

La Corriente

Connecting to what's current in ocean science,
wildlife conservation, and rescue efforts

Presented by



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We are excited to share the next issue of La Corriente, created by the Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center. Enjoy a mix of articles, local updates, and our Volunteer Spotlight!

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Bird Flu Devastates Seal Pups on Remote Australian Island



A recent study has revealed the devastating impact that highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) is having on marine mammals. Researchers found that more than 75% of seal pups on a remote Australian island died following an outbreak of bird flu, highlighting the growing threat the virus poses beyond bird populations.

Scientists believe the virus was likely introduced by infected seabirds before spreading through the seal colony. The outbreak caused significant mortality among young seals, raising concerns about the potential effects on future population recovery and long-term ecosystem health.

The findings add to a growing body of evidence that H5N1 is increasingly affecting marine mammals around the world. Conservationists and wildlife health experts are closely monitoring outbreaks as the virus continues to expand into new regions and species. Early detection, monitoring, and rapid response efforts are becoming critical tools for protecting vulnerable wildlife populations.

For organizations involved in marine wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, the outbreak serves as a reminder of the importance of disease surveillance, public reporting of sick or dead animals, and continued collaboration between researchers, wildlife managers, and rescue organizations.

Read the full article here: [BBC News article](#)

Decades of Sea Lion Research Guide Future Conservation Efforts

Photo credit: Liz McHuron, NMFS Permits 16058 and 22678



A remarkable new study demonstrates the value of long-term wildlife monitoring, using more than 50 years of data collected on California sea lions to help scientists better understand and predict population health.

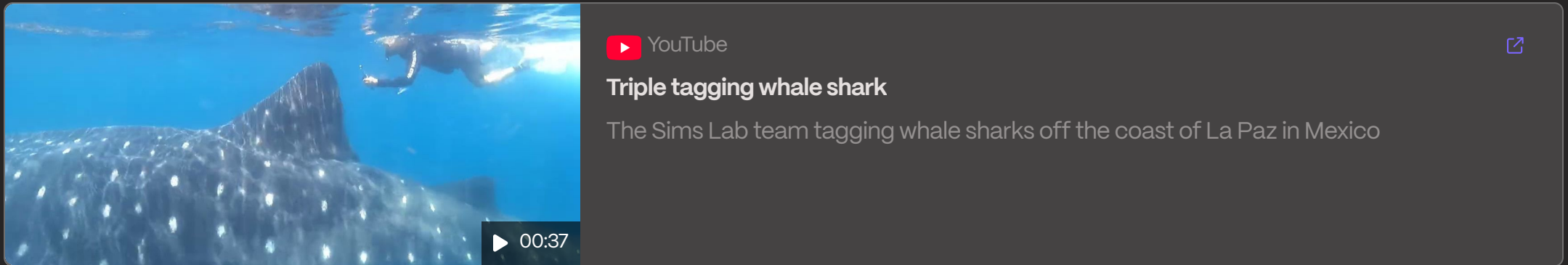
Researchers analyzed decades of observations from one of the species' largest breeding colonies and found that environmental conditions, including ocean temperatures, can provide important clues about pup growth and survival. By combining historical records with modern predictive models, scientists are gaining new tools to identify periods when sea lion populations may be under increased stress.

The findings highlight how long-term datasets can help wildlife managers anticipate challenges linked to changing ocean conditions, allowing for more informed conservation decisions. As marine ecosystems continue to be affected by climate variability and warming seas, this type of research is becoming increasingly important for protecting marine mammals and the habitats they depend on.

Studies like this underscore the importance of ongoing monitoring and research programs that provide the scientific foundation for effective conservation, rescue, and rehabilitation efforts.

