



# Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative Update

May 2007

## Proceedings from the Second Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Conference:

Proceedings from the second Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Conference, which took place in San José, Costa Rica in January 2006, will be distributed electronically in the next few weeks. The hard copy is in press and will be available shortly in English and Spanish. You will be notified once it is in stock and copies will be sent to you upon request.

## Ministerial Guidance for WHMSI:

An Interamerican Meeting of Ministers and High Level Authorities of Sustainable Development took place December 4-5 2006 in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Following up on the plenary decision taken in Costa Rica to seek ongoing ministerial support for WHMSI, Interim Steering Committee member Maria Rivera made a presentation on WHMSI at the Meeting. The Fourth Plenary Session adopted the Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (PIDS) for 2006-2009. The PIDS states that "The OAS will serve as a regional forum ...to explore the development of the

*Dear WHMSI colleagues:*

*The Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI) has made progress on several fronts since our last update of November 2006. If you have questions or comments about any of these issues, please contact me or any member of the Interim Steering Committee.*

*Sincerely,*

*Herb Raffaele*

*Chair of the Interim Steering Committee*

Western Hemisphere Migratory Initiative (WHMSI), in a manner that reflects the interests and priorities of all member states."

## Update on WHMSI-Funded Project for Migratory Sea Turtles Conservation:

In 2006, WHMSI provided support for the regional project: "Building Capacity to Care for Sick and Injured Sea Turtles: Standard Guide-lines and Criteria for the Wider Caribbean Region", implemented by the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST). This project addresses the call from more than 30 Caribbean States and territories

which unanimously agreed that a "Sea Turtle Trauma Response Corps" be created to strengthen and coordinate the efforts to respond to endangered sea turtles in crisis, whether at sea or stranded on the shoreline. No such 'corps' currently exists, and there are no relevant training materials available in the region (or elsewhere). As a result, sea turtle strandings are largely unreported, sick and injured turtles go untreated or incorrectly treated, husbandry conditions do not meet minimum standards, fishers are unaware of de-hooking and resuscitation techniques, and the region generally lacks the capacity to relate illness and injury to population status at national or regional scales. The development of standard guidelines will significantly strengthen existing sea turtle research and conservation efforts, and through the WIDECAST network, the guidelines will embrace a regional approach, be widely distributed and available, and be updated as necessary. The Field Manual supported by WHMSI will feature a user-friendly guide to "first responders", including guidance on triage and field treatment of various traumas, including hooking, entanglement, oiling, boat strikes, and predator attacks. The manual will be internationally



Photo credit: Chris McCandlish

peer-reviewed. Technical manuals for training stakeholders in first response options, clinical treatment, and husbandry care for critically injured sea turtles will be distributed, promoted and utilized through the efforts of the WIDECAST network and, as such, will have strong cross-sectoral benefit in the WHMSI area of interest.

#### **Cooperation in Conservation - WHMSI Proposal:**

At the Second WHMSI Conference that took place in Costa Rica in January 2006, participants identified priorities in capacity building for the conservation and management of migratory species in the Western Hemisphere. This input was used to create a capacity building implementation plan and to develop the project entitled "Cooperation in Conservation: Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI)".

The project seeks to build upon existing WHMSI and other migratory species efforts to significantly enhance the conservation of shared migratory species throughout the Americas by strengthening institutional and human capacity, political commitment, international cooperation, and public-private partnerships at regional, national and local levels.

A proposal for this project was submitted to the GEF through the OAS and UNEP. The proposal received the endorsement of Chile, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, each country assigning US\$156,250 from its GEF RAF funds to the project. These countries' endorsements and financial assignments to the project demonstrate their leadership in biodiversity conservation in the Western Hemisphere.

However, since the WHMSI proposal was first developed, the GEF has gone through significant internal changes, which have affected the status of the WHMSI proposal. Specifically, the GEF presently has withdrawn its support for regional projects such as WHMSI. In spite of this, given the value of the proposed activities, the Interim Steering Committee is committed to pursuing other sources of funding for the project. As we continue this search, your continued support of this project will remain important.

#### **MOU between WHMSI and U.S. NABCI Committee:**

Following upon a plenary decision at the WHMSI Conference in Costa Rica to promote Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with partner organizations, a MOU between the U.S. Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (U.S. NABCI) and WHMSI was signed by both parties in March 2007.

The MOU recognizes the breadth of each party's mission, while focusing on those portions that overlap. WHMSI addresses all migratory species that cross international boundaries of the entire Western Hemisphere, while U.S. NABCI is concerned more specifically with all birds, migratory and resident, that occur regularly within the boundaries of the United States and in collaborating with Mexico and Canada on additional species native to those countries.

This MOU will assist U.S. NABCI to partner with other countries in the hemisphere in which U.S. target birds regularly spend portions of their life cycle. Through this MOU, the parties agree to seek ways to work together more effectively to build on each others' strengths. This is expected to be the first in a series of MOUs to be signed by WHMSI and partner organizations.

#### **Next Meeting of the Interim Steering Committee:**

The ISC plans to meet June 5-6 2007 in Washington, DC. Topics for discussion include follow-up to the Second WHMSI Conference and planning for the Third WHMSI Conference, as well as identification of potential sources of funding for the Capacity Building proposal.

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**Summer 2007**

