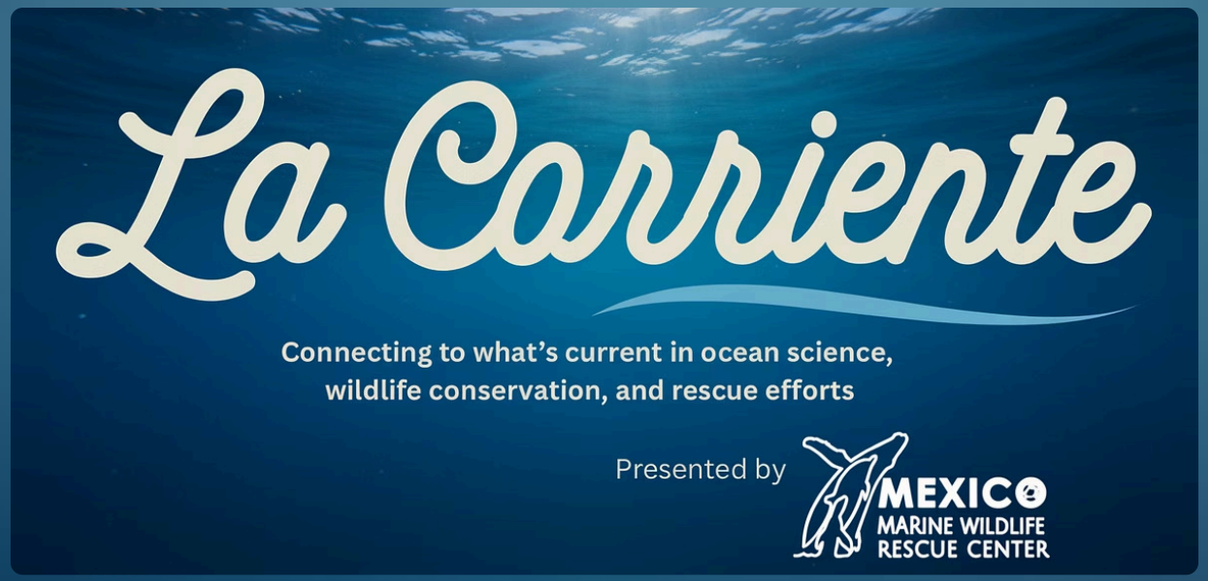

La Corriente - Volume 2, Issue 2

(February 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, our Volunteer Spotlight, and the newest addition to La Corriente: The Rescue Log!

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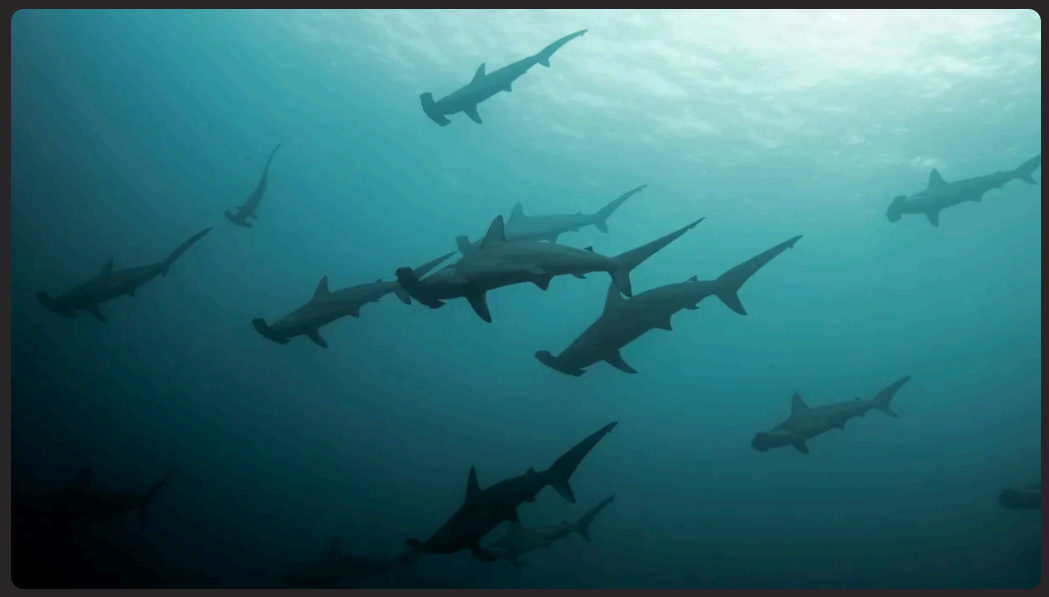


