

Project Update: October 2018

In September 2018, four local university students and I recovered the bones of a rare loggerhead that washed up at the Center for Marine Science in La Paz in June 2018 including 23 tiny tail bones. We took the bones to one of our Sea Turtle Ambassadors, Mary Sim, who lives in the fishing village of El Sargento. She gave the students a workshop on cleaning and preparing bones for preservation. Mary is a volunteer with the local Marine Science Museum. The university, along with our team, are collaborating with the museum to enrich their sea turtle display with more information about sea turtles in the Gulf of Pacific and eastern Pacific. We also conducted a study of the decomposition rate of a hawksbill sea turtle to aid in our necropsy work.

In both the turtles, we found no evidence of ingested macroplastics or injury. We did collect samples of barnacles, skin, and bone for future molecular analysis at the Center for Marine Science. Although not our idea of enjoyable field work, stranded turtles can provide a wealth of information, especially loggerheads which are not known to be in this region and critically endangered hawksbills. Hopefully our molecular analysis of stable isotopes, microplastics, and dissolved metals can provide clues as to the mortality of these individual turtles. We are grateful for the success of our Sea Turtle Spotter program since these turtles were reported via this programme.

Otherwise, we would have never known about these turtles and lost out on vital data.

It proves that our programme is working, and our outreach efforts are valuable as we continue to develop our model for sea turtle conservation.



Comparison of skulls of three different species of turtles and sizes between juvenile and adults in preparation for display at the local Marine Science Museum.



University Students learning how to clean and preserve sea turtle skeletons for display in the local marine science museum with Sea Turtle Ambassador Mary Sim.



Stephanie measuring a critically endangered hawksbill sea turtle in preparation for a decomposition field study to aid in necropsy investigation procedures.