

Project Update: September 2016

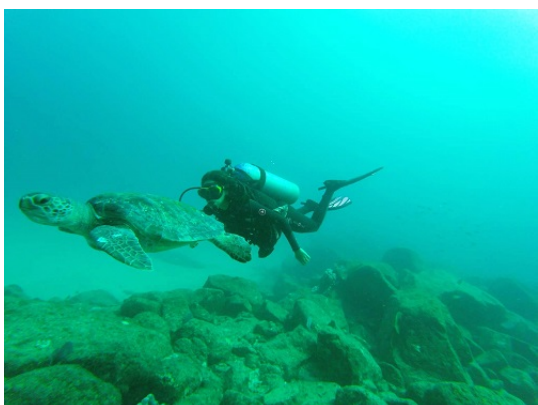
Since the start of our project, we have been monitoring and collecting data on four out of five species of turtles found in the region. Dr Monica Lara and Dr Lalo Resendiz have been working from August to October 2016 on monitoring turtle populations in coordination with artisan fishermen in several small fishing villages. These areas were closed due to claims of sea turtle bycatch. However, these claims were not proven and the data collected from our team in conjunction with the University of Baja California Sur is looking into other factors, such as illegal fishing practices, bycatch from Japanese sardine boats, and a sub-aquatic phosphate mine.

On a more positive note, I took four university students, three local volunteers, and two tourism groups to the nesting research centre from August - September. I began collecting epibionts, the marine organisms such as amphipods, barnacles, marine worms, and algae. My research is now at a much more advanced technical level now that I have entered into a graduate programme. I will be looking at the stable isotopes of the epibionts of sea turtles to georeferenced habitat usage and migration patterns, which will help define certain geographical areas where we need to focus on conservation efforts. Finally, we have begun to receive the first of the season's reports from our citizen science programme with sail boaters and tourism groups and expecting a flood of reports as the tourism season picks up and more sail boaters arrive for the nice weather.



Stephanie collecting marine organisms, "hitchhikers" to aid in migration and habitat use studies of the sea turtle.

During in-water monitoring for sea turtles, students freedive down to an illegal fishing net in a mating area to check for entangled turtles as part of our stranding and rescue pilot programme.



Reports from tourism groups such as SCUBA divers is increasing since we began our training and outreach campaign.