Hammerhead sharks are vanishing from their mountain homes in the Gulf of California, divers say

The Gulf of California, also known as the Sea of Cortés, is a world-famous destination for divers hoping to encounter an incredible diversity of marine wildlife. But at two of its most iconic dive sites, El Bajo and Las Ánimas, scalloped hammerhead sharks, once a common and awe-inspiring sight, have now nearly disappeared.

A study led by Kathryn Ayres found that El Bajo experienced a 97% decline in scalloped hammerheads, while Las Animas saw a 100% decline. The study was published in January 2024 (about two years ago), yet the findings remain a striking and urgent warning about the worsening conditions marine wildlife is facing in the region.

Scalloped hammerheads were once abundant, with approximately 225 individuals documented in the 1970s and 1980s. Today, their numbers have fallen dramatically, and the species is now listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

Locals, dive guides, and experienced divers who have spent decades in these waters point to overfishing as a major cause of the decline. Ayres, along with many in the dive community, emphasized the need for more protected areas across the Gulf of California. In some protected seamounts, divers can still spot large schools of hammerheads, but even those sightings are not what they once were.

Protecting hammerheads means taking stronger action against habitat degradation, overfishing, and climate change. One day, we might again see the return of these majestic ocean predators.

To learn more, check out the original article by science journalist **Patrick Pester** on LiveScience.com.

Sourced and summarized by Maya Miller

Great Migrations: The Grey Whale

Grey whales are annual visitors to the beautiful waters of the Baja California Peninsula. These whales can reach 40–50 feet in length and weigh over 36 tons (32,000 kg)! These remarkable animals have made an incredible comeback in recent years and are now listed as Least Concern.

Grey whales complete one of the longest yearly migrations of any mammal, traveling about 12,000 miles from their feeding grounds in the Arctic all the way down to Baja California, where they raise their young, and then back again.

