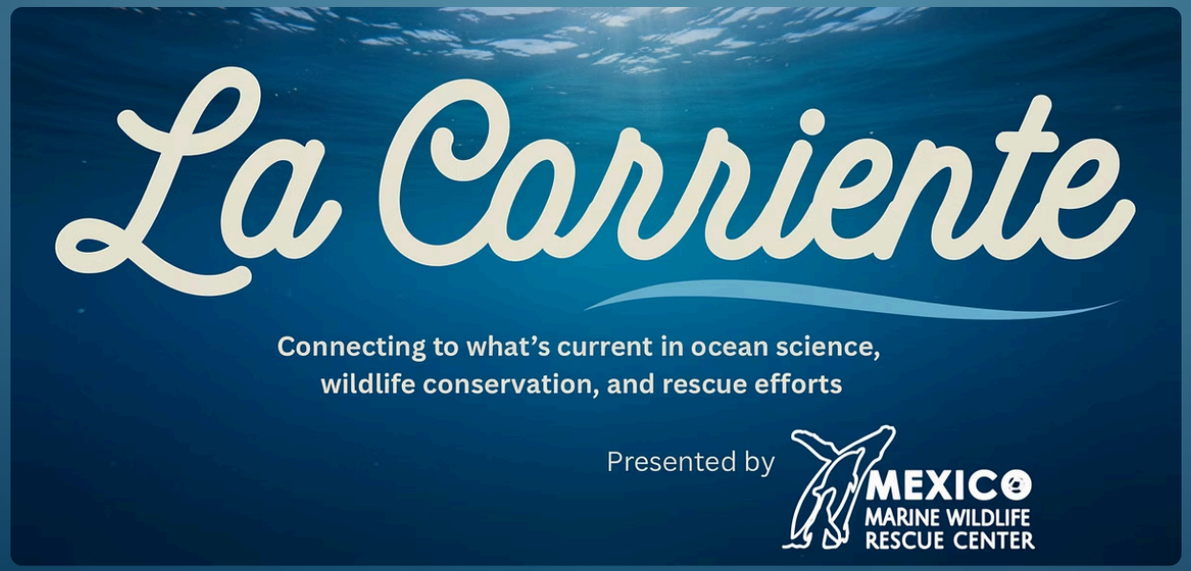

La Corriente - Volume 2, Issue 3

(March 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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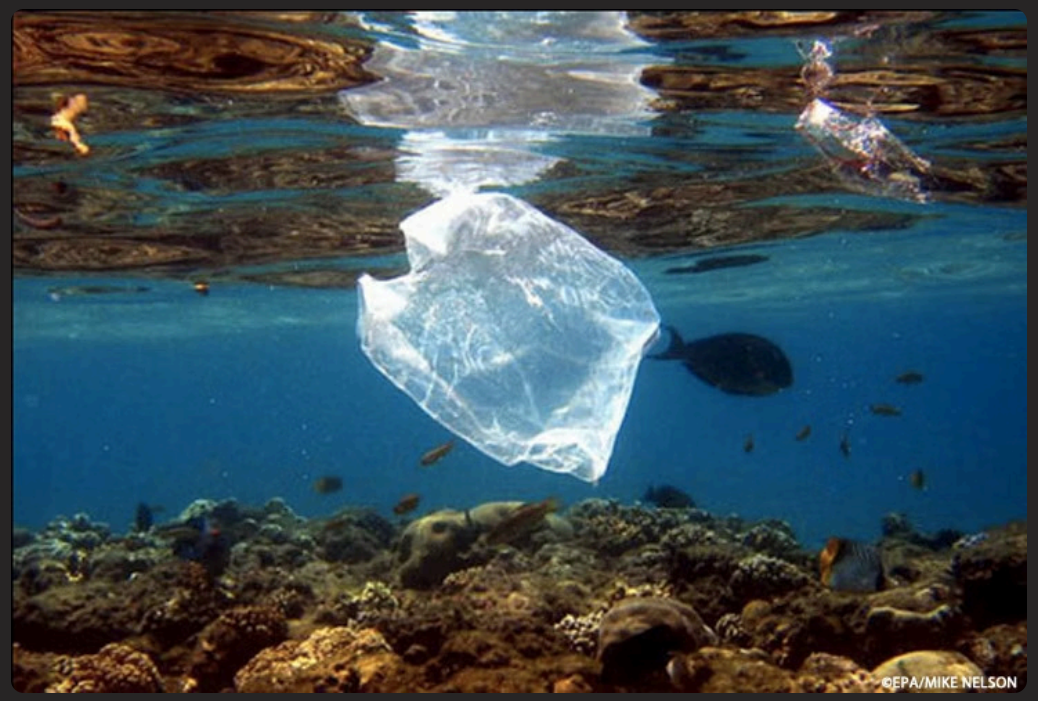
California Takes a Huge Step Against Plastic Pollution



