

La Corriente

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

Presented by



La Corriente - Volume 2, Issue 5

(May 2026)

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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Are sperm whales also midwives?



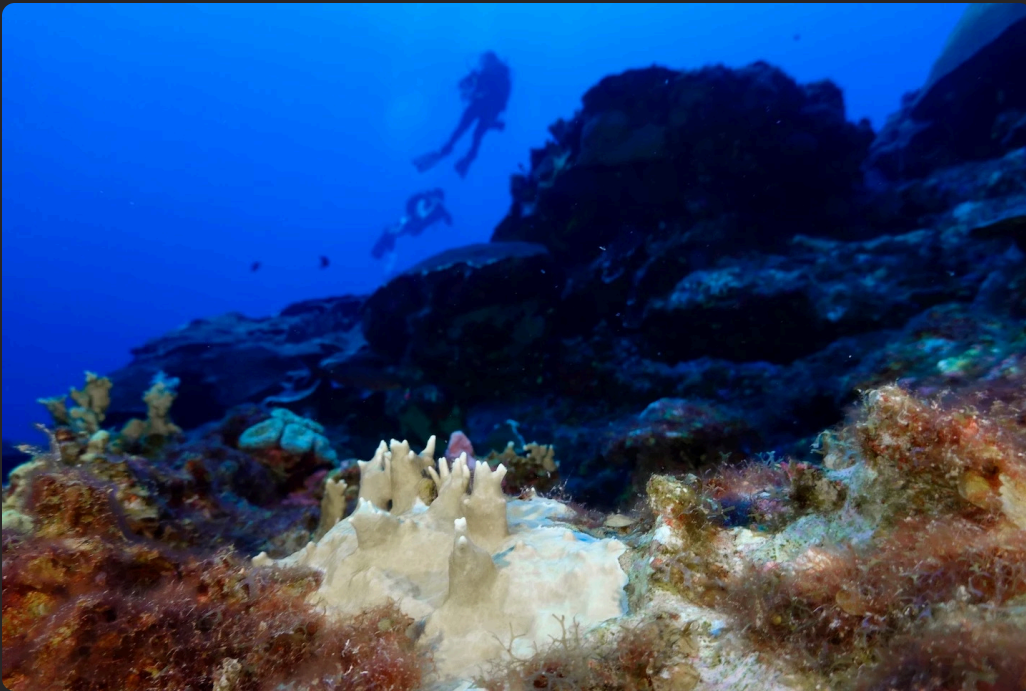
Childbirth is a dangerous process in all mammal species, especially for marine mammals. Sperm whale calves are not born with the ability to swim; they must be lifted to the surface to breathe for the first time. Before 2023, there was only one recorded instance of an observed whale birth, which occurred at a distance and only after the birth had taken place. However, in July 2023, a group of biologists from Project CETI, a scientific initiative focused on sperm whale communication, observed, heard, and recorded the birthing process of a sperm whale.

The scientific studies from this event were published on March 26 and revealed that sperm whales, like humans, engage in midwife-like activities. The pod assisted the mother during and after the calf's delivery. The animals were seen supporting the mother and ensuring the calf stayed afloat. Some members were even seen warding off potential predators that could have posed a threat to the mother or calf.

Not only that, but the whales' communication changed during the birth. The clicks and sounds they made appeared to "reinforce social belonging" and showed signs of collective excitement. These results are groundbreaking and suggest that sperm whales may have more complex social and cognitive abilities than previously thought.

To learn more about this fascinating and groundbreaking story, visit [National Geographic](#).

Sourced and Summarized by Maya Miller



Upcoming Marine Climate Anomaly Could Have Massive Implications

An ocean hotspot spanning from Micronesia to California, about 5,000 miles, is going to experience a massive heat wave, causing water temperatures to increase from 6 to 8 degrees above average.

These higher temperatures will increase humidity on the California coast and boost thunderstorms and erratic weather patterns. This could cause wildfires, lightning storms, and a particularly active hurricane season.

The impacts of the heat wave could extend from Baja California Sur all the way to Hawaii. Kelp forests and marine ecosystems could be negatively affected by these higher temperatures, especially if this heat wave is simply a “precursor” to a future, highly worrying pattern of global ocean warming.