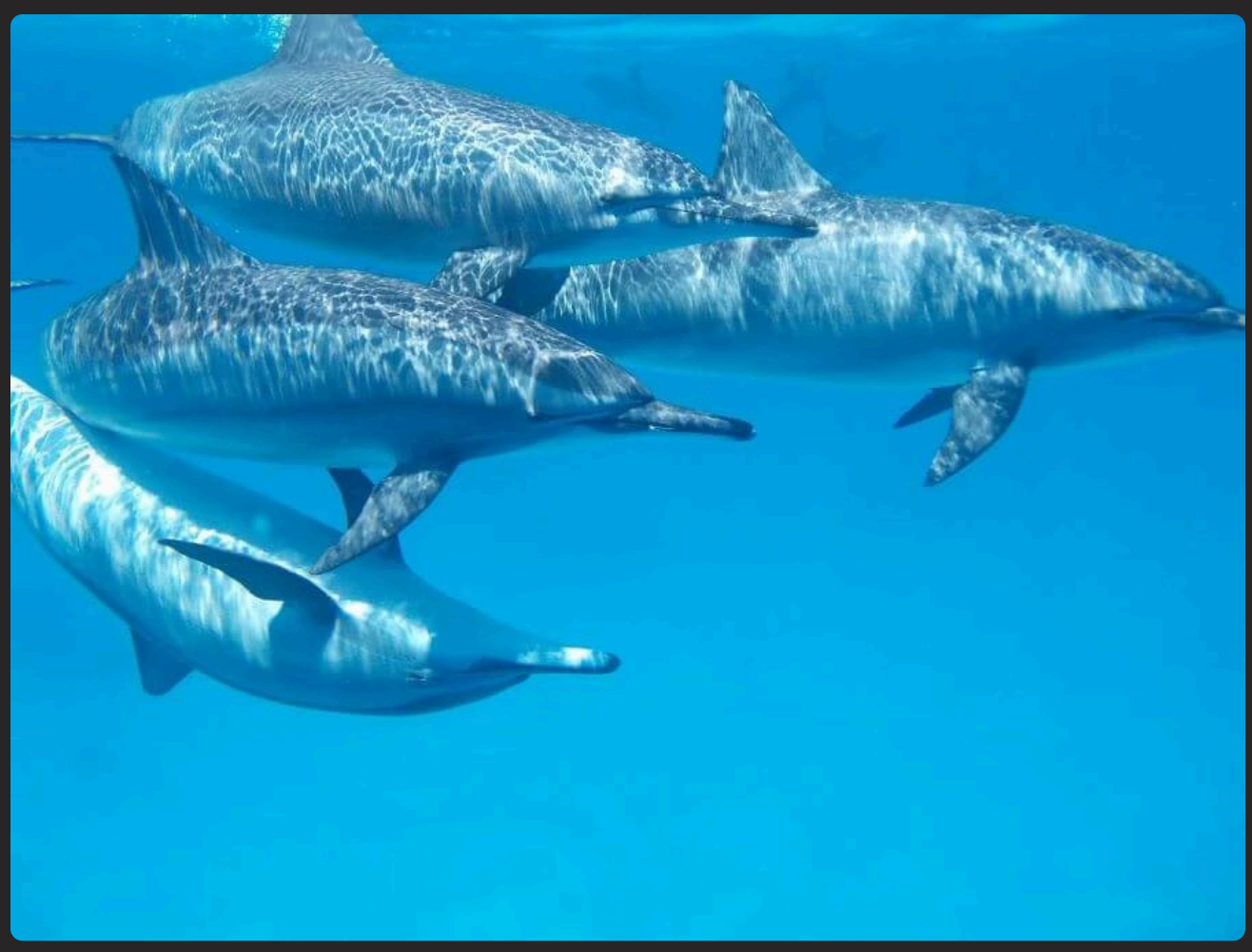
From May to September, grey whales feed in the nutrient-rich Arctic waters, dining on small animals that live on the ocean floor. They then begin their journey south at a pace of roughly 75 miles per day, arriving in Baja California in late December. Here, they gather in sheltered lagoons to give birth, while females that were not pregnant the year before return to find a mate.

Most whales continue arriving through February, and by mid-March, the lagoons are teeming with grey whales. Calves born during these months are about 15 feet long and can weigh around 1,500 pounds.

Afterward, the whales begin their return journey to the Northern Pacific. Mothers with calves are the last to depart. They nurse their calves for about seven months, and the calves typically stay close to their mothers for the first nine months of life. Along the way, they must watch out for predators like orcas and great white sharks, as the young calves are especially vulnerable.

To learn more, check out the **Oceanic Society's article!**

Sourced and summarized by Maya Miller



What's Going On with Mexico's General Wildlife Law?

In July 2025, Mexico published a reform to its *Ley General de Vida Silvestre* (General Wildlife Law) that ends the use of marine mammals (dolphins, sea lions, orcas, etc.) for entertainment and commercial exploitation, and significantly restricts captivity going forward.

This decision represents a national phase-out of commercial dolphin captivity and performances, along with a requirement to move cetaceans from concrete tanks into marine corrals.

Dr. Yolanda Alaniz, a respected marine mammal expert and former professor at the prestigious UNAM, was a key player in helping this legislation pass. As a result, approximately 350 captive dolphins must now be rewilded or transitioned into marine pens, open-water systems with seawater exchange, within the next 18 months.

In addition, the reform prohibits capturing wild animals and prevents breeding them in captivity, effectively interrupting the cycle of ongoing exploitation. A mandated national inventory will also improve traceability, making it harder for key details to be lost in paperwork.

That said, the legislation does come with challenges. In theory, this update to the General Wildlife Law can greatly improve conditions for animals that have endured years of captivity and exploitation. However, dolphin shows and swim-with programs have long been central to many local economies. To help offset economic impacts, the government hopes to re-incentivize ecotourism, which could strengthen conservation outcomes if implemented responsibly.

