Protected Natural Areas.

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CENTRAL AMERICA

In terms of its marine wealth, Central America suffers threats such as water contamination, overfishing, population growth, uncontrolled growth of fishing and aquaculture industries, the elimination of wetland and mangrove areas, sedimentation, the construction of infrastructure without environmental impact assessments and, in general, a lack of coastal development planning. All WWF Central America's actions promote an integrated coastal zone management approach that includes work with the communities living in these areas. Most of WWF Central America's activities for seas and coasts are based in the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion, which extends from the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, to the Belize Barrier Reef, the Caribbean coast of Guatemala and the Bay Islands/Cayos Cochinos complex adjacent to the northern Honduras coast. One important WWF program is training communities and public authorities to adapt to the climate change that is already affecting sensitive coastal zones. Furthermore, WWF Central America participates in the regional program to reduce incidental capture in longline fisheries of the Pacific. It is also promoting the community-based conservation of sea turtles at Junquillal beach, Costa Rica, a key nesting site for the world's most threatened population of Pacific leatherbacks.

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THE GUYANAS

The WWF regional program in the Guyanas includes sea turtle conservation activities in Guyana, Surinam and French Guiana. This region has one of the largest leatherback nesting populations of the Atlantic. Conservation efforts include research, strengthening of local capacities and environmental education for controlling illegal egg harvest, the occasional killing of females, and incidental capture by fisheries. Furthermore, it promotes the viewpoint that live turtles are a tourism attraction that can generate income for communities and contribute to local sustainable development.

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COLOMBIA

WWF focuses the efforts of its Coastal and Marine Program on the protection of species such as humpback and finback whales, sea turtles, some sharks, the conservation of marine and terrestrial habitats such as those within natural national parks, improvement of living conditions for local communities, and the conservation in perpetuity of key resources such as the fish.

- **Protection of marine cetaceans:** Work is underway to declare two new protected areas, with the approval of national environmental authorities, the national protected area system and the support and commitment of diverse NGOs, local communities and academia.
- **Generation of public opinion about the potential construction of a deepwater port in Málaga Bay:** In conjunction with its partners, WWF has been developing a campaign to show the biological and cultural importance of Málaga Bay for humpback whales and local communities, as well as the negative impacts that would occur with the construction of a deepwater port in the bay.
- **Protection of sea turtle nesting beaches:** The declaration of a new protected area in the Gulf of Urabá (Chocó-Darién) is expected. But its impacts will go beyond this: the declared area will protect a significant number of beaches and a marine area that is important to local artisanal fishers.
- **Protected Areas:** In the Gorgona National Nature Park, a sea turtle conservation and management plan was developed to improve management effectiveness in protected areas, communication and educational materials were prepared for ecotourists, and there is scientific research underway on the Eastern Pacific green turtle, *Chelonia mydas*.
- **Incidental capture program:** As part of the Eastern Pacific, there is ongoing work with artisanal and industrial fishers, as well as with environmental authorities and NGOs to advance activities for reducing the incidental capture of sea turtles in particular.

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ECUADOR

WWF has an office in the Galapagos Islands, a globally important site due to its endemic species and geographic location. In 1959, the Galapagos was the first national park to be declared in Ecuador and in 1978 it became a World Heritage Site. In 1984, it was added to UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Subsequently, the government of Ecuador created the Galapagos Marine Reserve in 1998 and it was also declared a World Heritage Site in 2001. WWF's goal in the Galapagos is to maintain a marine environment that sustains diverse, abundant native species as well as the people whose lives depend on them. On land, WWF focuses on avoiding extinctions and keeping the inhabited islands in the most pristine condition possible. The four pillars of the Galapagos program are sustainable tourism and immigration regulation, innovative fisheries management, improved waste management, and strengthening capacity of the National Park Service in the Galapagos regarding administration and inspection.

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PERU

Off the coasts of Peru, an average of 739 pounds of fish is extracted per second, or more than 20 tons per minute. The Peruvian sea is so productive it concentrates 10% of the world's fishing. If measures are not taken, the ocean fishery will collapse and many populations will lose their main source of food. The WWF Peru sea program has proposed the following priority objectives to reverse this situation: (1) Establishing an efficiently managed network of marine protected areas, and (2) ensuring sustainable use of marine species. WWF Peru participates in the regional program to reduce incidental capture of sea turtles in tuna fishery longlines and promotes marine certification as a local development alternative for conserving hydrobiological resources.

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CHILE

WWF Chile supports the preparation of a marine conservation strategy for the Chiloense ecoregion (Chiloé, Gulf of Corcovado, Chonos archipelago), to protect one of the most productive and diverse habitats of the southern Pacific coast. This ecosystem is a feeding and breeding area of important endangered cetaceans such as the blue whale, the largest animal to exist on Earth. WWF supports the work of researchers (from the Centro Ballena Azul and the Universidad Austral de Chile) who are studying the ecology of the blue whale and planning for its ecosystem. WWF Chile is now working on a new participatory conservation strategy for the protection of the Chiloé - Corcovado – Chonos area, after the Government of Chile postponed the approval of a Multi-Use Marine Protected Area (MUMAP) for the zone in August 2007. Since that date, WWF Chile and CBA have continued to push hard for a joint participation strategy with the area's many stakeholders, artisanal fishers, and coastal and indigenous communities, to meet the need to develop common, participatory criteria that will help advance the establishment of a protection zone for the conservation of this important marine habitat and facilitate the sustainable development of adjacent coastal communities.

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ARGENTINA

The Argentine sea has one of the most extensive continental shelves on the planet with an area of one million km² and 4,000 km of coastline. Oceanographic conditions generate high productivity with a food chain that sustains populations of right whales, sea lions, elephant seals, dolphins, penguins, sea turtles, petrels, albatrosses and dozens of commercially important fish species such as the Chilean sea bass, langostino crabs and squid... there is an entire ocean full of species that merit conservation! But the challenges for the area's conservation are as extensive and passion-inspiring as the Argentine sea. There are serious threats that affect the environment, its species and the development of all the activities that depend on them. The main threats include overfishing, illegal fishing, incidental capture, the negative impacts of tourism, and pollution. Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina, a partner with WWF since 1988, works to ensure the sustainable management of the ecosystems in the Argentine Sea and the southwestern Atlantic through three approaches: promoting sustainable fishery development; supporting the creation and effective management of a network of marine protected areas; and supporting conservation projects for the area's main flagship species, including whales and dolphins.

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