



Rufford Small Grant Costa Rica  
2018 CONFERENCE REPORT

Organizer: Damián Martínez-Fernández  
Garabito, 28 november, 2018





## RSG Costa Rica Conference (MarColab 2018): Sharing and generating collaborative strategies

RSG Costa Rica Conference was the first Costa Rican Marine Conservation meeting to date. The Costa Rican government, through the Vice-Minister of Water and Seas Ms. Haydée Rodríguez Romero supported the RSG Costa Rican conference in order to create a space to share experiences on marine conservation issues. We called the conference MarColab, which is a combination of words in Spanish that refer to the Sea and Collaboration. The Conference was aligned with the historical interest of Costa Rica to consolidate itself as a country that seeks sustainability and biodiversity conservation. It seeks to support government authorities in generating analysis that results in a concrete proposals. So, our main objective was to propose collaborative strategies based on solutions and synergies that allow Costa Rica to get closer to achieving national and international goals in conservation issues.

On November 26, 27 and 28, 2018, at least 250 people between students, professionals, academics, non-governmental organizations, development associations and public officials participated in the conference. We had 4 plenary sessions with international experts of different topics. Attendants had the opportunity to choose among 115 talks, in 3 different rooms that worked simultaneously, distributed in the following topics:

1. Ecological connectivity and technology in oceans

2. Ecological integrity within and outside marine protected areas
3. Governance and coastal marine ecosystem services
5. Science for Conservation
6. Coral reefs restoration
7. Eastern Tropical Pacific Conservation

Throughout the three days there were 80 exponents sharing results and lessons learned from their projects. During the first day, three sessions grouped participants for affinities and previous work. The Rufford Small Grant session, "*Science for conservation*" had a participation of approximately one hundred people who learned from Rufford grantees about progress on their projects.

During the second day, attendants were able to choose which speed talks they wanted to listen, out of 3 rooms representing 3 major conservation topics: on ecological connectivity and technology in oceans, ecological integrity within and outside of marine protected areas and governance and coastal marine ecosystem services. During this day, Rufford grantees had the opportunity again to share the results of other projects that they are leading as principal investigators. Finally, on the third day, the RSG grantees and other professionals and practitioners propose a path to address a national conservation agenda on marine issues. The negative and positive perceptions of the key actors regarding the ocean were analyzed



“It’s very likely that after the activity there will be more new conservationists in the region managing projects with RSG to contribute to conservation”.

- Catalina Molina, Costa Rica

to propose a collaborative strategy. Currently, most of the RSG grantees are leading key conservation initiatives. A space to expose their projects seeks to position in the region and in the coming years as an event to share on marine conservation issues. This initiative offered the country and grantees new tools and meeting points to manage its marine resources in a respectful and responsible manner. Through the promotion of knowledge exchange between national and international conservationists, we aim to debate about challenges and look for best possible ways to achieve healthy marine ecosystems in the region.

## Impact of the RSG Conference

According to the RSG grantees the activity provided a space to exchange knowledge and explore possibilities of alliances generated from the experience of the participants, including the Rufford grantees. Claudia Asencio from El Salvador mentioned that “personally, I was pleased to show that El Salvador is doing studies and we are trying to make relevant projects in the area”

Because the Conference allowed the gathering of conservation leaders, researchers and students, it was possible to discuss critical

issues for the future of ocean conservation, which places a high value on the participation of RSG grantees.

According to Catalina Molina from Costa Rica, “it is very likely that after the activity there will be more new conservationists in the region managing projects with RSG to contribute to conservation”.



Participants in the session of the first day



RSG COSTA RICA  
CONFERENCE  
PROGRAMME:  
International Keynote Speakers

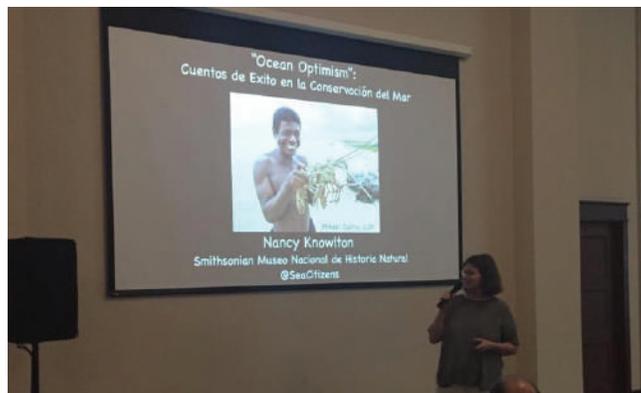


## INTERNATIONAL KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



*Connecting for conservation: collaboration can save us.* Bryan Wallace, Duke University

He works in wildlife ecology and conservation planning, particularly in protected resources biology and conservation, marine ecology, fisheries management, and ecophysiology. He has extensive experience leading and advising projects dealing with wildlife monitoring, assessments, and conservation planning, both internationally (mainly Latin America) and in the U.S. He has coordinated OPO, an international network of researchers and managers working toward reversing the decline of critically endangered leatherback turtles in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. He currently leads the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group for the Red List of Threatened Species, serves on the advisory panel for the New England Aquarium's Marine Conservation Action Fund, and is Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University Marine Lab.