Enforcement will also be critical. Without strong oversight, companies may look for loopholes or take advantage of ambiguity, especially around enclosure requirements for animals that cannot be released, and how decisions are made about which individuals are suitable for rewilding. For dolphins that do qualify for release, the process is complex and costly, requiring specialized veterinary care, transport protocols, trained staff, and sustainable funding. Poorly managed transfers can put animals at serious risk.

Still, this law is necessary. After a 2020 video resurfaced showing a dolphin falling onto concrete during a show at the now-inoperational Barceló Maya Grand Resort dolphinarium, many people were forced to confront the reality of dolphins in captivity. Two additional dolphin deaths were later reported at the same facility, further increasing pressure on the Mexican government to prioritize ending dolphinariums nationwide.

The bill received unanimous support in the Senate, majority support in the House of Representatives, and was signed into law by President Sheinbaum. It marks a major step forward for animal welfare, conservation, and marine mammal protection efforts.

External Sources:

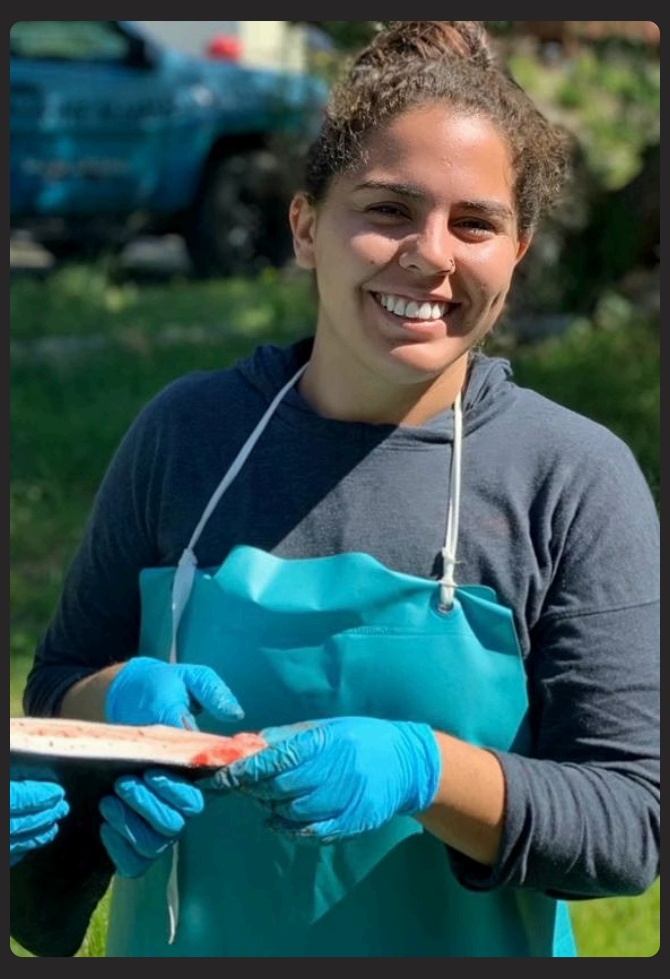
- "Mexico bans use of captive marine mammals for entertainment." *Humane World for Animals.* Accessed January 19, 2026. https://www.humaneworld.org/en/news/mexico-bans-use-captive-marine-mammals-entertainment
- Oliver, Sara. 2025. "Mexico Bans Dolphinariums." *PETA.* https://www.peta.org/news/dolphinariums-mexico/