Global warming is incredibly alarming, and the ocean most often endures the worst of its effects. Coral bleaching events are increasingly common, and rapid ocean acidification is a worrying sign of the ocean’s worsening condition.

We all depend on our oceans, and this climate anomaly is a concerning indication of the distressing effects of climate change. To learn more about this weather event, you can read the original article by the [The Washington Post](#).

Sourced and Summarized by Maya Miller

A Huge Win: Chile Makes Landmark Progress Toward Ocean Conservation



Chile recently expanded a marine reserve, increasing marine protections in a manner that, if implemented by every country, would guarantee protection for 30% of the ocean by 2030.

The Juan Fernández Archipelago and Desventuradas Islands marine parks are home to thousands of marine animals, including the Juan Fernández fur seal and various species of lobster, whales, dolphins, turtles, seabirds, and fish.

This action expanded the reserve by 360,000 km², ensuring the archipelagos are safeguarded for future generations. The reserve holds massive cultural significance for local communities and demonstrates the Chilean government's commitment to both marine conservation and the culture and traditions of its citizens.

Biodiversity loss is a major challenge facing the planet, and Chile's recent expansion of the reserve "reinforces its position as a global leader in marine conservation." To learn more, visit [Oceanographic Magazine](#).

Sourced and Summarized by Maya Miller

Climate Change Strikes Again: This Time, Baby Penguins Are the Victims



Climate Change Strikes Again: This Time, Baby Penguins Are the Victims

Global warming is, and has been, causing massive melting of sea ice, and there are currently record-low levels of Antarctic sea ice, causing mass drownings of emperor penguin chicks. As temperatures increase, "fast ice" (ice that remains intact for the duration that penguin chicks need to develop their waterproof feathers) can break early, causing entire colonies to fall into the water and leaving the chicks to drown.

Between 2009 and 2018, emperor penguin populations decreased by 10%, causing the species to move from 'near threatened' to 'endangered' on the IUCN's list of endangered species.

Baby penguins are incredibly vulnerable and rely on sea ice as a safe haven before they can enter the water. Even if a chick falls into the water and escapes, it does not have the ability to simply "dry off," as it will likely freeze to death. There have been multiple mass drowning events that have led to the premature deaths of thousands of chicks.

Furthermore, warmer waters are causing decreased krill populations, which Antarctic fur seals rely on for food. Antarctic fur seals have, in turn, also moved from 'least concern' status to the 'vulnerable' category on the IUCN's Red List.

The decline of Antarctic animals is a telling sign of the worsening situation we find ourselves in. With increasing levels of CO2 in the atmosphere, we need to take serious steps to slow and reverse climate change. Global warming is causing the unnecessary deaths of millions of innocent lives. To learn more, you can see the original article from the [Guardian](#).

Sourced and Summarized by Maya Miller

Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Alejandro Castro. His friends call him Gori.

Gori is a long-time volunteer with the Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center. He grew up in San Felipe, a coastal fishing community where life is closely tied to the sea. Over the years, he has supported marine mammal response efforts and become more deeply connected to marine conservation, and is a valuable member of our team.

M: To start, can you introduce yourself and tell us how you first became involved with the Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center?

A: Thank you very much, and greetings to everyone. I'm Alex, but all my friends call me Gori. I am from San Felipe, Baja California where I was born and raised, and I have lived there for more than 30 years. My involvement began in 2016 before there was a Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center! There was a big conservation project in San Felipe which is where I met Ricky [Rebolledo, Director de MMWRC.org] and later, Victoria and some of the other original team members as well as the guys from Museo de la Ballena.



M: I know San Felipe was founded as a fishing port in the upper Gulf of California and grew into a holiday destination and popular area for expats to settle, but would you say that the majority of local Mexican people in San Felipe are still tied to fisheries, either directly or through their families?

A: San Felipe is 100% a fishing town. Fishing has always been the main activity, although at certain times of the year it does become more focused on tourism. Many families here depend on fishing for their livelihood.



M: I imagine that would have a really big impact.

Before we go on, you said all your friends call you Gori. Where does that nickname come from?