*Ocean Optimism: Success stories in Marine Conservation.* Nancy Knowlton Smithsonian Institute

Nancy Knowlton was a professor in the Marine Biology Research Division and director of the Center for Marine Biodiversity and Conservation at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego. She has held the John Dove Isaacs Chair in Natural Philosophy at Scripps. Widely recognized for her studies of marine diversity, Nancy Knowlton holds the Sant Chair in Marine Science at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.





## INTERNATIONAL KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



*Hand in hand with fishermen: a shared vision between conservation and fisheries.* Aimee Leslie Global Cetacean and Marine Turtle Leader, WWF

In the last 7 years she has led the implementation of the Species Action Plan of Cetaceans and the WWF Marine Turtle Strategy, coordinated efforts worldwide to reduce the bycatch of these species. She is currently responsible for designing, directing and manage the WWF-Peru marine program strategy, promoting management based on the ecosystem that includes the participatory governance of communities and the reduction of fishing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated.



*Public-private partnerships and sustainable financing for the conservation of the insular Caribbean.* Yabanex Batista Chief Executive Officer, Caribbean Biodiversity Fund

Yabanex is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund. He has focused on international financing institutions and sustainable financing for conservation and development, government relations and policy. He has ample experience working on conservation, climate change and sustainable development in and with Small Islands Developing States, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. We worked for GIZ in Mexico, The Nature Conservancy International Government Relations Department and Europe Office, the World Bank-GEF Unit, the United States Geological Survey, and IPAM (Amazon Environmental Research Institute) in Brazil.

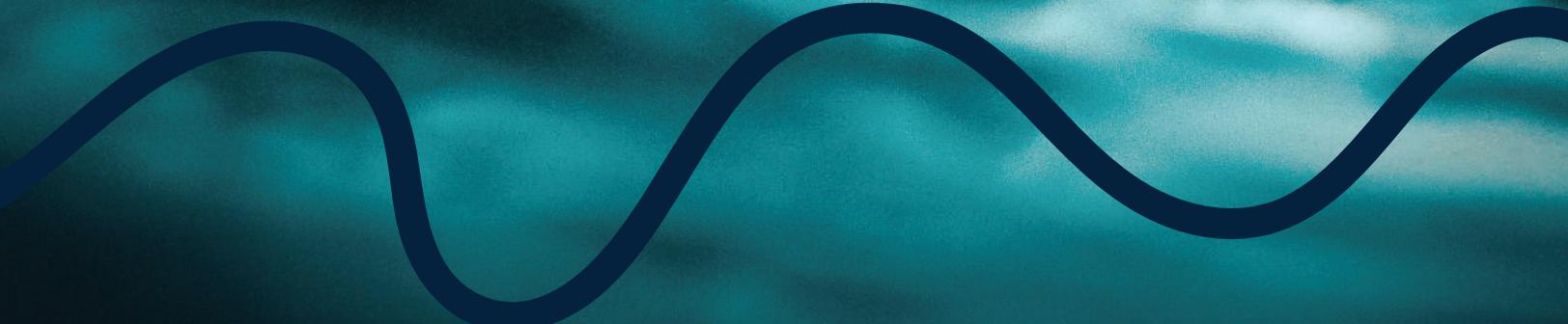


International Keynote Speakers from left to right: Damian Martinez (RSG Costa Rica Conference Coordinator), Bryan Wallace, Aimee Leslie, Nancy Knowlton and Jorge Cortés (Invited professor and speaker)



## WORKSHOPS

Rufford Small Grant  
“Science for conservation”





The RSG session focused on the need to highlight the effectiveness in marine conservation through the projects of the RSG recipients. We wanted to show that science must matter to stakeholders, policy makers, and practitioners. At the session the participants talked about marine turtles, sharks, biological monitoring, governance and conservation. For the participants the session allow them to create networking, discuss ideas, problems and issues that they face.

We share a questionnaire with some RSG grantees and some of their general impressions were:

- The initiative was quite good and this type of activities are important to replicate every 2 years. For the future, sessions can be planned in such a way that there are intertwined themes and with a more open session of questions or discussion.
- The participation of international keynote speakers adds greater quality and importance, especially when they are people who have been working or have any relationship with the Central American region. A high point was to have had a mixed audience among them conservation & protected areas, academia, non-governmental organizations, public institutions such as protected areas, fisheries, among others.
- Joining different RSG grantees was not only very important at the level of connections but also at the level of knowledge.
- Super positive experience, I think that as the first conference has reached all my expectations. It has been a great achievement for CR.

