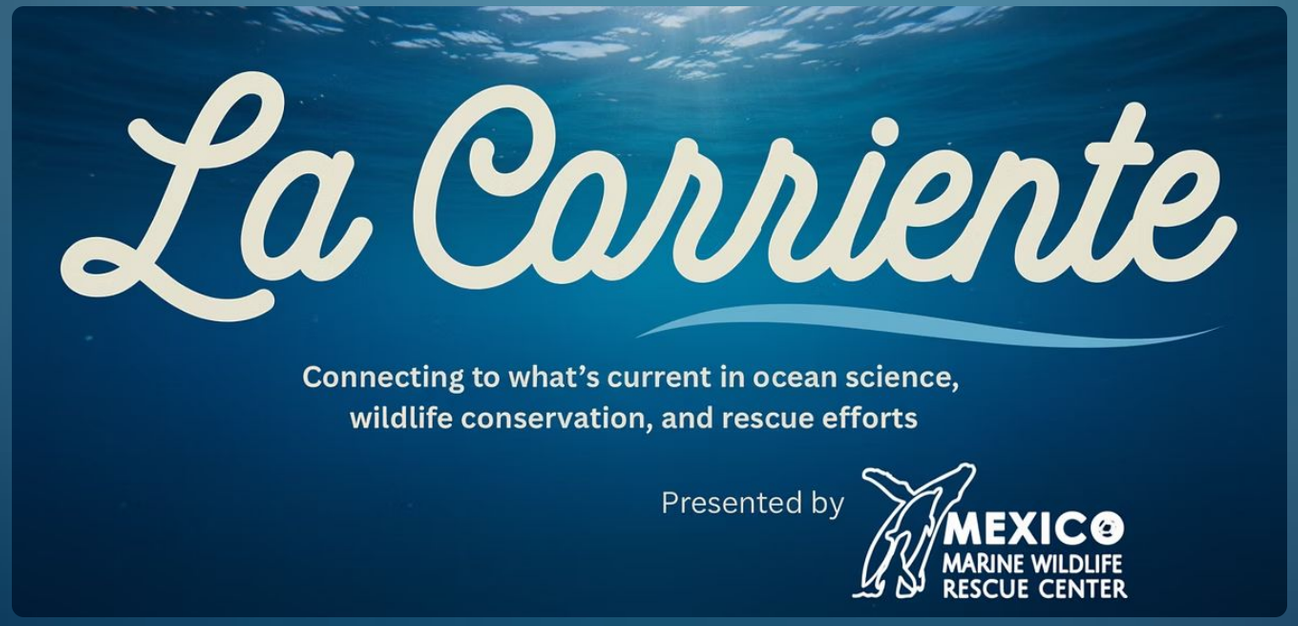

La Corriente - Volume 2, Issue 8

(August 2026)

Welcome to the latest issue of La Corriente, brought to you by the Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center. Inside, you'll find in-depth articles, local conservation updates, and our featured Rescue Spotlight.

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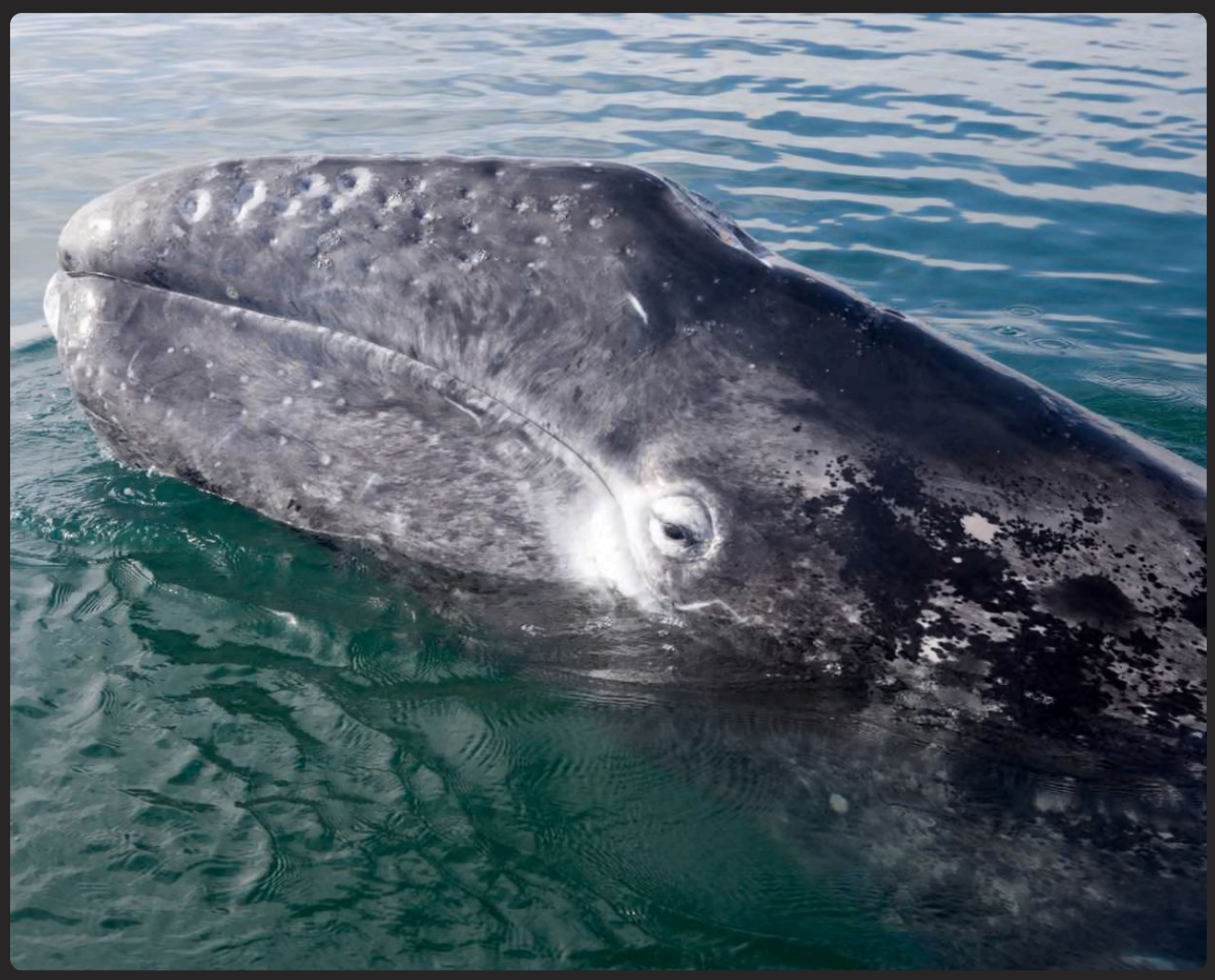
Pacific Gray Whale Population in Peril



Climate change strikes again — and this time, Pacific gray whales are the victims. The species knows endangerment well. Commercial whaling in the 19th and 20th centuries drove them to the brink of extinction, but decades of dedicated conservation work brought them back. In 1994, they were officially removed from the endangered species list — a hard-won triumph.

That recovery is now in serious jeopardy. Gray whale populations have plummeted from roughly 20,000 in 2019 to fewer than 13,000 in 2026. Reclassifying them as "Endangered" would offer meaningful protections, but the Trump Administration's sweeping rollbacks of environmental safeguards have made decisive action painfully difficult. Its drilling-friendly policies have only compounded the threat, increasing pollution and accelerating the conditions driving this collapse.

Gray whales face entanglements, boat strikes, and contaminated waters on a daily basis. Most alarming, however, is the growing food crisis. Warming ocean temperatures are rapidly depleting their prey, and the consequences are visible: marine ecologist Rick Steiner has described stranded gray whales as "emaciated" — a stark indicator of a species under severe stress.

We cannot afford to ignore these warning signs. Gray whales are not just ecologically vital — they are economically essential. Their vast migratory routes distribute nutrients across ocean layers, fueling phytoplankton growth and supporting entire marine food webs. From Baja California to Canada, they anchor multi-billion-dollar whale-watching, ecotourism, and fishing industries. Lose them, and the ripple effects will be profound.

So, what can we do to help?