A: Yes, yes, Well, since I was little, I was a bit bigger than normal. So they started calling me "gorilla," kind of in reference to my size. Then later, as I grew up, they stopped calling me gorilla and just "Gori." So it came from "gorilla," and then it got shortened. In Mexico, nicknames are very common. It is just a friendly way people connect with each other.

M: Well yes, I've lived in Mexico long enough to know that's true and you're right, it's very endearing. Thank you very much for the green light to call you Gori. The truth is our team respects you a lot.

The conservation project you talked about earlier was the Vaquita CPR project right? And you were part of the construction crew helping them build that site?

Yes, as I mentioned it was through there that I had the pleasure of meeting all the amazing people on that project and I saw how they were involved one hundred percent in the project and how outstanding they were with the desire to work and make a difference. It was a pleasure to be part of that project, even from my side of it, to help build it and be part of the dream everyone had to help the vaquita. I remember how many countries were involved and how much effort was made to come to my small community and help this animal.

I got to know Ricky really well and he allowed me to participate in some workshops and rescue simulations and that piqued my interest in response and rescue as well. It is amazing seeing how people come together to care for marine mammals.



What an incredible project to be a part of! Do you still work in construction now?

No, not anymore, not unless one of my friends needs help! In fact, in 2018 I travelled to La Paz with Hector and the crew from Millanes Construction to build the first phase of the facility for MMWRC! That was our first time there and we love visiting the center and getting out on the water in La Paz.

Shortly after that I started working in Aquaculture through some of the contacts I'd made on the Vaquita project. There were several years of taking care of and raising fish but that meant I was all day at sea.

I eventually decided to move on because I wanted to go back to school. So I took a job in hospitality/tourism alongside my wife Liz, who is also a profesora. That gave me more flexibility to attend my classes and study. But I stayed connected to the ocean and it was during all of these years, post-Vaquita CPR project that I started attending strandings with MMWRC and got trained in whale disentanglement so that I could be on the RABEN (our national whale disentanglement network) team for San Felipe. Ricky has been instrumental in all of that and I make it a priority to be able to respond to cases here when he asks for my assistance.



M: What are the most important rules for tourists or volunteers if they encounter a marine animal in distress?

A: If you do not have experience, especially with strandings like whales, you should never try to move or handle the animal yourself. The best thing to do is report the situation immediately to the authorities (PROFEPA or Policia) or specialists (MMWRC.org) and keep the animal in sight until help arrives. The same applies to sea lions and dolphins and other species. Avoid direct intervention and always contact trained personnel.

M: What are the most serious environmental issues you are seeing today in your community?

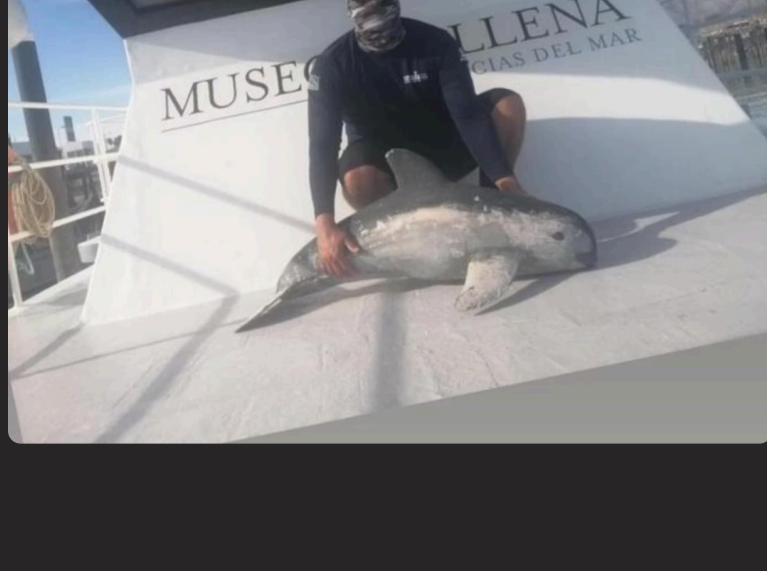
A: Pollution is a major problem, but illegal fishing is also a serious issue. The use of very long nets in restricted areas and the misuse of gillnets causes a lot of damage. Many marine animals die this way, and every year it adds up to a huge loss that harms the environment even more.