Written by Maya Miller

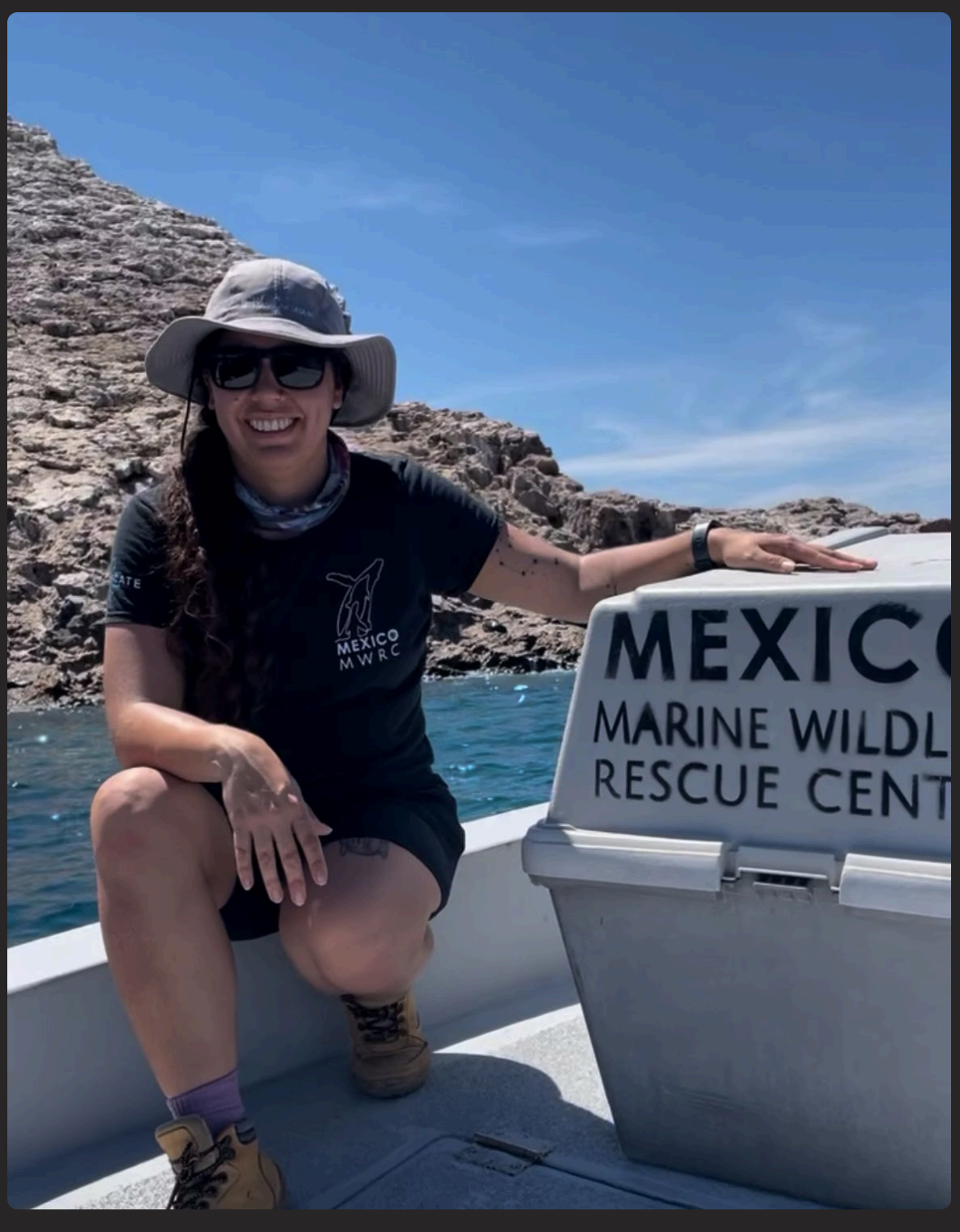
Volunteer Spotlight

Julieta Sandoval

Jul's journey began in a small town in Guanajuato, where she was born and raised. She enjoyed a peaceful, ordinary childhood, growing up with her sisters and parents surrounded by fields of corn, wheat, and sorghum. Every summer, her family would visit the beach, and that's where her love for the ocean truly began.



She spent those long summer days diving beneath the waves, searching for marine life. That fascination with sea creatures stayed with her into adulthood. At one point, she even had a *very difficult* time deciding whether to pursue marine biology or veterinary studies. After plenty of thought (and discussion), she chose marine biology.



With the support of her family, Juls moved to La Paz at just 17 years old to follow her dreams. She studied marine biology and later specialized in the science of managing marine resources. For her PhD thesis, she focused on sea lions, an animal she had already gained experience with through her work at MMWRC.