Marine animals don't recognize borders — but governments and corporations respond to pressure. Now is the time to use your voice. Demand stronger environmental protections. Support renewable energy. Vote for leaders who treat climate action as the emergency it is. The gray whale's survival depends on the systems we fight to protect — and so does ours.

To continue learning about the crisis gray whales are facing, you can check out the article from **The Guardian** focusing on the subject.

by Maya Miller

Attacks on Endangered Species Act: Putting Profits over Public Good

The Trump Administration and the Republican-controlled Congress are waging an all-out assault on the Endangered Species Act — the landmark law that has shielded imperiled wildlife since 1973. They are doing so despite 84% of Americans supporting the ESA.

So why gut a law the public overwhelmingly supports? The answer is simple: money. Large corporations routinely face regulatory hurdles when extracting resources from or developing the habitats of protected species. They can also face legal and financial consequences for directly or indirectly harming listed animals. The current administration has chosen to prioritize those "economic considerations" over the survival of the species themselves.

What Are the Proposed Changes?

The legislation starts by redefining the word "harm" — stripping habitat destruction from its legal meaning. This is a radical departure from decades of ESA precedent, which recognized that protecting a species requires protecting its home. Habitat loss remains the leading threat to wildlife worldwide. Under this new definition, oil, mining, and timber industries would be free to devastate critical habitats without consequence.

There's a legal problem with this, too. The 1995 Supreme Court case *Babbitt v. Sweet Home Chapter of Communities for a Great Oregon* explicitly held that "harm" includes significant habitat degradation. This bill flies directly in the face of that ruling.

The legislation also mandates that economic factors receive greater weight when classifying species as endangered. In practice, this means a species could be denied endangered status simply because that classification might threaten a business opportunity: a resort, a casino, a pipeline. The ecological reality of that species' decline would become legally secondary to a corporation's projected profits.

Third, species currently listed as "threatened," those expected to become endangered in the foreseeable future, would lose all legal protections. That means people could legally kill, capture, or trap these animals, leaving them completely defenseless at the very moment they need protection most.

Finally, the Administration has reconvened the so-called "God Squad," formally known as the Endangered Species Committee, granting blanket exemptions to oil and gas companies to harm endangered species in the Gulf of Mexico. This directly threatens the critically endangered Rice's whale, one of the rarest marine mammals on Earth.

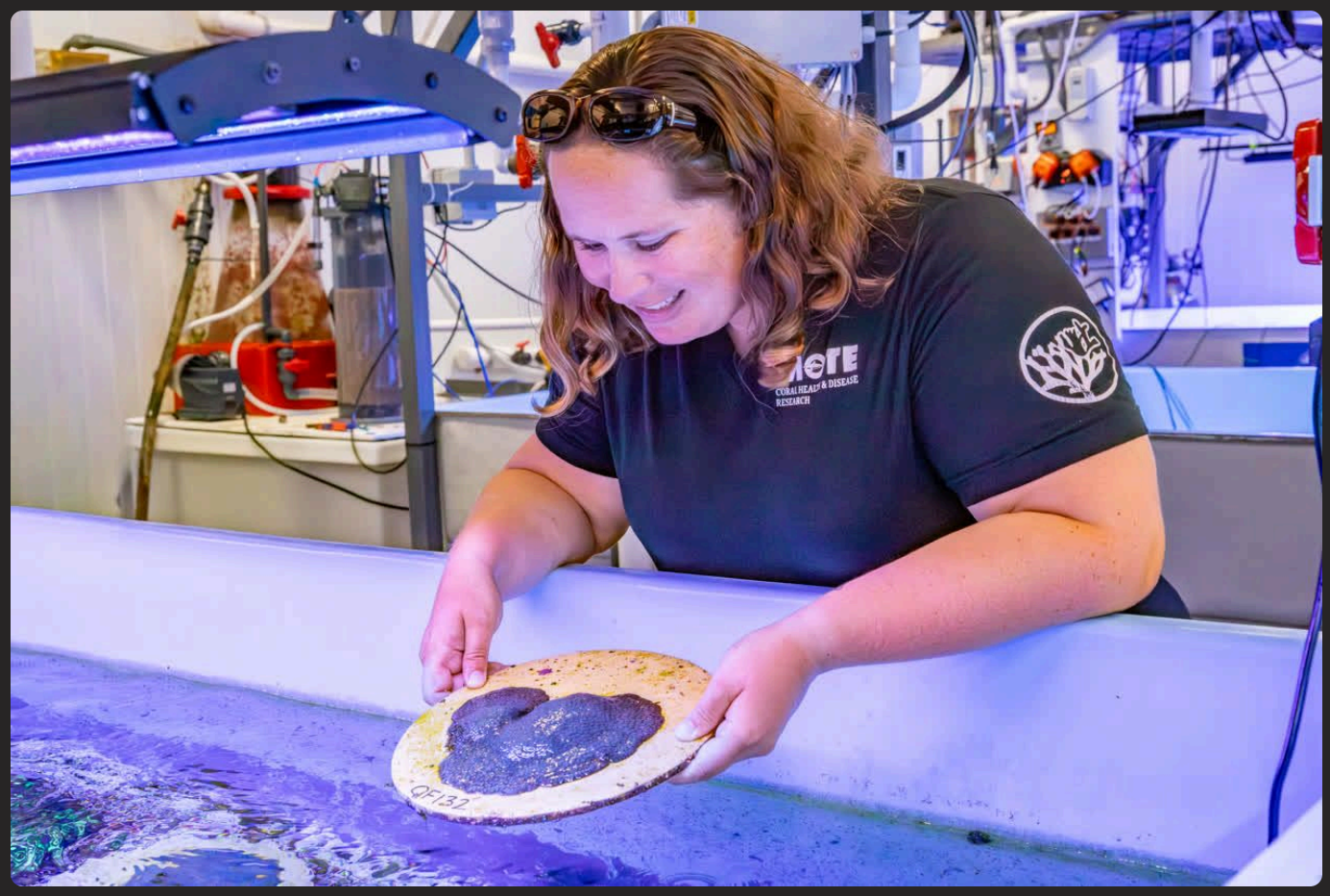
Numerous lawsuits are already being filed to block these measures. But legal challenges alone may not be enough. International pressure, community organizing, and sustained advocacy from people in positions of power will all be necessary to stop this coordinated dismantling of wildlife law.

This is not a partisan issue. Every person on this planet depends on the biodiversity that keeps our oceans and ecosystems functioning. These protections have held for over fifty years because they reflect a basic truth: you cannot put a price on a species' existence. We must fight to preserve them — before that option disappears entirely.

To read more about this issue, you can visit **This article** by **Earthjustice**.

by Maya Miller

Disease-Resistant Genotypes in Certain Corals Discovered, Has Major Reef Restoration Implications



Scientists at the Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium have identified specific genotypes in the mountainous star coral (*Orbicella faveolata*) that are naturally resistant to stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD) — one of the most lethal and contagious coral diseases known.

Human activity has contributed to SCTLD's spread: pollutants, contaminated dive gear, and coastal development have all helped carry the disease throughout the Caribbean. Meanwhile, rising ocean temperatures have weakened coral health more broadly, making reefs more vulnerable to disease and slowing recovery after outbreaks.

In the published study, scientists identified 12 genotypes that consistently demonstrated disease resistance across repeated transmission experiments, a significant and reproducible finding that points directly toward practical restoration strategies.

By propagating and outplanting corals with these resistant genotypes, researchers believe we can build more resilient reefs from the ground up.