## Local RSG conservation impact

The impact of RSG on local initiatives varies from ensuring the legal protection of species, fighting illegal traffic to promoting conservation actions on specific species or communities. For Costa Rica, it has reaffirmed the importance of the conservation of marine species and their ecosystems. At the same time, an increase in the interest of coastal communities for conservation has been identified. Something relevant is that the support of RSG has managed to consolidate incipient conservation projects that over time have managed to consolidate and be leaders in their regions.

The support of RSG has allowed the projects to promote management actions for biodiversity since many of the species that work with the RSG projects have ecologically important characteristics, widely distributed in marine, coastal and freshwater environments, which could work as umbrella species. These species could support the protection and conservation of other species or of functionally in land or seascapes. At the same time it could promote important economic activities (fishing, tourism, etc.) in areas classified as vulnerable.



Rufford grantees, from left to right: Didiher Chacón (CRC), Ilena Zanella (ITA), Andrea Montero (CRC), Debbie Lopez (CRC), Daniela Rojas (VEN), Elpis Chavez (MEX), Mario Espinoza (CRC), Claudia Asencio (SAL), Hansel Herrera (CRC), Damian Martinez (CRC), Luis Fonseca (CRC), Catalina Molina (CRC) y Andrés López (CRC). Not in the picture: Julie Osborn (Miguel Fuentes)





Co-creation Workshop: *Coral reefs and their synergistic relationship with economy, conservation, research and climate change*



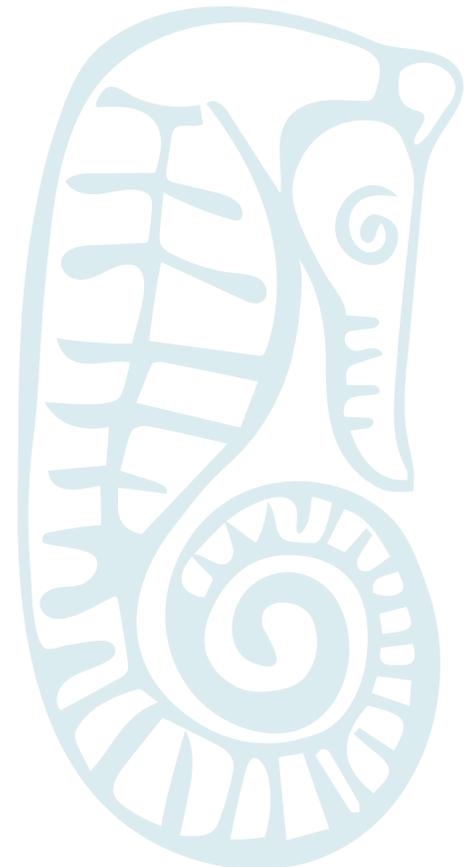




The starting point of this session was established from a generating question, what is it that unites us with the sea? Counting on a diverse public: academy, NGO, central government, students who from each of their trenches have worked to improve the marine, coastal and its inhabitants' conditions, we proceeded to carry out a first individual exercise to collect what are the aspects What links us to the sea? Each of the participants wrote in a post it each and every one of the reasons and aspects that brought them closer to the sea from different perspectives. At the end of this exercise, all this information was placed on the wall creating a cloud of links with the sea.

Once the participants could appreciate the cloud and dimension all the different aspects that motivate them, unite them and share them, the links were grouped to create macro categories from which the following themes were obtained: work, family, ecosystem services of provision, science, conservation, feelings, hedonic ecosystem services. Having each of these categories working groups were established to delve into them using the Empathy Map tool whose results were shared among all those present.

*What is it that unites us with the sea?*



## Motivations expressed at the workshop

- Share the information generated with the communities
- The awareness of the functioning of the planet
- Ecosystem vital for the planet
- Survival of the species, harmony
- Know the biology of marine species
- Caring for the balance of the oceans
- Joint construction of solutions
- I want to see each fishing area administering its resources with advice
- Conservation
- Protect marine resources
- Marine life is wonderful and integral
- An ecosystem that has much to discover
- Generate knowledge so that people know the sea
- It is a duty to take care of the sea and its living beings
- Need to conserve the species, make a change in people (thought) save the planet
- New shared projects
- Educate people to care for the sea
- That at some point there is a change
- Struggles because reef reefs continue to exist
- Work with people who wear the shirt
- Know what there is and how it works
- Make people known about the sea
- Work for an ecosystem equilibrium, the search for conservation for the health of marine ecosystems. Seas with healthy species



SOCIAL  
EVENTS



SOCIAL EVENTS



## Our seas and coasts free of plastic?



An evening session with Laura Zumbado (Environmental coordinator from Garabito Local Government), Gabriel Rodríguez (Advisor of the Viceministry of Water and Seas) and Gloriana Turcios, moderator and consultant of the UNESCO Culture Program.



## Sharing conservation experiences with sea turtles project leaders

A meeting organized by the Playa Hermosa-Punta Mala Wildlife Refuge Local Council with sea turtle experts who participated in the Conference to share experiences on marine turtle conservation and management initiatives.







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