This year, California enacted historic legislation to improve the environment. As of January 1, the state implemented an improved version of the 2024 plastic bag ban. The original 2024 ban prohibited certain types of plastic bags, allowing only thicker, reusable bags. However, these thicker bags were often not reused and were treated virtually the same as single-use plastic bags. Now, there is a "true plastic bag ban" that eliminates plastic grocery bags entirely, a key source of plastic pollution.

Plastic grocery bags are one of the five deadliest forms of plastic pollution for marine life. Plastic pollution is also a global issue, especially since ocean currents do not recognize borders as they carry pollutants throughout the world's oceans, beaches, and reefs. It is encouraging to see places like California taking action against plastic pollution. Plastics are extremely difficult to break down, harming marine life that can ingest them or become entangled in them. Both scenarios are potentially very dangerous for these animals. In fact, even a small amount of soft plastics (like grocery bags) can have devastating consequences. Studies suggest there is up to a 50% chance of mortality for a harbor seal after ingesting certain soft plastics.

Plastic grocery bags are both extremely harmful to the environment and extremely common. It is important to consider these facts when we go to the store and reflect on our choices. We should also look to California as an example of how meaningful action can have positive effects on our ecosystems. After all, plastic bag bans have been shown to result in a 25–47% reduction in plastic bags in the environment where they are implemented, demonstrating just how impactful these policies can be. To learn more, see the Ocean Conservancy's original article **HERE.**

Marine Plankton Might Be the Missing Piece of Climate Models, Scientists Say

Tiny marine organisms known as calcifying plankton are key contributors to the sequestration of carbon dioxide, yet most climate models do not fully account for them. Coccolithophores, foraminifers, and pteropods are microscopic organisms that form hard shells and help regulate the planet's temperature by capturing carbon and moving it through the ocean. However, a recent study found that most climate models exclude these tiny organisms entirely.