M: Besides literally rescuing marine life, what do you do in your everyday life that helps marine life, and what can others do?

A: I try not to pollute, I pick up my garbage and others when I go to the beach, and I treat animals with respect. These are simple actions, but they are important and something everyone can do.

M: Gori, you're in San Felipe, most of us are in La Paz, and the extended response network is scattered throughout Mexico's coastlines...what keeps you connected to the team?

A: Yes, that's a good question. When we were working together and living together during trainings, it became something stronger, a closer bond. Serving together with the team, we became like a family. It created stronger ties, a stronger friendship. Being surrounded by people with the same purpose is very motivating. Seeing the effort everyone puts in inspires me to keep going. I feel proud to be part of it even when I see what the team is doing in other parts of the country.



Gori's story is rooted in the sea, but it is really about people. It is about growing up in a community that depends on the ocean, choosing to protect what sustains it, and continuing to show up even when the work is difficult. Whether he is on the water responding to a rescue, supporting conservation efforts, or preparing for his future in law, his focus remains the same. Protect marine life, support the community, and be part of something bigger than yourself.

Interview by Maya Miller



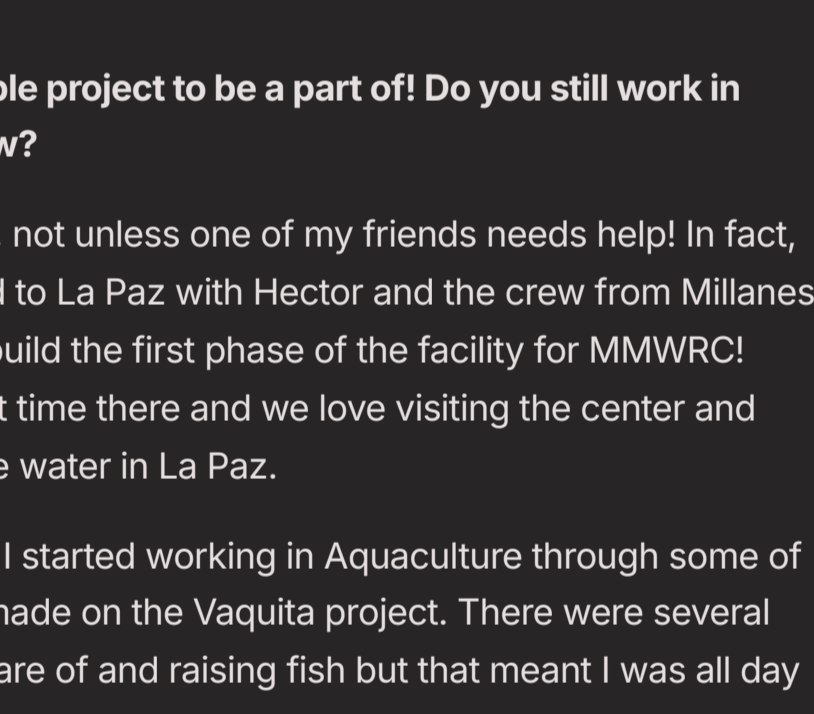
M: Oh that's really cool that you are from San Felipe. I've never been there but as an ocean lover it's on my radar because I know that's where the last remaining vaquita porpoises are and where all the efforts to save the species were initiated, and still continue today.

Is the vaquita a big part of the conversation there among the community?

A: There is growing awareness around sustainability and the protection of endangered species, the vaquita marina being the most important because there are so few of them remaining. There are organizations working to raise awareness about the vaquita marina, and others that help support better practices amongst the fisheries. It is a beautiful and productive place, and people are becoming more conscious about protecting the environment.

When did you first realize your passion for animals and marine ecosystems?

A: It was natural. I grew up near the sea, and that created a strong connection for me. From a young age, I felt a desire to help and protect marine life. I was involved in three situations with stranded whales, but in all cases the animals had already died. Those experiences stayed with me and strengthened my commitment to protecting the environment.



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.



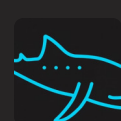
Whales

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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