

## Sixth Annual Sea Turtle Network of the Californias meeting

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From January 23-25, 2004, more than 150 grassroots conservationists from the Baja California peninsula, mainland México, and the United States came together in San José del Cabo to share strategies for sea turtle conservation. Participants attended scientific presentations including, "What can we learn from monitoring sea turtle populations?" by Dr. Jeffrey Seminoff of the National Marine Fisheries Service; "Toxicological studies of sea turtles" by Dr. Susan Gardner of CIBNOR; and "Sea turtles as ecotourism attractions in Baja California Sur" by Graciela Tiburcio Pintos of the municipal government of Los Cabos.

Saturday's events were dedicated to community presentations, the heart and soul of the turtle meeting. Representatives of 23 local groups that are working to save sea turtles told everyone about their community's activities, successes, and progress during the past year. These presentations included handmade posters, powerpoint presentations, slideshows, factsheets, and general discussions.

On Sunday, we broke into workshop groups. Those interested in nest protection followed Pedro Márquez of Los Cabos directly to the beach to learn hands-on how to organize and manage a nest protection program. Environmental educators met with Susanna Musick of VIMS and Angeles Cruz of the Mazatlán Aquarium to gather new tools for outreach projects. "Vida de la Tortuga," a new science curriculum-based activity based on real-life black turtle life history and mortality data, was presented and put into use by students and teachers alike. "Conoce a las tortugas marinas," an education booklet produced by ProEsteros, was also distributed to participants. In the communications session, Serge Dedina and Fay Crevoshay imparted their media expertise on workshop attendees who practiced becoming effective turtle spokespeople. Lastly, Alonso Aguirre of the Wildlife Trust helped participants learn more about the importance of monitoring the health of sea turtles in the region.

Participants were treated to a video/photograph compilation set to Maná's music, showing a years' worth of outreach, education, monitoring, and networking. Other new conservation films, including "Una Entre Mil", "Oasis Marino", and "Caguamas del Pacífico" were presented. The Don Manuel Orantes prize was awarded to the monitoring team from Bahía Magdalena for their outstanding efforts to protect sea turtles and a special award was made to the Cabo San Lucas Sea Turtle Project. The municipality of Los Cabos donated a celebration dinner for everyone, complete with traditional dancers and a childrens' choral group that sang about ecology and clean water.

The overall goal of this annual meeting is to create and nurture a growing network of community conservationists. Observing the participants comparing data, sharing materials, having in-depth conversations, and building new friendships, we realize that the goal is being reached and the commitment to protect turtles is being sustained. WiLDCOAST is honored to be part of this dedicated grassroots movement, which becomes stronger each year.

Sponsors of this year's meeting included Global Greengrants Fund, the George Binney Conservation Fund, Conservation International, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and the Wildlife Trust. Our deepest thanks goes out to the Los Cabos team: Graciela, Pedro, Rayito, Maria Fernanda, and Martina, for their professional organizational skills, their nonstop hard work, and their attention to detail, all of which made the conference flawless and enjoyable. For a complete list of sponsors, please see our website, and please join us next year, when the meeting returns to Loreto.