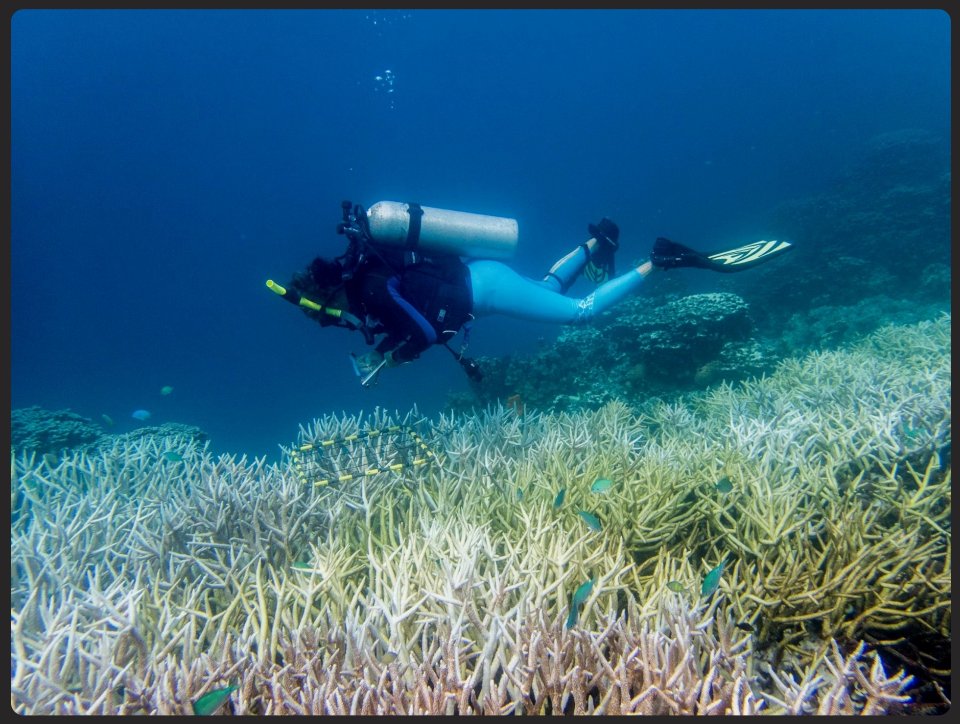
Climate models are used to predict Earth's future, so accounting for as many factors as possible is essential for providing accurate information. The natural life and death cycles of these plankton species move carbon deeper and deeper into the ocean's layers, removing it from the atmosphere. Just as soil sequesters carbon on land, this process stores carbon in the ocean. Because excess carbon in the atmosphere is a major contributor to climate change, this function is critically important.

This process is known as the ocean carbon pump. It helps stabilize Earth's environmental systems and plays an essential role in the planet's chemistry. Excluding these processes can therefore reduce the accuracy and effectiveness of modern climate models.

These organisms are not indestructible, however. Different types of calcifying plankton respond differently to changes in their ecosystems. Coccolithophores are highly sensitive to ocean acidification, while foraminifers and pteropods are especially vulnerable to rising temperatures and decreasing oxygen levels. Climate change increases ocean temperatures, raises acidification levels, and contributes to lower oxygen concentrations, placing additional stress on these vital organisms.

As a result, one of our most powerful natural tools for managing atmospheric carbon is being harmed by climate change, and these impacts must be accounted for in climate research. Our oceans are full of mysteries, but this is not one of them. To learn more, see the original article **HERE** on Science Daily.

The Third Global Coral Bleaching Event Had Far Worse Effects Than Previously Thought



