

Project Update: August 2006

Since the beginning of May, the number of stranded animals on the monitored beaches raised pretty much. Even if Proyecto Carapacho is focusing on sea turtles mortality causes and rates in Baja California Sur, we also started counting stranded marine mammals as sea lions, dolphins, whales and seals because of the increasing number found on the monitored area. From our findings, bycatch is a threat in Baja California Sur not only to sea turtles but also to other species. 59 dolphins were found stranded, according to external marks (i.e. cut fins, scars), their death is mostly related to incidental fishery. For sea lions (54 individuals counted) and seals (3 individuals), death cause is harder to determine. We also found at least 80 cormorans entrapped in fishing net, we could rescue just one the others being already dead when we arrived (see pictures).

Concerning sea turtles, a total of 160 carapaces have been counted: 36 were consumed (mostly during lent time), 50 stranded for unknown reasons and 74 died incidentally in fishing nets. The relationship with artisanal fishery is pretty evident especially in San Ignacio lagoon where strandings are frequent only in correspondence with the guitarfish fishing season. "The problem is that most of the people that are fishing within the lagoon are not allowed to but as law enforcement is very low, illegal fishers are throwing their nets in the channels catching incidentally large amounts of sea turtles" said Ranulfo Mayoral, member of the Grupo Tortuguero from San Ignacio. A meeting was organized and the presence of the authority was required for the next season in order to discourage illegal fishers in the area.