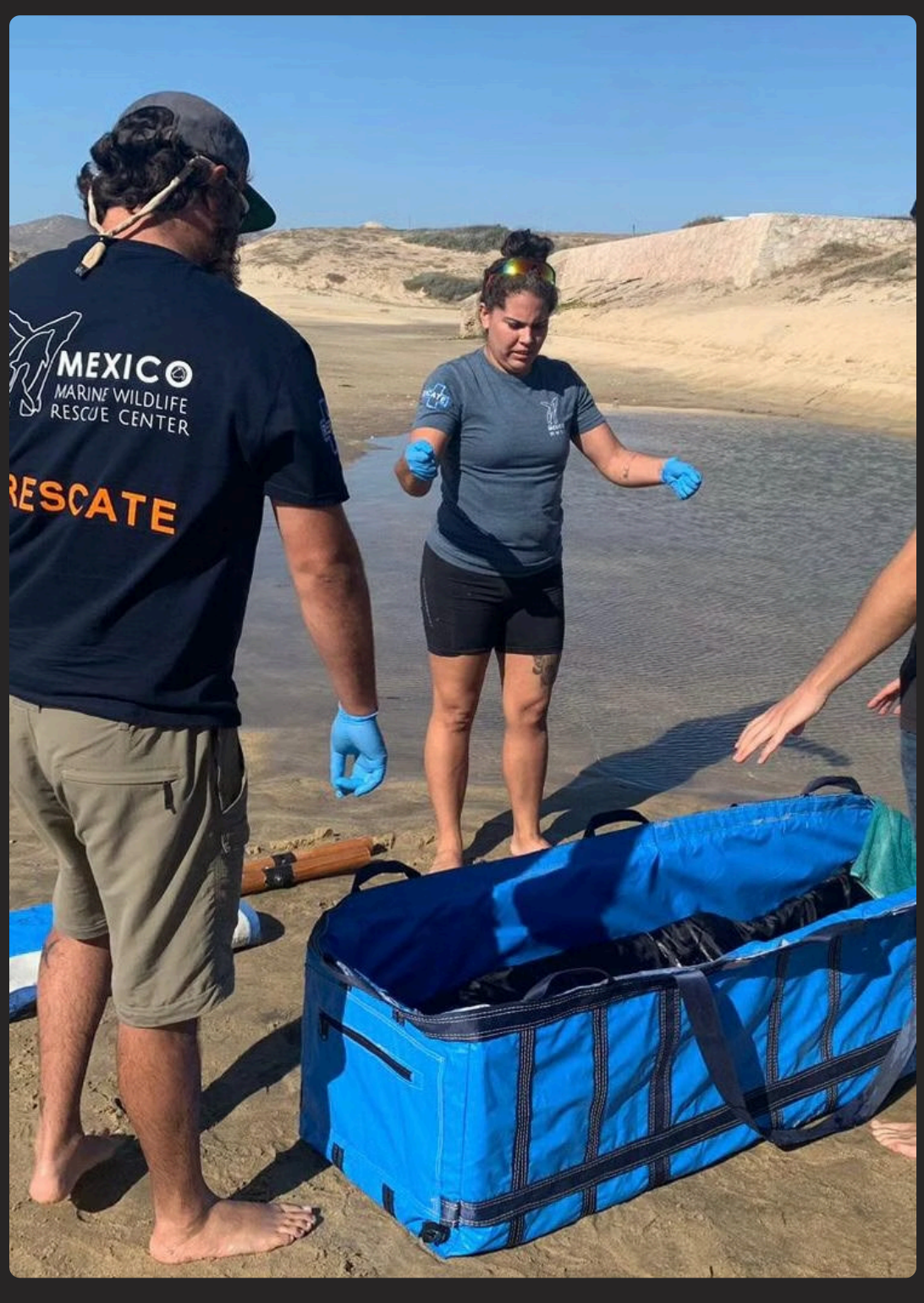
Juls has been part of MMWRC since 2019, and she loves witnessing the incredible recoveries of the animals we rescue. She describes the feeling of seeing an animal healthy, free, and back in its natural environment as **"indescribable."** Even watching animals progress through recovery at the rescue center brings her deep joy, as every step brings them closer to release.