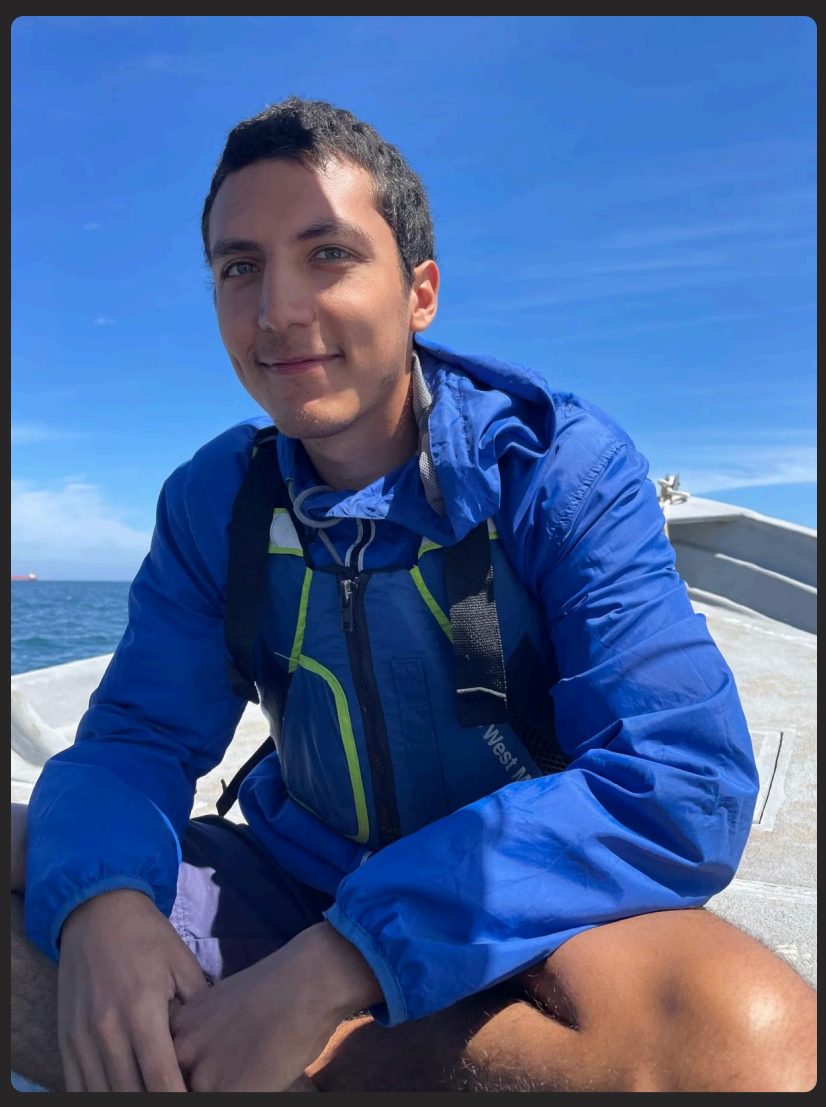
Our oceans absorb most of the heat produced when we burn fossil fuels. Without the oceans, air temperatures would exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit (50°C). Coral reefs bear the brunt of the negative impacts of rising ocean temperatures. Over the last 30 years, we have lost more than 50% of the world's corals. This is cause for alarm, especially considering that coral reefs contribute an estimated $9.8 trillion to the global economy each year.

The third global bleaching event occurred from 2014 to 2017, and its full effects have only recently been thoroughly assessed. Coral bleaching occurs when corals experience severe stress, often leading to their death. More than half of the world's reefs suffered "significant" bleaching during this event, resulting in devastating environmental consequences. With another major global bleaching event beginning in 2023 and still ongoing, reefs are not being given enough time to recover.

Coral reefs are an essential part of the global ecosystem. They are home to a vast array of marine life and support approximately one quarter of all known marine species. It is clear that protecting them is critical. The third global bleaching event was described as "the most severe and widespread event on record," and, even more concerning, the fourth event appears to be even more intense.

This should serve as a wake-up call for the global community. We need a coordinated global response to climate change to protect a vital part of the global economy, ecosystem, and cultural heritage. See the Smithsonian's article **HERE** to learn more.

Volunteer Spotlight: Andre Ortega



Andre Ortega has been an important part of the Mexico Marine Wildlife Rescue Center (MMWRC) since its opening in 2018. Now 27 years old, Andre studied Marine Biology at UABCS and has dedicated much of his life to the care and conservation of marine wildlife.

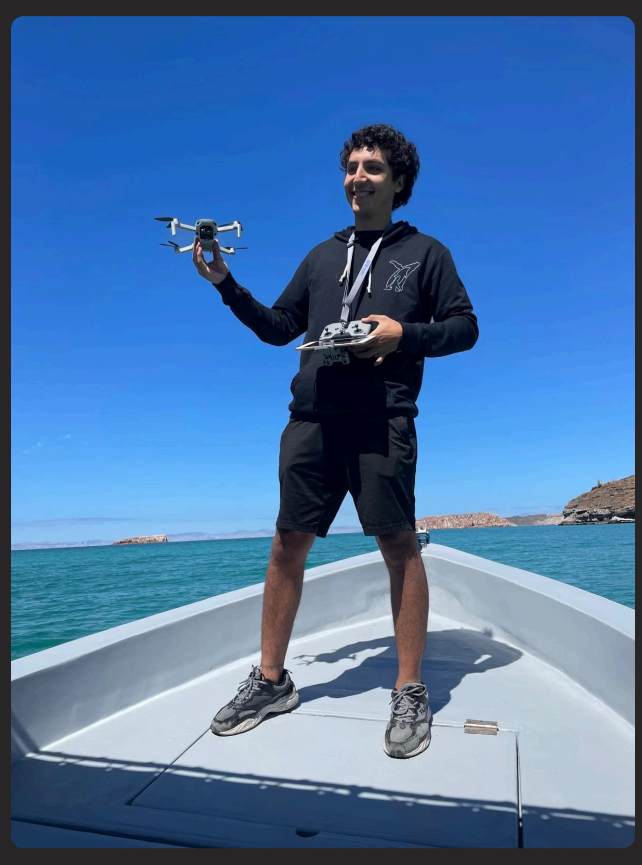
From an early age, Andre felt a deep admiration and curiosity for the ocean and the animals that inhabit it. What began as interest grew into a genuine desire to contribute. For Andre, the opportunity to directly help animals in vulnerable situations has always been both meaningful and inspiring.

