

Project Update: March 2015

In February 2015, we visited a fishermen camp near the city of La Paz, Baja California Sur, where there have been recent reports of nesting, well outside of the usual nesting season for olive ridley sea turtles. We met with Doña Matty and Don Salvador whose family has been fishing at this camp for generations. The fishermen use multi-filament gill nets to catch all the fish they can. They have previously hunted sea turtle, but have learned in recent years that sea turtles are more valuable alive than dead when they can take tourists to snorkel with sea turtles.

Don Salvador and his family are now helping researchers at the University of Baja California Sur and ProFaunaBaja by reporting sea turtle nests and protecting them from poaching by other fishermen. They are also serving as impromptu advocates for sea turtle conservation and supporting the initiation of sea turtle (and whale shark) tourism. Don Salvador told us about a previously unknown site for juvenile hawksbill sea turtles that we are now studying with his help by taking us out in his boat. We are also now evaluating this area as a new nesting area, possibly a range extension of our focal species, olive ridley due to climate change and development impacts in primary nesting beaches. While our original project plan did not include fishermen, this new nesting area and new stakeholder group are valuable pieces of our conservation model. Also, the ability to incorporate not only nesting, but also in-water monitoring of another species we are able to expand our project and increase our productivity under the same grant award. We will resume our planned field research activities; dune-beach profile monitoring in April 2015 and nest monitoring in July 2015. We will also initiate workshops with ATV companies in April 2015.



Left: Juvenile hawksbill caught in a gill net, tagged, measured, and safely released with the help of artisan fishermen from La Paz; shown here with students and professors from the University of Baja California Sur, Mexico. Right: New nesting area adjacent to rustic fishing camp recently discovered by fishermen who are eager to promote tourism and stop poaching sea turtles.