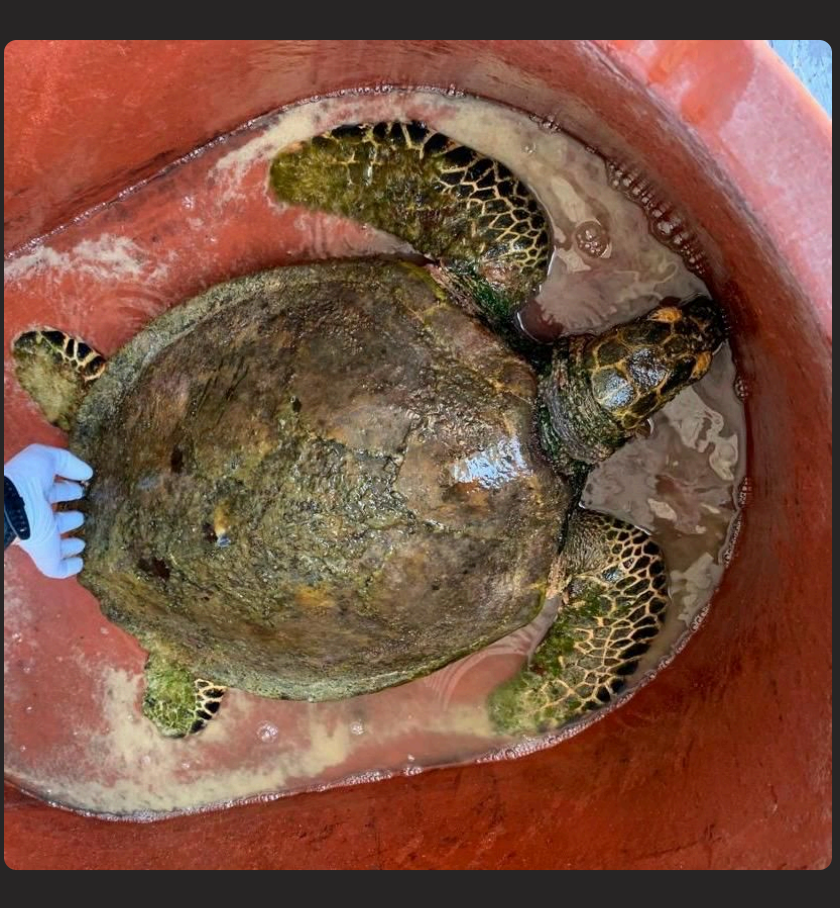
In a rapidly changing ocean, resilient reefs are increasingly rare. This study offers real promise — and a clear path forward for harnessing what nature has already evolved to help our reefs survive.

The implications reach beyond SCTLD. Screening corals for genotypes linked to stress resistance is already underway, and with continued research, we may be able to help reefs adapt to the challenges of a warming world.

To read more about the study, you can visit **This Article** by **Mote.org**.

by Maya Miller

Solving the Mystery for a Hawksbill Sea Turtle



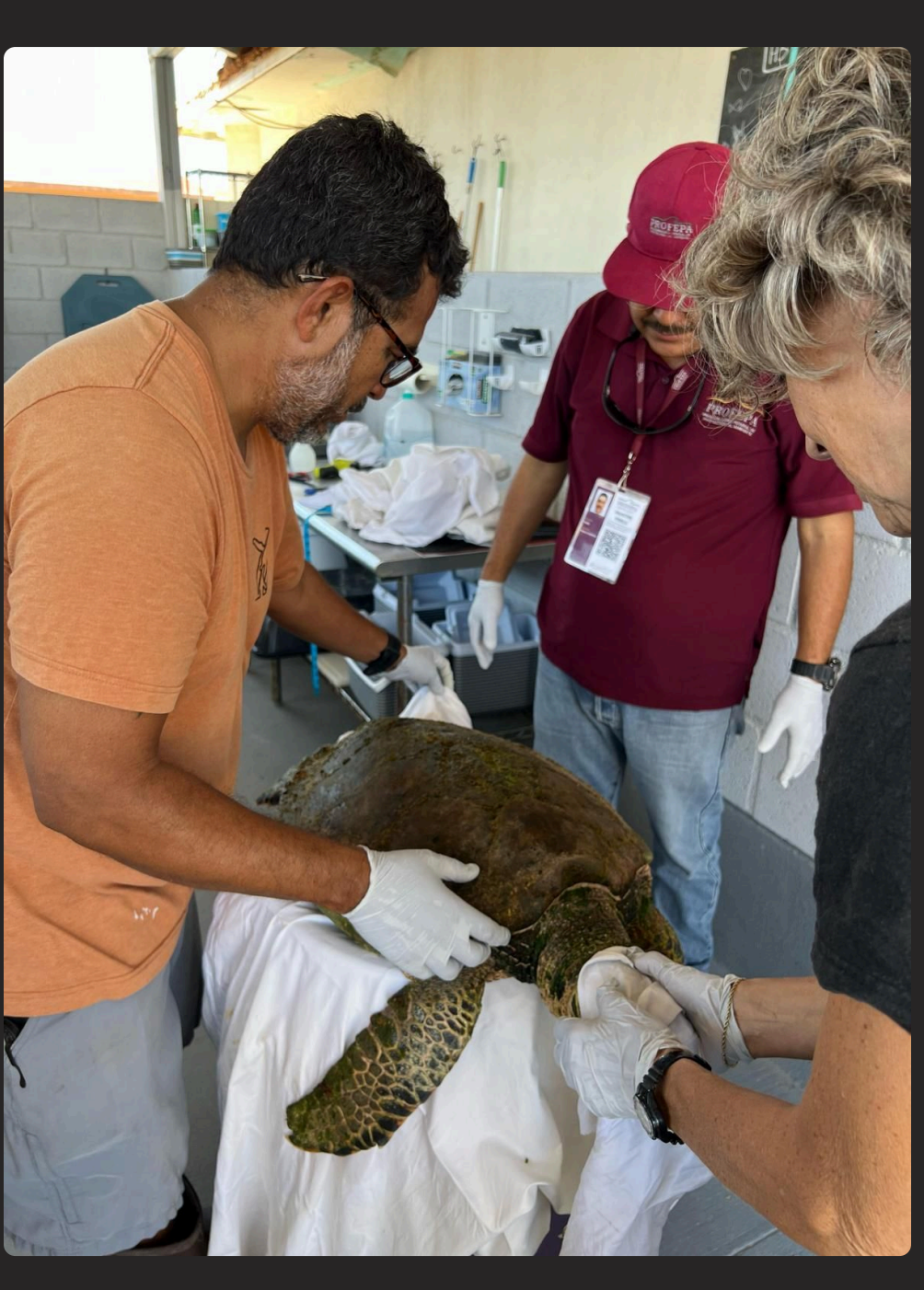
A Hawksbill Sea Turtle arrives at MMWRC

This month, instead of featuring one of our amazing volunteers, we'd like to introduce you to one of our recent patients. Every rescue has a story, and we hope you enjoy this one.

When we're out in the field conducting rescues or monitoring marine wildlife, we sometimes encounter animals that need immediate medical attention or showing signs of chronic illness, malnutrition, or injury, that we know can only be resolved with long-term rehabilitative care. With permission from Mexico's federal wildlife protection agency, PROFEPA, we are given permission to transport these critical cases to Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center.

Our rescue efforts extend to all types of marine wildlife, including sea turtles. Here in Baja California Sur, several outstanding organizations work tirelessly to monitor sea turtle populations, protect nesting beaches, assist hatchlings as they make their journey to the sea, and educate the public about sea turtle biology and conservation.

Once hatchlings have entered the open ocean, however, our organization responds to sea turtle strandings and entanglements throughout the region. Each year, we rescue, rehabilitate, and care for a number of juvenile and adult sea turtles at our rehabilitation facility before returning them to the wild whenever possible.



The sea turtle is examined

Mid-June, we found ourselves with a young Hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata)* in our care.

Known locally as a *Tortuga Carey*, this animal was found and picked up by officers from **PROFEPA**, floating in the channel between Isla Cerralvo (Jacques Cousteau Island) and Isla Espíritu Santo, close to La Ventana.

The officers immediately knew something wasn't right.

Sea turtles spend most of their lives swimming and diving, surfacing only briefly to breathe. This sea turtle, however, was spending far too much time at the surface. It appeared lethargic and, most concerning of all, it couldn't seem to dive. For a sea turtle, being unable to dive is a serious, often life-threatening condition. Diving is essential for feeding, resting, avoiding predators and simply surviving in the wild.