Her most recent reintroduction was a Guadalupe fur sea lion she had the chance to work closely with throughout its rehabilitation. She assisted with many of its appointments and supported the recovery process from start to finish. The sea lion was released at Las Ánimas, a "magical" place about three hours from La Paz. This individual also became the first Guadalupe fur sea lion in the Gulf of California to be fitted with a satellite tag, helping researchers learn more about the species.

Juls is also deeply interested in studying the anatomy and physiology of deceased marine animals. Performing necropsies is vital for understanding marine life and remains one of the most valuable ways to learn more about these organisms.

She truly loves her work at MMWRC, and giving animals a second chance is incredibly meaningful to her. She also helps teach children about conservation and how to better protect our oceans and climate. Now, with more experience under her belt, she also helps organize and train new volunteers.

Juls has contributed so much to MMWRC, and we are incredibly grateful for everything she does. Her life goal—to make a positive impact on the world and inspire new generations to love and respect nature—shines through in all of her work.

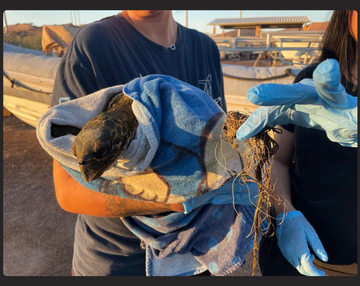


Rescue Log

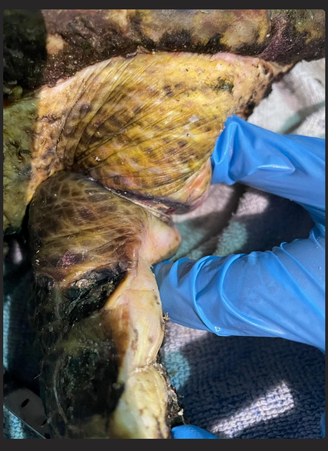
Hawksbill Sea Turtle Recovery

Stranding reports come in through several channels, often from our colleagues or tour operators who spend countless hours on the water. One such example is a call we received from a group of whale researchers about an injured sea turtle. Our colleagues from @MMAPE, who were out on the water conducting routine monitoring near Espíritu Santo Island, La Paz, had spotted something unusual. At the surface, a small sea turtle drifted awkwardly; its movements were slow and uncertain, clearly not behaving as it should.

When they approached for a closer look, the reason became painfully clear. A tangle of fishing line was tightly wrapped around both of the turtle's front flippers. Acting quickly, the team carefully removed some of the line from one flipper, but it soon became obvious that the situation was more complicated than it first appeared. Realizing the turtle would need medical care, they immediately contacted us. We coordinated with the authorities from PROFEPA, who joined them on the water and escorted the turtle safely to our rescue center at Pichilingue, where we were waiting to receive the animal into our care.



Our new patient turned out to be a juvenile hawksbill sea turtle, a *Tortuga carey (Eretmochelys imbricata)*, no larger than a dinner plate. Its shell was lightly coated in dense algae, an early sign that it may have been unwell or under stress for some time. But what caught our attention right away was the fishing line emerging from its mouth, along with more line tightly wound around one of its fore flippers. The line itself is what we call *hilo de pesca trenzado* in Mexico; it is a braided line with little to no stretch.



During the intake examination, we measured the turtle, just 36 centimeters in carapace length and weighing only 4.2 kilograms. We also took note of her physical condition, temperament, reactivity, respirations, and heart rate. Despite her small size and compromised condition, this was a remarkably strong animal with a lot of fight in her. Hawksbill turtles are reef dwellers, feeding primarily on sponges. This explains their narrow, pointed, beak-like jaws, though juveniles are pelagic and have a more varied diet. Their shells are equally distinctive, made up of overlapping scutes that range in color from amber to deep red, with serrated edges that set them apart from all other sea turtle species. At the time of rescue, this turtle's shell was tinged red from the algae coating her carapace and body, but this species is typically a beautiful amber color.