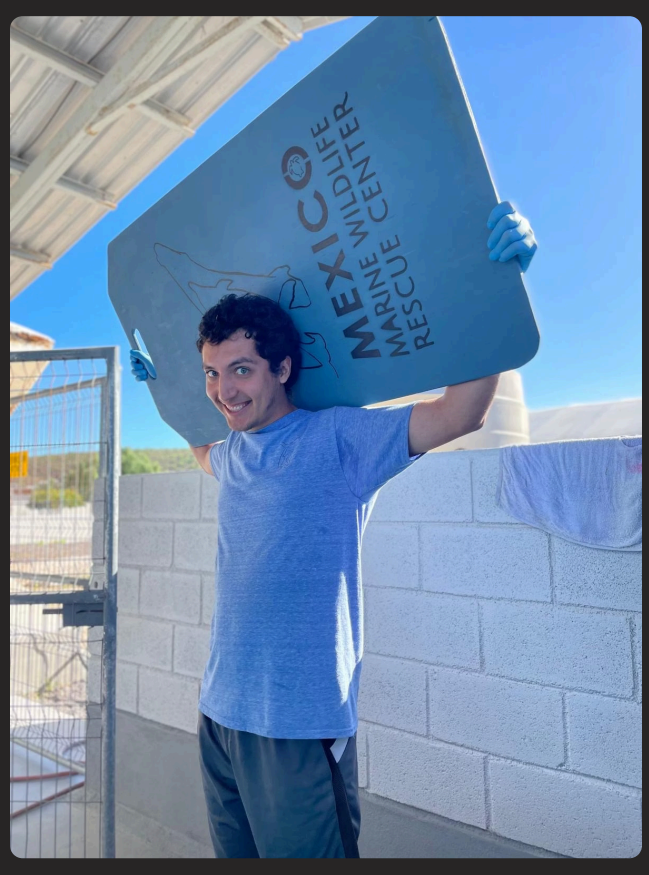
During his years as a volunteer at MMWRC, Andre gained extensive experience in marine animal care and rehabilitation. He supported daily operations by preparing diets, cleaning and maintaining facilities, assisting with animal handling and monitoring, and helping with records and logistics when new cases arrived. Over time, he also took on a leadership role by helping train and coordinate new volunteers, ensuring that routines and protocols were followed.