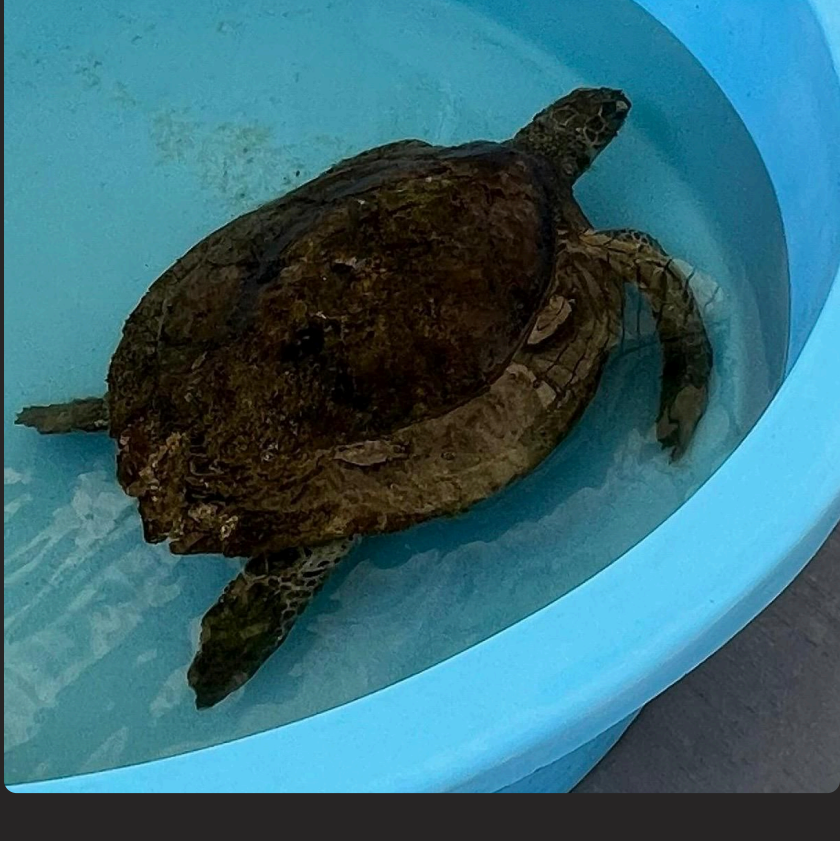
Although there were no obvious signs of injury, the turtle's shell was covered with an unusually heavy layer of red algae. Algae doesn't typically accumulate like this unless the sea turtle has been less active and spending more time at the surface or in the shallows than normal. The buildup was a clear indication that something had been affecting the turtle's normal behaviour for quite some time.

Recognizing that the sea turtle needed our help, PROFEPA transported it to Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center for treatment and rehabilitation. Based on the sea turtle's size and weight we estimated it was a large juvenile, or sub-adult, approximately ten years old. Hawksbill sea turtles don't mature sexually until close to 30 years, and young turtles like this one don't have any distinguishing external features to differentiate males from females. Eventually the tail length and claws on the fore flippers will be an easy tell. Ultrasound can also be used for determination in more mature animals. Our team of volunteers decided this sea turtle was a SHE. So 'she' it would be for the duration of her stay. ;-)

As with every patient, our first priority was a thorough intake examination. Sea turtles don't require sedation for handling and examination, which makes performing a careful hands-on assessment much easier than it can be with some of the larger marine mammals we receive. We examined her from head to tail, looking for new and old injuries, signs of illness or disease, and anything else that might explain why she was struggling.

The layer of algae confirmed that the sea turtle hadn't been swimming normally for some time but there were no obvious injuries, no signs of entanglement (past or present), and only a normal parasite burden. The turtle was alert enough to respond to us, but lacked the energy and feistiness we'd expect from a healthy hawksbill.

During that intake examination, we collected a blood sample to look for signs of infection, disease or other medical problems. While waiting for the laboratory results, we settled the sea turtle into one of our rehabilitation pools filled with natural seawater. Sometimes we rescue sea turtles with such severe injuries they need to be "dry docked" for days, or even weeks, before they're healthy enough to withstand the water. Fortunately, this Hawksbill was stable enough to begin our normal sea turtle rehabilitation protocols immediately.



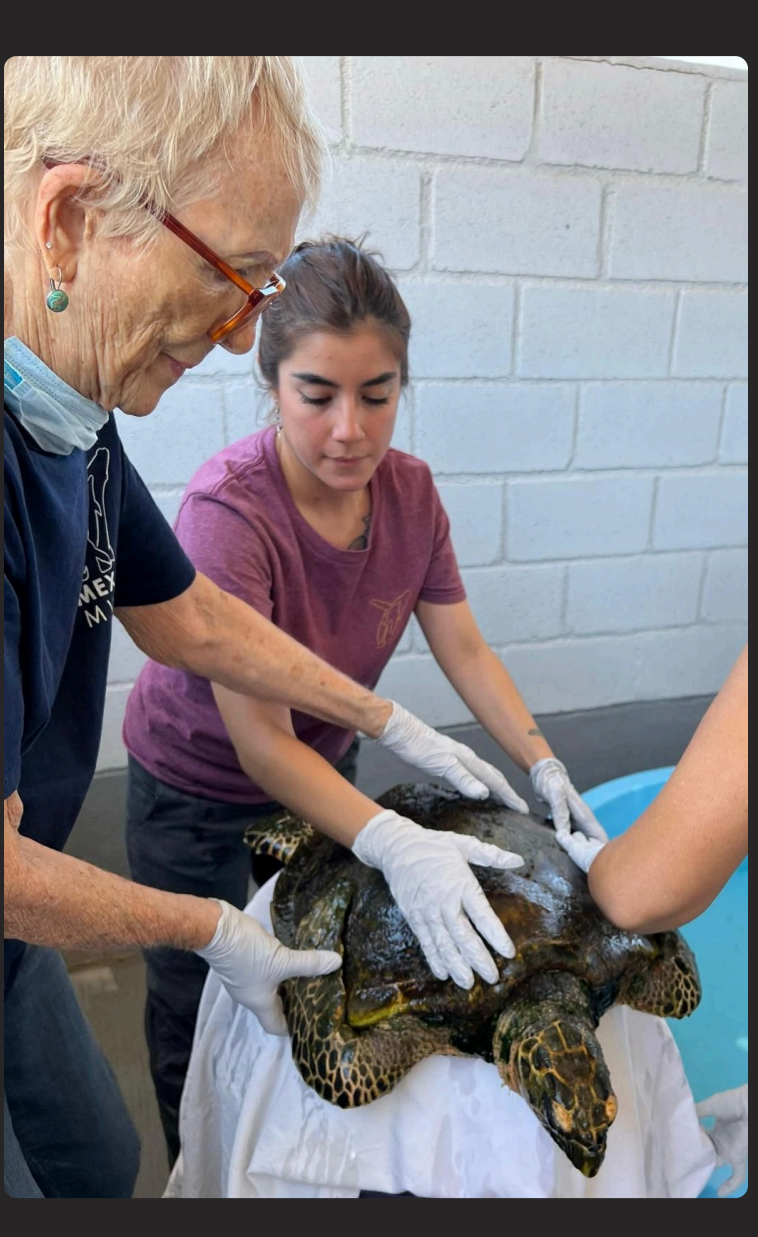
Sea turtle in rehab pool showing signs of mild buoyancy

The rehabilitation pools are intentionally small. They allow us to monitor patients closely while preventing weakened animals from wasting valuable energy swimming and struggling to dive when they have similar buoyancy issues. Over the next several days we carefully observed the sea turtle's behaviour. Initially, the mild buoyancy issue she arrived with actually became slightly worse. The animal wasn't floundering uncontrollably, but every attempt to dive or stabilize herself in the water required much more effort than it should have. For this reason, we lowered the water depth so that she could use her flippers to balance and prop herself in a comfortable position.

During the first few days in our care, the sea turtle also received several freshwater baths to help knock off the marine parasites and loosen the algae. After soaking for 20 to 30 minutes each time, we gently scrubbed away the algae from her carapace, plastron (underside), flippers, and head. This gave us the opportunity to more closely examine her for old, healed wounds that may give us a clue to the source of the buoyancy issue.

We still needed to answer our biggest question.

Why couldn't the sea turtle dive?