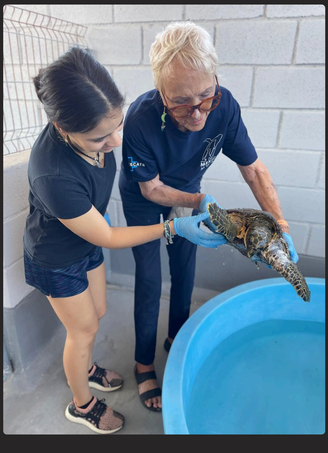
Historically, Hawksbill sea turtles have been poached for their shells to make 'tortoiseshell' jewelry and accessories. Now largely illegal due to severe population declines and their critically endangered status, modern versions are primarily made from faux materials like plastic or resin, and no doubt most of us own a plastic hair clip or pair of sunglasses in this beloved pattern. Authentic pieces, historically made into combs and jewelry, are now rarer, often sold illegally, and their purchase fuels continued illegal poaching.

We suspect this little turtle became entangled while feeding along the reef, likely encountering discarded fishing line caught up on the seabed. As is often the case, struggling to escape only caused the line to tighten further, cutting into the flesh at the shoulder joint of the flipper. While that injury was concerning, the line extending from the turtle's mouth worried us even more. Had the turtle swallowed a long piece of line, or was a hook lodged somewhere deeper in its throat or stomach? In marine wildlife, hooks with bait can be especially dangerous, often becoming embedded when animals mistake them for food. This is something we see all too often in seabirds, sea lions, and sea turtles.

Before examining the throat, we carefully removed the line wrapped around the flipper using surgical forceps and scissors, then cleaned the wound and applied medicated cream. Then we gently opened the turtle's mouth and, with a specialized bite block, scoped and examined her throat, but we couldn't see the end of the line or any hook. Ultrasound also did not reveal a hook or any mass within any soft tissues. Since we felt some resistance when we gently tugged the line, we made the decision to trim the line back to the corner of the mouth and let the turtle pass the foreign object naturally.

The minimum time we keep a patient in our care is 48 hours. This allows us to complete an intake exam, observe behavior, and run diagnostics. Occasionally, we receive animals in excellent health with only minor injuries, those confiscated by authorities from poachers, or individuals displaced by storms.

We placed this turtle in a small rehabilitation pool, where we could monitor her closely while minimizing stress and conserving her energy. Our hope was to see her eat, defecate, and ultimately dislodge the remaining line on her own.



She was in relatively good body condition, suggesting the entanglement had not been ongoing for very long.

As reptiles, sea turtles have slow digestion and can go many days without defecating; likewise, they can also go several days without eating. Our primary goal was to help her safely expel the remaining debris she had swallowed. On her second day in our care, we collected blood samples for analysis to rule out infection or illness and took X-rays to ensure no foreign objects, such as a fishing hook, had been missed during earlier examinations. Later that day, we offered her food for the first time, but, as expected, she showed no interest.

We decided to tube-feed her using a *sonda*, a practice commonly used in sea turtle rehabilitation. This method allows us to carefully manage nutrition and caloric intake while the animal recovers. After feeding, she was allowed to rest undisturbed in the water, and we continued tube feeding every three days as we monitored her progress.

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Within a few days, the visible portion of fishing line in her throat disappeared. After four days, she passed her first feces, remnants of her wild diet, including algae and fragments of mollusk and crustacean shells. As time went on, her wounds healed steadily, she tolerated tube feeding well, and she began producing more feces, which we examined carefully. After her third feeding, we found the fishing line in the pool among her waste, a short piece measuring approximately 25 centimeters long.

The turtle remained in our care for 15 days, during which time she gained 400 grams and fully recovered from her injuries. Confident she was ready to return home, we worked with the authorities from PROFEPA and CONANP to schedule her reintroduction to the wild. She was returned to the island near where she had been found, accompanied by a group of local schoolchildren who learned about sea turtles, this rescue, and the importance of protecting marine life. Together, they became part of her journey home as she was set free again, back into the wild.

It truly takes a community to respond when wildlife is in need. **We want to offer a heartfelt thank you** to our partners and colleagues at **@mmape_lpz**, **PROFEPA**, **CONANP**, and **UABCS** for their support and coordination during this rescue.
And a very special thanks to **Dr. Eduardo Reséndiz (@hastbcs)** for providing the X-rays and helping guide the next steps in this turtle's recovery.

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.

Sea Turtles

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

Dolphins

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

Whale Sharks

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

Whales

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

Seabirds

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

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