



41st International Sea Turtle Symposium

Workshop Proposal for ISTS41

Title of Proposed Workshop:

REDUCING BYCATCH BY BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COLLABORATIVE
RESEARCH AMONG FISHERS AND
CONSERVATIONISTS

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Suggested Duration of Workshop:

Full Day (8 hours)

Description and Justification of the Workshop:

Injurious interactions between fishing activities and marine turtles is a theme that concerns conservation (and fisher) communities around the world. As such, ISTS continues to promote the idea that fostering change amongst fishers regarding bycatch and its causal factors is a critical component in achieving sustainable development. Special sessions that address the challenges and best practices of developing working relationships with fishers to address bycatch were held during ISTS New Orleans, USA (2014) and ISTS Lima, Peru (2016). During these sessions, specific attention was given to bycatch issues of immediate importance to the host region (TEDs in US shrimp fisheries; bycatch reduction in Peruvian artisan gillnet fisheries).

Seeing that this year's ISTS annual meeting is in Cartagena, we want to seize the opportunity to host a bycatch session that will bring together fishers and scientists working on bycatch with Caribbean conservationists seeking a deeper understanding of how to reduce bycatch in their local communities. We will encourage all participants, and especially those working in Colombia, to invite fishers who are open to sharing their experience with bycatch and working with scientists/conservationists. During the session we will identify the challenges faced by stakeholders and update participants on recent developments in bycatch knowledge and technologies, both developed in the Wider Caribbean and elsewhere in the world. Case studies with very practical results will be featured; e.g., how bycatch issues were identified/quantified/ prioritized, how responses were developed/ implemented/ evaluated, and

what tools can be shared in order to replicate success elsewhere. We will explore bycatch mitigation techniques (gear and human dimensions) that are most likely to be successful in the Wider Caribbean region. Finally, the highlight of this session will be a panel composed of fishers who will present their ideas as to how scientists/ conservationists could better approach fishers to get things moving in the right direction.

The overarching goal of the workshop is to give participants a deeper understanding on how we can better foster voluntary behavior changes by fishers in favor of saving turtles, and how conservationists can most effectively support the process.

Expected Outcomes of the Workshop:

Expected outcomes will differ depending on the professional background of the participant. Novices will acquire foundational information, basic tools, and contacts needed to begin the process of working to effectively resolve bycatch issues in their local communities. Seeing the conservation urgency for turtles, it is crucial that time be not wasted on repeating our mistakes – so for participants already involved in various aspects of this important work (e.g., policy, funding, testing, implementing, enforcement, strategic planning), it is expected that they will benefit from exposure to the latest information, contacts, and ideas pertaining to their specific interest(s).

As ‘connected’ as we are it remains challenging to get the ‘right folks’ around the table to advance on a specific topic, and bycatch is no exception. In an attempt to balance plenary presentations with hands-on networking and Q&A, the workshop will provide for breakout groups who will report back to all workshop participants on the highlights of topical discussions. Pertaining to the fishers that will have participated in such an event for the first time, it is hoped that they will see the good will and openness of the ‘environmentalists’ wanting to ‘protect’ turtles. It is hoped that our conservation communities’ capacity to recognize fisher’s perception and knowledge will in turn contribute to bridging the gap that persists between marine turtle conservation and fisheries livelihoods.

During the session, one person will be in charge of collecting information on participants bycatch capacities which will contribute to the creation of a ‘bycatch repertoire’ of contact information based on knowledge and/ or specific capacity pertaining to various turtle species /fishing gear/ locality/ field of work. This will be distributed to all participants. Finally, a selection of innovative new tools, apps, outreach materials, etc. will be featured on display tables as part of the workshop.