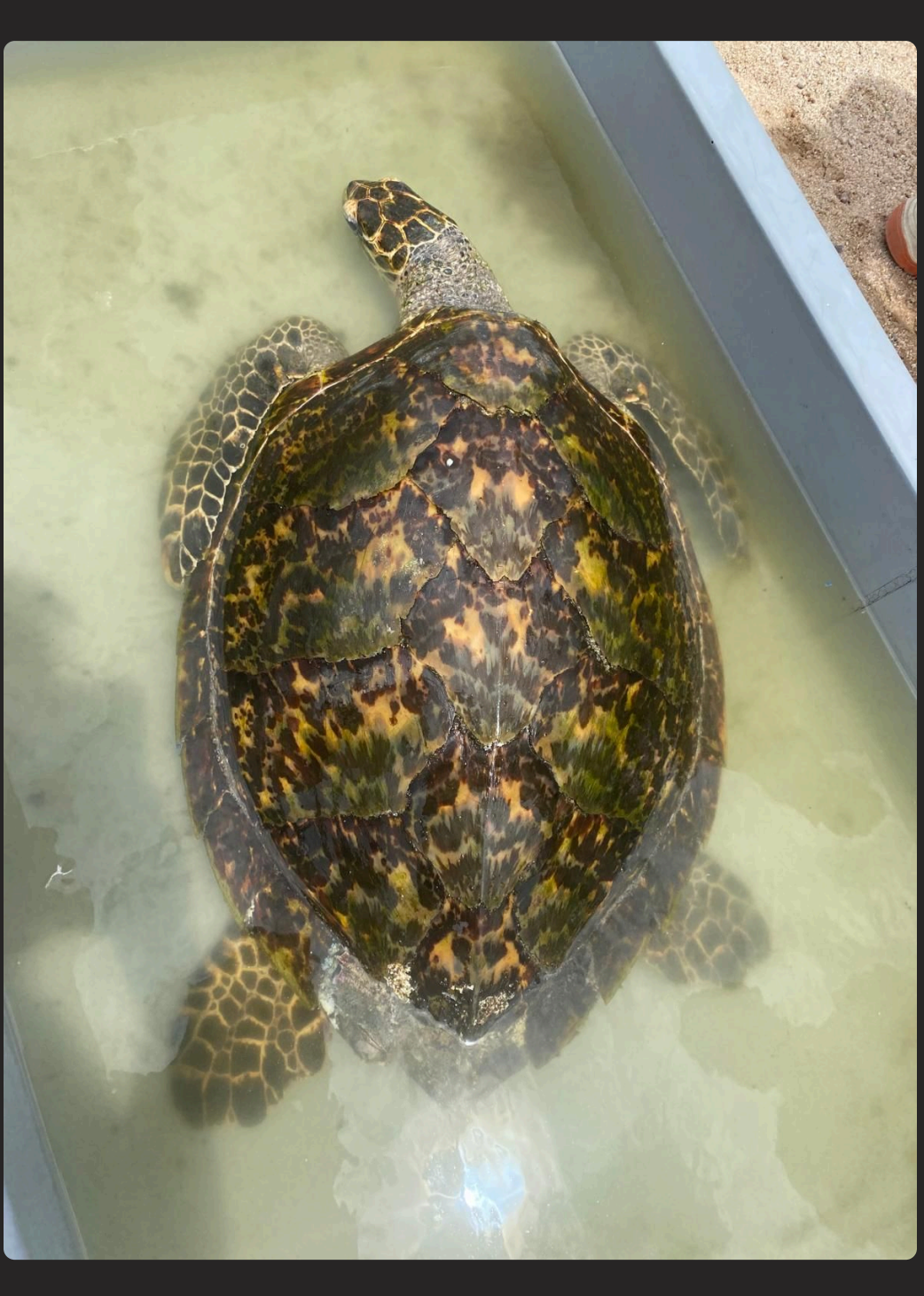


The blood analysis results had arrived on day two, bringing some encouraging news! There was no evidence of infection or any active systemic disease. The only abnormalities were mild indicators that the turtle's immune system had responded to stress, possibly from capture and transport, or from exhaustion, dehydration, or even an earlier tissue injury. Most importantly, nothing in the blood work explained the buoyancy issue. This was a significant clue.

With infection, pneumonia, and major internal injuries ruled out, our investigation turned toward the most likely possibility, trapped air or gas somewhere within the body cavity or digestive system.

We used an ultrasound to look for pockets of air in the sea turtle's coelom, or body cavity, but this diagnostic tool has its limitations.

One of our biggest clues came from watching HOW the sea turtle was floating. Turtles with free air trapped within the body cavity often tilt to one side as the air shifts, and this can be manipulated through handling to assist with the diagnosis. This type of buoyancy requires a more invasive and challenging treatment. Our turtle remained remarkably level on the surface, in all directions.

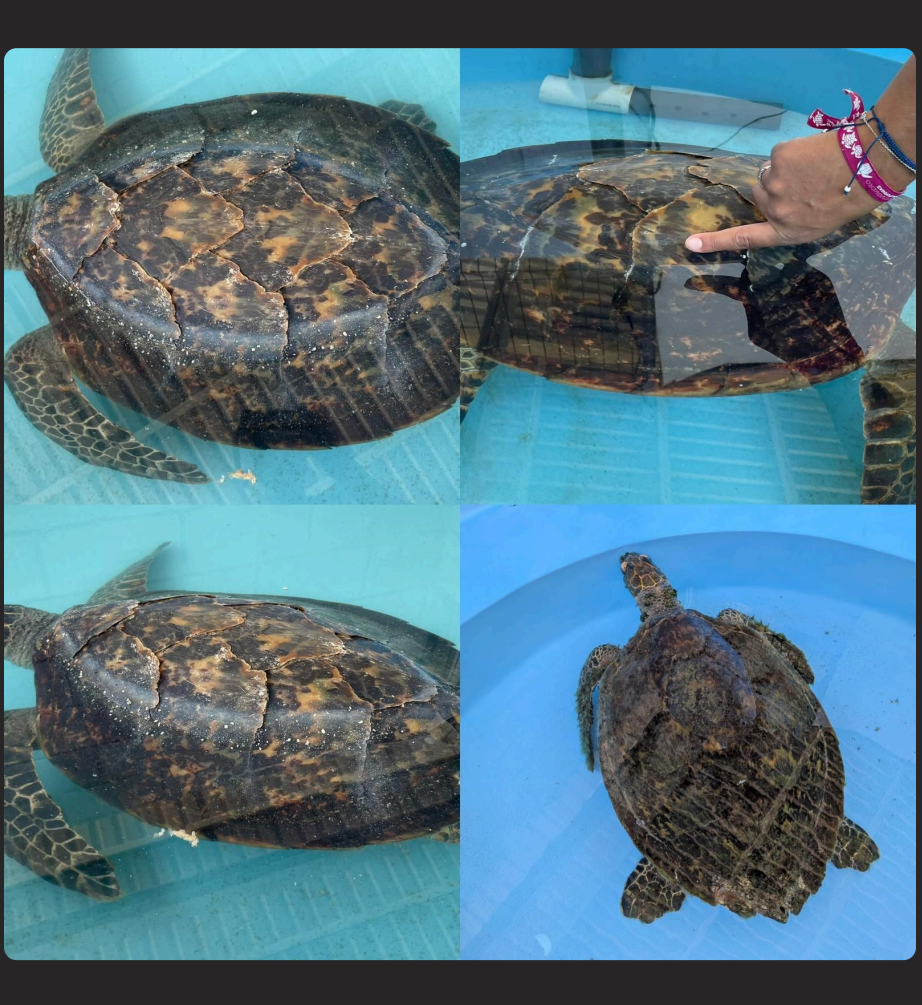


Sea turtle given a freshwater bath and scrub to remove algae

Our next goal was simple: get the turtle eating, get the digestive system moving and wait for excrement!

As funny as that sounds, our patients' bowel movements are remarkable indicators of their health and can give us so many clues about what happened before they arrived. With this sea turtle, we were anxious to see what it had been eating in the wild and whether it may have swallowed something it shouldn't have. Sea turtles are ectotherms, 'cold-blooded' reptiles, which means their digestion is very slow. Not only can adults go weeks, even months, without food but they can go weeks between bowel movements.

