

Proyecto ¡Carey! Saving Hawksbills from Mexico to Central America

Last month, **Proyecto ¡CAREY!** began conducting research along the pacific coast of Mexico and Central America in an effort to save the eastern pacific hawksbill sea turtle from extinction. Beginning in Costa Rica, Proyecto ¡Carey! partnered with PRETOMA (the Sea Turtle Restoration Project) and ASOPECOY (the Coyote Artisanal Fisheries Association). This dedicated team conducted the first ever in-water monitoring activities using tangle nets along the pacific coast of Costa Rica. After only two hours, the group successfully captured a juvenile hawksbill sea turtle near Punta Coyote, which is just north of the Caletas-Ario National Wildlife Refuge. This monumental achievement provides important evidence of the continued presence of this species in the region, and demonstrates the need to increase research on behalf of saving these amazing creatures.



Proyecto ¡Carey! team with the hawksbill

Following this great success in Costa Rica, Proyecto ¡CAREY! staff traveled to Nicaragua to continue studying this enigmatic hawksbill population. Equipped with two satellite tags provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), project personnel were optimistic that they would have the rare opportunity to deploy these devices on adult hawksbill sea turtles. However, given the extremely perilous state of this species in the eastern pacific region, there was no way to tell if such important opportunities would actually arise.

Paso Pacifico, a leading grassroots conservation organization in southwest Nicaragua that recently began documenting hawksbill nesting, joined Proyecto ¡CAREY!'s exploratory activities in the region. The Paso Pacifico field team, consisting of resource rangers and community guides, searched for weeks in an effort to encounter a nesting hawksbill turtle and thus enable the application of a satellite tag. In the wee morning hours of June 30th the team was ecstatic to finally locate a hawksbill sea turtle...but they were truly stunned when a second hawksbill turtle emerged on the same beach only a few hours later! Proyecto ¡CAREY! and Paso Pacifico, with the assistance of the local Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) and the Nicaraguan Sea Turtle Network (Red Nica), tagged and released both of the hawksbills from La Flor National Wildlife Refuge. These hawksbills are the first of the species to be equipped with such devices along Nicaragua's pacific coast. They represent a crucial advancement in the Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative's (ICAPO) efforts to acquire information and promote the recovery of this critically endangered population.

These historic events were made possible by PRETOMA, Paso Pacifico and each of their dedicated field teams. Proyecto ¡Carey! extends a special thanks to the Tempisque Conservation Area, MARENA, Red Nica, NOAA, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the regional ICAPO hawksbill network. You can follow these amazing turtles as they travel! Just visit www.seaturtle.org/tracking and search for Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative. Also, please visit www.pasopacifico.org to learn more about the conservation work taking place in Nicaragua.

Contact gaos@propeninsula.org for more information!