Read the full article here: <https://cicoes.uw.edu/2026/03/18/one-half-century-of-california-sea-lion-data-underpins-predictive-models-for-management-decision-making/>

MBA Researchers Launch Whale Shark Tagging Mission in Mexico



Researchers from the Marine Biological Association (MBA) have launched an ambitious whale shark tagging expedition in the Gulf of California, Mexico. The project aims to better understand how climate change, warming waters, and declining oxygen levels in the ocean are affecting whale sharks, the largest fish in the world.

Using advanced satellite and data-recording tags, scientists will track the movements, diving behaviour, and habitat use of adult female whale sharks. The research will help determine how changing ocean conditions influence where these animals travel and feed.

One concern is that warming surface waters and low oxygen levels at depth may force whale sharks to spend more time near the surface, increasing their risk of collisions with boats and ships. By gathering detailed information about their behaviour, researchers hope to improve conservation strategies and better protect this vulnerable species.

The project brings together scientists and conservation partners from Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Portugal, highlighting the importance of international collaboration in marine research.

Read the full article here: <https://www.mba.ac.uk/mba-team-launches-whale-shark-tagging-mission-in-mexico/>

Volunteer Spotlight: Haidé Cruz Villagrán



Originally from Mexico City, Haidé Cruz Villagrán followed an unconventional path into marine biology, leaving a career in business administration to pursue her passion for marine mammals and conservation. Today, she is completing her PhD while conducting research that combines ecology, acoustics, artificial intelligence, and cetacean science.

Over the years, Haidé has volunteered with the marine mammal stranding network and supported rescue and response efforts in Baja California Sur. Beyond her scientific work, she is an avid birdwatcher, endurance athlete, freediver, reader, and devoted dog owner who finds inspiration and peace in the natural world.

In this conversation, Haidé shares her journey into marine biology, the experiences that shaped her career, and the lessons she has learned along the way.

Interviewer: Tell us a little about yourself and how you found your way into marine biology.



Haidé: First, thank you very much for the invitation. It is an honor to be able to collaborate with you.

I am originally from Mexico City, where I was born, raised, and completed my first degree in Business Administration. Since I was very young, I have loved animals. Animals in general have always been my passion, whether they are marine or terrestrial. I was fortunate enough to experience the ocean from a young age, and I completely fell in love with it.

After finishing my first degree, I moved to Ensenada to complete a specialization in Environmental Management. While I was there, I realized that although I had many ideas related to conservation, I lacked the scientific background to pursue them in the way I wanted. That realization led me to make a major decision. In 2013, I moved to La Paz to pursue a second degree in Marine Biology. Looking back, it was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Around 2015, I began focusing on marine mammals, particularly cetaceans. Sperm whales have always been my favorite species. By 2017, I was volunteering with an existing stranding network in La Paz, made up of many students and professors. We responded to a lot of dead stranded marine wildlife as well as some live animals, and I was participating in rescue responses, necropsies, biopsies, and other field activities. I stepped back somewhat as I pursued my master's degree and eventually my PhD, but with the mmwrc.org being so active here, I am able to stay connected to the work and what's happening, and occasionally help out when I can.



Interviewer: Was making the transition from business administration to science difficult?

Haidé: Yes, but I think it helped that I was older and had a much clearer idea of what I wanted. The scientific world is very different, but my administrative background turned out to be surprisingly useful. As scientists, we often deal with project management, policies, funding, and administration. Having that perspective helped me understand the processes that support conservation and research.

I much prefer being in the field than sitting behind a desk, but I have come to appreciate that both sides are necessary. The biggest challenge was making such a significant career change later in life. Society often tells us there is a certain timeline we should follow, but for me it was exactly the right moment.



Interviewer: Tell us about your research.

Haidé: My master's research focused on sperm whale population genetics, which was a field I completely fell in love with. For my PhD, I moved into acoustics, ecology, and the use of artificial intelligence and neural networks. Acoustics is one of the tools we use to gather information, and AI helps us analyze those data in new ways.