Like most sea turtles we rehabilitate, she had no interest in food offered by hand or left in the pool. Tube feeding quickly became an important part of the rehabilitation.



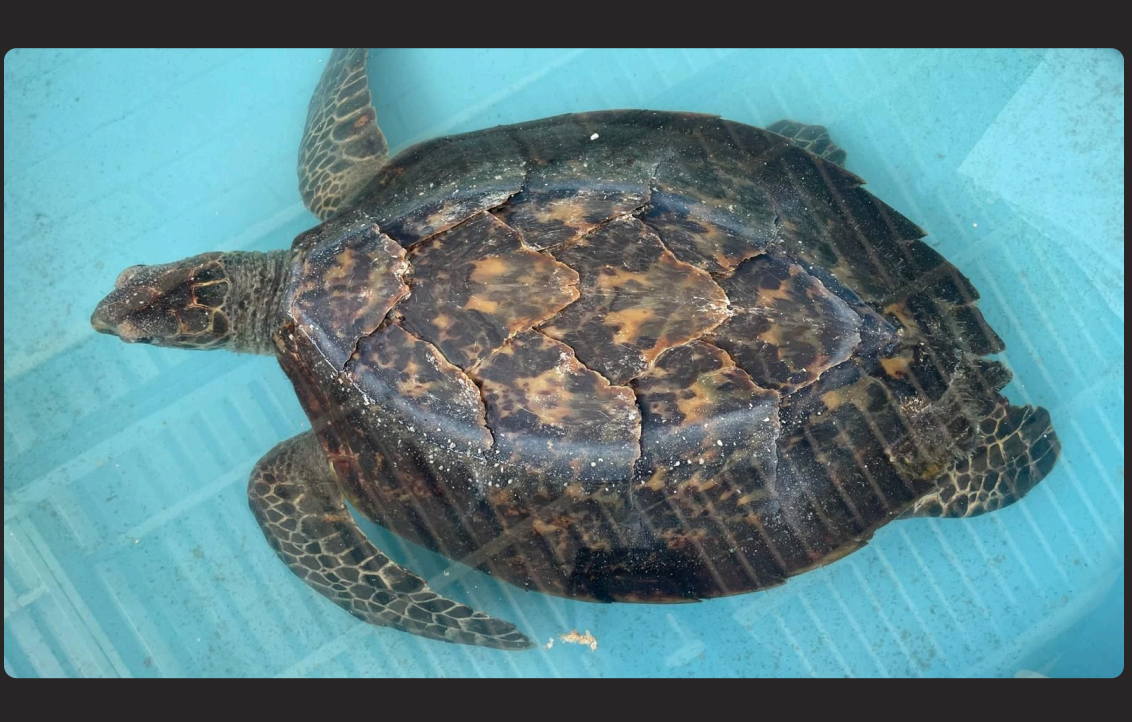
Sea turtle exhibiting varying levels of buoyancy

Every three to four days we provided a specially prepared, nutrient-rich sea turtle formula made from fish, marine invertebrates, fish oils and specially formulated vitamins developed specifically for sea turtles (Thank you to Dr. Lanny Cornell of Pacific Research Labs, Inc. who provide our patients with crucial supplements). We also added medication to help relieve any trapped gas within her digestive system.

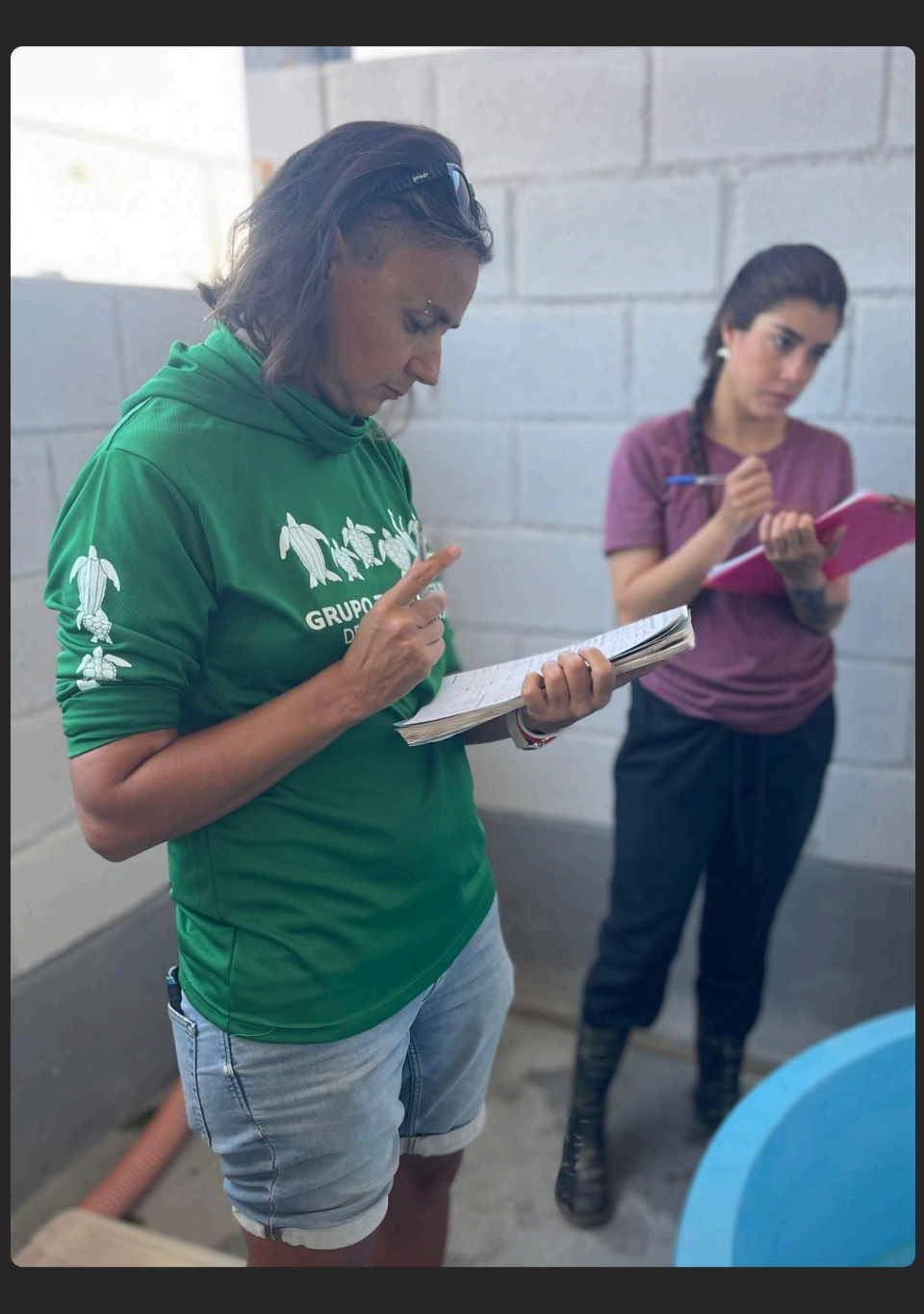
Within two days of the first tube feeding, the sea turtle had her first bowel movement, something we had been eagerly waiting for. Initially, we found broken mollusc shells, spicules, small pieces of sand and gravel, and algae that she had eaten before arriving at our rescue center. About two weeks later, the sea turtle began passing the food we had been feeding her, confirming that the digestive system was functioning well and at a good pace.

Throughout rehabilitation, she continued to refuse food offered by hand, so tube feeding remained the safest way to ensure our patient received the nutrition she needed. Young turtles don't have the energy reserves that adults do, making nutrition an essential part of rehabilitation. We often say that food is one of the best medicines we can provide, and this case proved exactly that.

As the days passed, we began seeing encouraging changes!

