



RSG 33326-C

PROGRESS REPORT

AUGUST 2021 - MARCH 2022

Sea Turtle Mindfulness Expeditions



We are currently developing economic incentives with ecotourism companies in La Paz, Baja Sur, Mexico. Specially designed 5-day expeditions to the Archipelago San Jose in the Gulf of California will include hiking, snorkelling, and of course sea turtle monitoring activity with our collaborating team of conservation fishers from our Mexican non-profit partner, "Grupo Tortuguero de Las Californias A.C." (GTC). Our expeditions will highlight a special menu of local, responsibly-caught, and traceable seafood sourced from our collaborating conservation fishers at GTC. Each expedition strengthens community-based fishery management (CBFM) specifically to reduce sea turtle bycatch, promote alternative seafood species, and support gear mortification trials to improve sustainability.

Economic incentives for fishers to participate in conservation research and community-based fishery management to reduce sea turtle bycatch

In June, an intern from Colorado State University (CSU) and graduate student from Columbia helped plan and implement our first successful pilot research expedition with 2 paying guests from the U.S., and 8 sailboaters from the U.S. travelling on a catamaran (Photos). The expedition resulted in 2 recorded turtles, both newly tagged juvenile green turtles and received \$250 in donations. In November 2021, Stephanie repeated this trip with 3 paying guests from the U.S. and a PhD student biologist from Peru resulting in 2 more recorded turtles, both juveniles, one newly tagged green and one recaptured hawksbill. In March 2022, a third pilot expedition was repeated with 5 MBA students from University of California, San Diego, an intern from England, a graduate student from Cuba, and a PhD student from Arizona State University (AUS), US. This expedition also resulted in 2 turtles, a different recaptured hawksbill and a new tagged green turtle and \$200 in extra donations.



Photo Above: Fisher Juan Cuevas carries a green sea turtle for release back into the Gulf of California.

Photo Bottom: Fisher Felipe Cuevas holds green turtle while PhD Student Luciana Klinge from Peru measures the girth.

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Data collected from the recaptured hawksbills contributes to a project from PhD student from University of California, Santa Cruz. Extending our research area to include newly tagged green turtles helps expand the research area and total number of tagged turtles. Finding previously tagged turtles helps our larger collaborative team with GTC understand the growth rate and site fidelity of the turtles in this foraging area.

Over the next couple weeks, Stephanie will meet with the collaborating fishers on the team, Juan and Felipe Cuevas, project lead for a non-profit, Niparaja, and the scientific coordinator from GTC, with whom our research permit is held. This meeting will be to review the official standard protocol, permits, and finalize our business plan identifying how these expeditions best provide a sustainable funding source.

We plan to offer expeditions in full by March 2023, yet possibly sooner. Our goal is 12 expeditions per year with a minimum of 6 paying guests which will contribute \$20,000 us in conservation funds, plus substantial contributions to the collaborating fishers for their efforts and time. We also plan to develop strategic internship program for local graduate students to participate in the expeditions with their costs covered by the expedition itself.



Blue Turtle Sustainable

Photo: Green sea turtle being measured with calipers by expedition participants, led by fishers Juan and Felipe Cuevas, of the El Pardito Island.