What excites me most is that there is still so much left to discover. Starting my PhD felt almost like starting over because I knew very little about acoustics or neural networks, but learning about both has been incredibly rewarding. The opportunity to keep learning and uncovering new things about the ocean is what keeps me excited about my work.

Interviewer: Outside of science and conservation, what are some of the things you enjoy doing in your free time?

Haidé: Nature has always been a huge part of my life, even outside of work. One of my greatest passions is birdwatching. I love observing different species, listening to their calls, and watching their behavior. Even when I am not intentionally looking for birds, I find myself noticing them wherever I go.

I also enjoy staying active. Running, cycling, and swimming are some of my favorite activities, and I am currently training for my second triathlon. I especially enjoy swimming in the ocean whenever I have the chance. I also love freediving. Being underwater brings me a tremendous sense of calm, and the feeling of freedom that comes with freediving reflects an important part of who I am.

My dogs are also a very important part of my life. I adore them. They remind me every day of the joy and companionship animals bring. I enjoy spending time with family and close friends as well, though I prefer small gatherings and meaningful conversations over large crowds.

I also love reading, especially thrillers. Reading allows me to disconnect, use my imagination, and explore different perspectives. Whether I am birdwatching, training outdoors, reading a good book, or spending time with my dogs, those experiences keep me connected to nature and remind me why conservation matters.



Interviewer: How did you become involved with the Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center?

Haidé: Around 2017, I was already involved with the stranding network through a research group in La Paz. When the rescue center was established, I was introduced to Ricky and later to Victoria, and we began collaborating during rescue and response events.

What impressed me most was the commitment and passion of everyone involved. I was also conducting research nearby at the time, which made it easy to help with sample collection, measurements, and laboratory work whenever stranded animals arrived. I always enjoyed working with the team, and I hope I can become more actively involved again in the future.

Interviewer: Is there one rescue or stranding that stands out in your memory?

Haidé: Absolutely. The sperm whale stranding I ever witnessed, and it had a profound impact on me.

Seeing such a massive animal up close was incredible. What affected me even more was watching everyone work tirelessly to try to save it. People were doing everything they could, waiting for the tide, trying different approaches, and refusing to give up. It was powerful to see so many people united by a common purpose and a genuine desire to help.

At the same time, it was heartbreaking. Sometimes, despite everyone's best efforts, circumstances are beyond our control. The whale ultimately died, and we witnessed the entire process. I remember feeling admiration, sadness, frustration, and helplessness all at once. It reinforced for me how important this work is and how much more support and resources are needed for marine wildlife conservation.



Interviewer: Where do you think your passion for animals comes from?

Haidé: Honestly, I do not know. Growing up in Mexico City, I did not have much direct contact with nature. We were not even allowed to have dogs or cats because my sister had asthma. My parents taught us to respect animals and nature, but they were not scientists or naturalists. My father was an accountant, and my mother was a nurse.

I think the passion simply came from within me. Whenever I had the opportunity to experience nature, especially the ocean, I felt a strong connection to it. When I first saw dolphins and whales in the wild, I knew this was what I wanted to dedicate my life to. I have always felt deeply connected to nature and, in many ways, I connect more easily with animals than with people.



Interviewer: What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a whale researcher?

Haidé: Follow your dream.

When I was young, I wanted to become a veterinarian, but I often heard people say that careers involving animals were not practical or successful. Over time, those messages influenced me more than I realized. Nobody directly told me not to do it, but by the time I was choosing a career, that dream had quietly faded into the background.

My advice is not to let other people define your path. If you have a dream, pursue it. Build a plan, work hard, and be prepared for challenges, but do not abandon something you truly care about because of someone else's expectations. There is no perfect age to start something new and no single path to success. Life will always bring challenges, but they are easier to face when you are doing something you genuinely love.

Interviewer: What can people do to contribute to conservation, especially if they live far from the ocean?

Haidé: I think many people feel disconnected from environmental issues because they do not see them directly. Someone living in a large city may wonder what the ocean has to do with their daily life, but everything is connected.