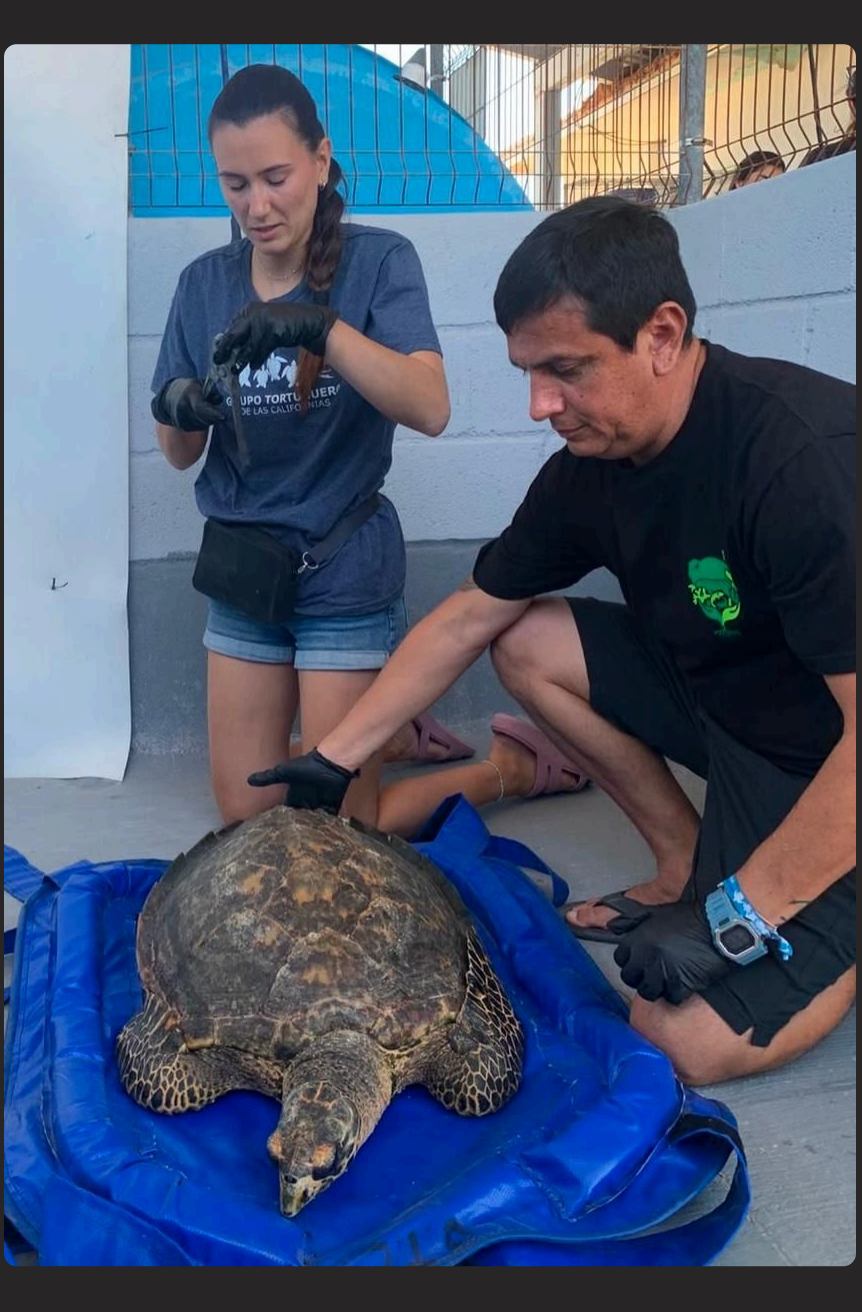


The sea turtle became noticeably stronger and more active in the rehabilitation pool. Most importantly, her buoyancy gradually improved. By Day 30, everything had changed! She was no longer floating at the surface and could comfortably rest on the bottom of the pool, exactly as a healthy sea turtle should. We had overcome the buoyancy battle!



Grupo Tortugueros de las Californias visit MMWRC

Before any patient returns to the wild, we repeat important health assessments to ensure it is truly ready to be reintroduced to the wild. For this assessment we were joined by our colleagues from two incredible organizations here in La Paz, **Dr. Eduardo Reséndiz** of **Health Assessments in Sea Turtles from BCS** and **Dr. Helena Fernández Sanz** of **Grupo Tortuguero de las Californias**.



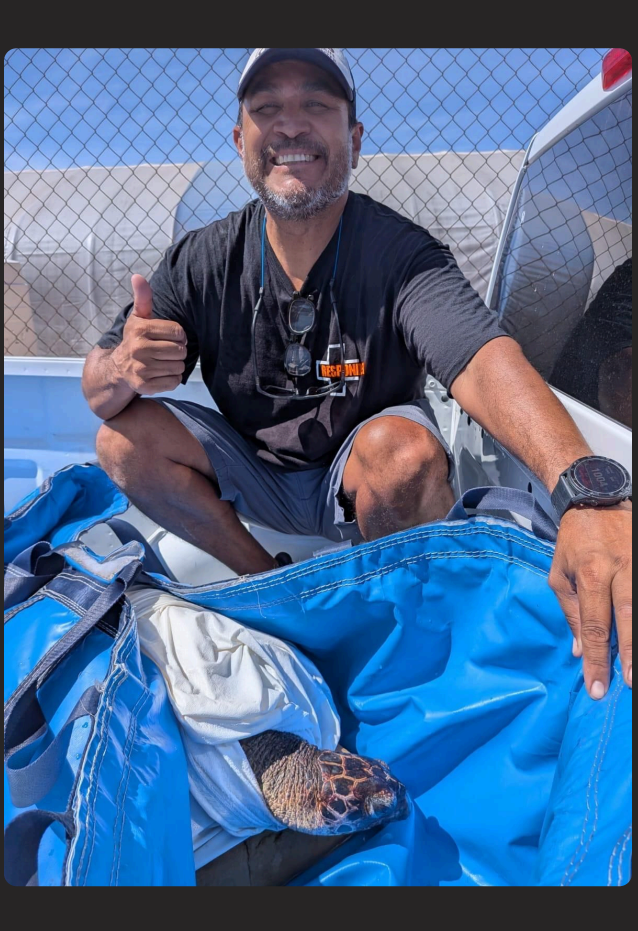
Health Assessments in Sea Turtles from B.C.S. visit MMWRC

A second blood sample was collected and showed that the earlier indicators of stress had improved and, once again, there was no evidence of infection or disease.

The sea turtle had gained nearly two kilograms during rehabilitation, increasing from approximately 18 kilograms on arrival to almost 20 kilograms in the final days with us. Steady weight gain, combined with improved strength and normal buoyancy, told us that rehabilitation had come to an end and it was time to prepare the sea turtle for a return to the sea!

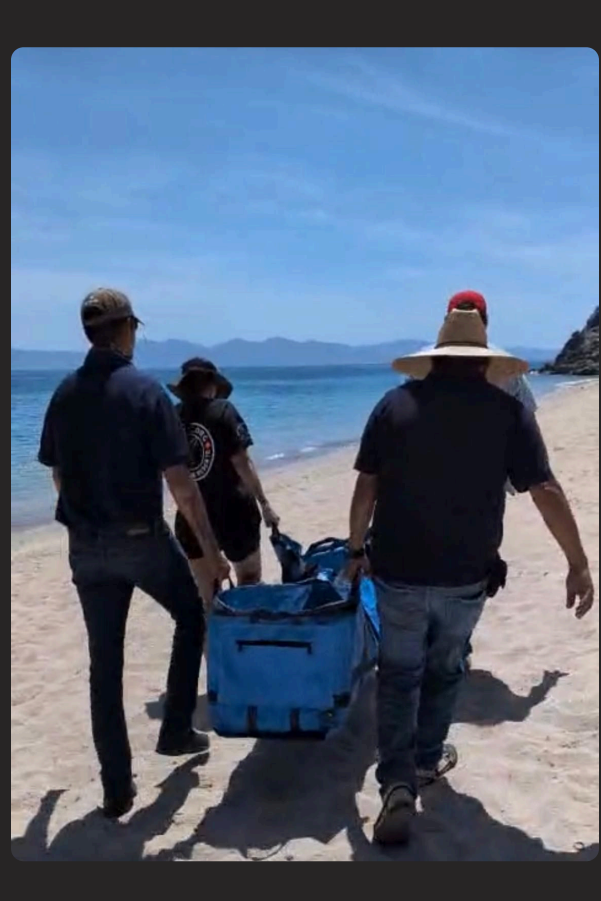
Dr. Eduardo Reséndiz and Dr. Helena Fernández Sanz fitted identification tags to both rear flippers and inserted a tiny microchip beneath the skin. These identifiers allow researchers to recognize the turtle if it is encountered again in the wild, providing valuable information about its movements, survival and long-term health. Every tagged sea turtle contributes important data that helps scientists better understand and conserve this critically endangered species.