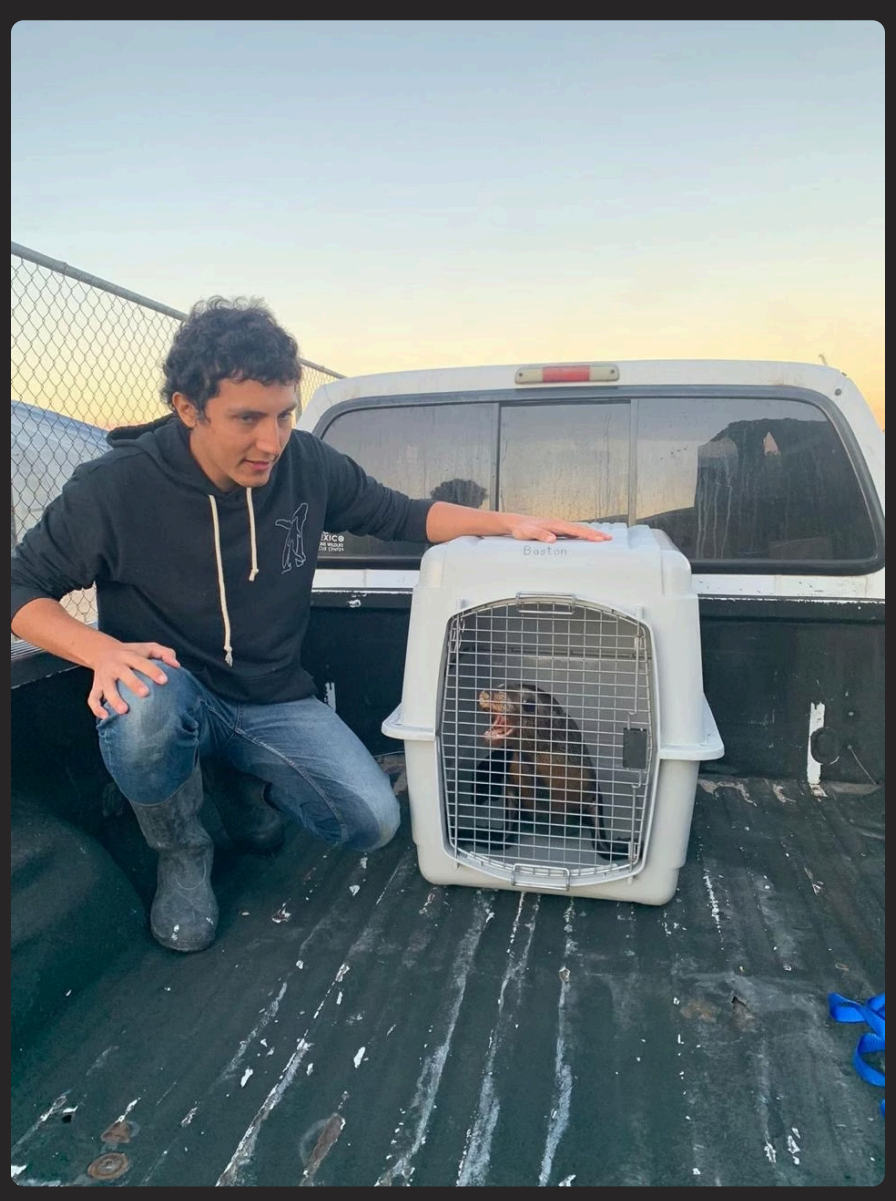
One of the aspects Andre values most is the spirit of MMWRC, an organization built on commitment, discipline, and vocation. He credits the center for teaching him the importance of teamwork, perseverance, and dedication, especially during long days and challenging rescue situations.

Andre's favorite work has always been in the field. He has been actively involved in responding to strandings and emergencies, including the disentanglement of sea lions and whales. He finds great fulfillment in coordinating and motivating rescue teams and, above all, in seeing animals safely return to the ocean.

Andre believes that while one organization may not "save the world," every rescued animal represents a world saved. This philosophy continues to motivate his work in conservation.







Currently, Andre is in Spain, where he completed a master's degree in Aquarium and Zoo Management and Welfare and completed an internship at the Oceanogràfic of Valencia, working in their marine turtle rehabilitation center. Although he deeply misses Mexico and his work at MMWRC, his goal is clear: to gain knowledge and experience so that he can one day return and contribute even more to marine conservation in Mexico.

MMWRC remains a vital part of Andre's life. The people he met there continue to feel like family, and he remains an active and supportive member of the community.

We are proud to recognize Andre Ortega for his dedication, compassion, and ongoing commitment to protecting marine wildlife. His journey reflects the heart and mission of MMWRC.

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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