I believe education is the foundation of conservation. Small actions matter. Reducing waste, using resources responsibly, consuming less, avoiding unnecessary plastics, and making thoughtful choices all contribute to a healthier environment. One person's actions may seem small, but when many people make those same choices, the impact becomes significant.

That is how we think in biology. We do not only study individuals. We study populations. Conservation works the same way. Stay informed, stay engaged, and remember that everything is connected.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to share?



Haidé: I would like to thank everyone involved with the rescue center (mmwrc.org) and acknowledge the incredible work being done there.

La Paz is home to an extraordinary diversity of marine life, and having a rescue center here is essential. The commitment of the volunteers is truly remarkable. The work requires time, energy, travel, and dedication, but it is also incredibly rewarding. Even when many animals cannot be saved, helping just one recover makes all the effort worthwhile.

I encourage people to learn more about the organization, follow its work, visit if they have the opportunity, and support it in whatever way they can. Whether through volunteering, sharing information, or donating, every contribution helps.

I truly admire the dedication and passion that everyone brings to helping marine wildlife, and I feel fortunate to be a small part of that effort.



Our sincere thanks to Haidé for taking the time to share her story with us. Her journey is a wonderful reminder that there is no single path to a meaningful career, and that passion, curiosity, and perseverance can lead us in remarkable directions.

Whether she is studying sperm whales, training for a triathlon, birdwatching, or spending time with her dogs, Haidé's connection to nature shines through in everything she does. Her dedication to science and conservation continues to inspire those around her.

We are grateful for the time, expertise, and enthusiasm she has shared with the rescue community over the years, and we look forward to following the next chapter of her journey. Thank you, Haidé, for all that you do for marine wildlife and for helping us better understand and appreciate the natural world.

Our Mission: Rescue, Rehabilitation, Reintroduction



Emergency Response

24/7 coordination with federal authorities, including PROFEPA and CONANP, to quickly respond to reports of marine life in distress.



Expert Rehabilitation

Providing specialized medical care and rehabilitation support for sick or injured marine life, utilizing best practices in wildlife veterinary medicine.



Large Whale Entanglement Response

Rapid intervention and specialized techniques to safely disentangle whales from fishing nets and other marine debris.



Safe Return to the Ocean

Careful reintroduction of recovered animals to their natural habitat, following strict national wildlife protection protocols.



Community Education

Raising awareness through school programs and community outreach to foster shared responsibility in ocean conservation.

Our collaborative conservation approach, involving federal agencies such as CONANP and PROFEPA, local authorities, and community members, ensures that every rescue follows established protocols. This integrated network maximizes successful rehabilitation and significantly improves survival rates for vulnerable marine populations in the Gulf of California.

The Rich Biodiversity We Protect

The Gulf of California is a global conservation priority, home to astonishing marine life, including over 900 fish species, 37 marine mammal species, and five of the world's seven sea turtle species.

Our work not only saves individual animals but also advances scientific understanding of marine health, migration, and human impacts. Collected data informs conservation strategies, policy decisions, and community education, strengthening our commitment to protecting these magnificent creatures.



Pinnipeds

Four pinniped species are present in Mexico. Both sea lions and seals often require rescue from fishing gear entanglements and human-related injuries. They are also vulnerable to the effects of pollution and toxic algal blooms.



Dolphins

Dolphins face threats from nets, pollution, harmful algal blooms, and marine debris, necessitating expert intervention.



Whales

Species such as humpback and fin whales are vulnerable to fishing gear entanglement, requiring specialized disentanglement.



Sea Turtles

Five endangered species nest and feed here, making our rescue and rehabilitation efforts critical for their recovery.



Whale Sharks

These gentle giants migrate through our waters. We respond to occasional incidents of strandings and vessel collisions.



Seabirds

Seabirds, like pelicans, are especially vulnerable to entanglement and injuries, and our team responds when reported.

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