We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to Health Assessments in Sea Turtles from BCS and Grupo Tortuguero de las Californias for contributing their expertise and conducting and interpreting the blood analysis which helped us develop the best treatment plan for this patient.



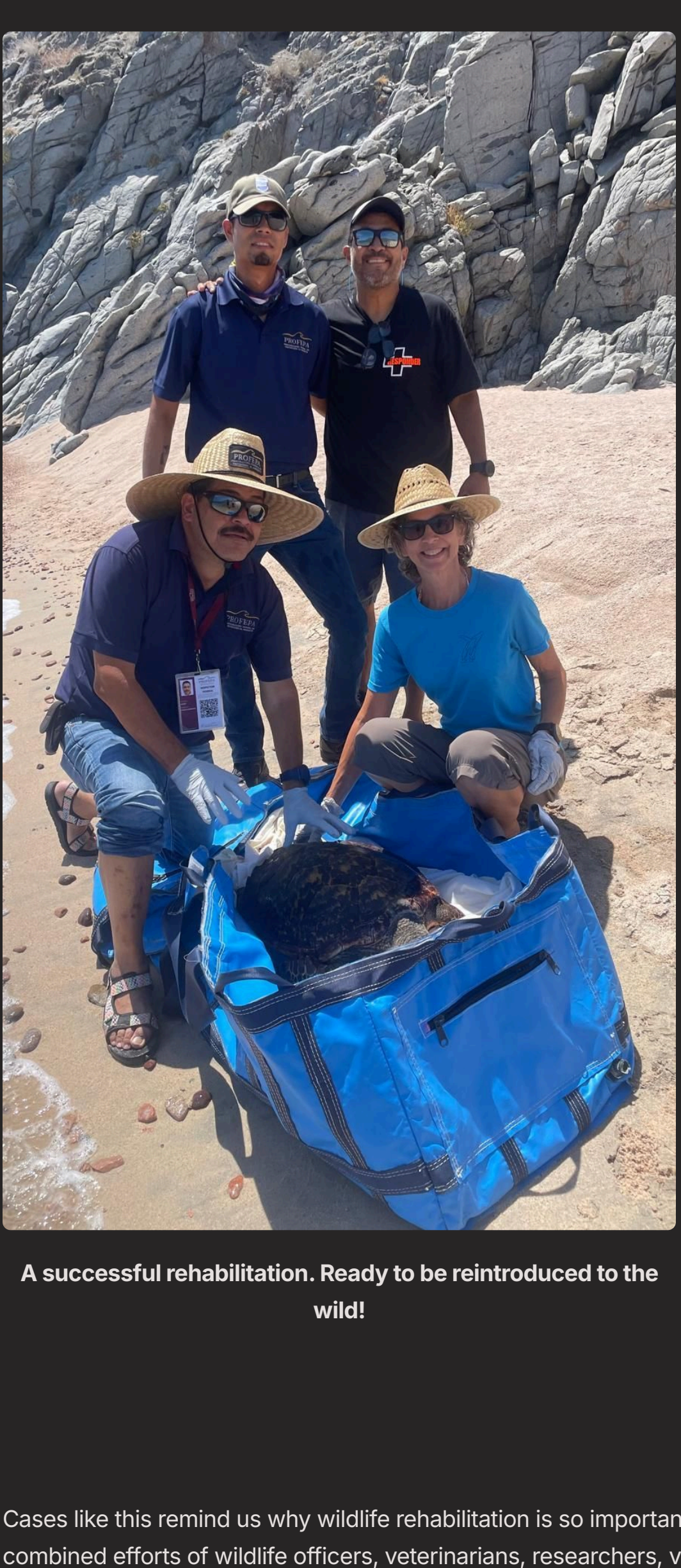
Hawksbill sea turtle loaded for transport for her return to the wild.

Volunteers and PROFEPA carry the sea turtle on the beach



Working together with **PROFEPA**, we selected a quiet beach near suitable reef for the reintroduction.

After 36 days in our care, we placed the sea turtle on the sand, allowing her to make the final journey back into the sea on her own.



A successful rehabilitation. Ready to be reintroduced to the wild!

These are always the moments that fill us with joy, but where we might still feel a little nervous.

You spend weeks or months caring for an animal, treating it, monitoring every small improvement and hoping you've made all the right decisions along the way. Then comes the moment of truth.

The sea turtle reached the water.

Pausing only briefly.

Then she dove.

Not only did she dive, but she swam confidently along the bottom, disappearing into the clear waters before crossing the drop off into deeper water.

This was exactly what we had hoped to see.

This sea turtle was home.

Cases like this remind us why wildlife rehabilitation is so important. Every animal successfully returned to the wild represents the combined efforts of wildlife officers, veterinarians, researchers, volunteers, and supporters, each playing an essential role in giving wild animals a second chance.

We hope this is not the final chapter in this beautiful sea turtle's story. Thanks to her flipper tags and microchip, there is always the possibility that another researcher, conservation organization, or wildlife officer will encounter her again and share an update. If that happens, we'll know that one more hawksbill sea turtle was given the opportunity to survive, grow, and continue fulfilling its vital role in one of the world's most remarkable marine ecosystems.

If she is indeed a female, she may one day return to nest and produce the next generation of hawksbill sea turtles, helping to secure the future of her species. That possibility is a powerful reminder that every successful rehabilitation extends far beyond a single animal — it can contribute to the conservation of an entire species.

We'd also like to take this opportunity to remind you that wildlife rehabilitation requires resources. Every animal in our care depends on daily nutrition, medical treatment, specialized supplies, and countless hours of dedicated care, all of which place significant demands on our limited resources.

If you're able, you can help by making a donation or by sharing our mission with others who may be interested in supporting our work. We can't do this alone, and we are truly grateful for every person who helps us give wildlife a second chance.

Our Mission: Rescue, Rehabilitation, Reintroduction

Emergency Response

Around-the-clock coordination with PROFEPA and CONANP to reach marine life in distress — fast.

Expert Rehabilitation

Specialized veterinary care tailored to each animal's needs, giving every patient the best possible chance at recovery.

Large Whale Entanglement Response

Rapid, skilled intervention to safely free whales from fishing nets and marine debris before lasting harm is done.

Safe Return to the Ocean

Recovered animals are released with care and precision, guided by strict national wildlife protocols every step of the way.

Community Education

School programs and community outreach that turn awareness into action and build a culture of ocean stewardship.

Conservation only works when everyone shows up. By uniting federal agencies, local authorities, and coastal communities, we ensure every rescue is handled with expertise and every recovery counts. Together, we're giving the vulnerable marine populations of the Gulf of California a fighting chance.

The Rich Biodiversity We Protect

The Gulf of California is one of the world's most extraordinary marine ecosystems — home to over 900 fish species, 37 marine mammal species, and five of the seven sea turtle species found on Earth.

Every rescue we conduct advances not just survival, but science. The data we collect illuminates migration patterns, population health, and human impacts on the ocean — shaping conservation strategy, policy, and the next generation of ocean stewards.

Pinnipeds

Sea lions and seals frequently become tangled in fishing gear or fall victim to pollution and toxic algal blooms — and when they do, our team is ready to step in.

Sea Turtles

Five endangered species nest and feed in these waters. Each rescue and rehabilitation is a direct investment in their continued survival.

Dolphins

Nets, pollution, harmful algal blooms, and marine debris all take a toll on dolphin populations — our team responds with the speed and skill their recovery demands.

Whale Sharks

These gentle giants pass through our waters on their migrations. When strandings or vessel strikes occur, we're on the water to help.

Whales

Humpback and fin whales face life-threatening entanglements in fishing gear. Our specialized disentanglement teams work to free them and send them safely back to sea.

Seabirds

Pelicans and other seabirds are easily caught in lines and hooks. When a report comes in, our team responds — no bird is too small to matter.

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