

Escuela Americana Sea Turtle Liberation

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Holly Jones

Hollyjones.eplerwood@yahoo.com



Escuela Americana students, faculty and staff received an introductory sea turtle conservation presentation. Local egg collectors-now fledgling tour guides were listening in the background.

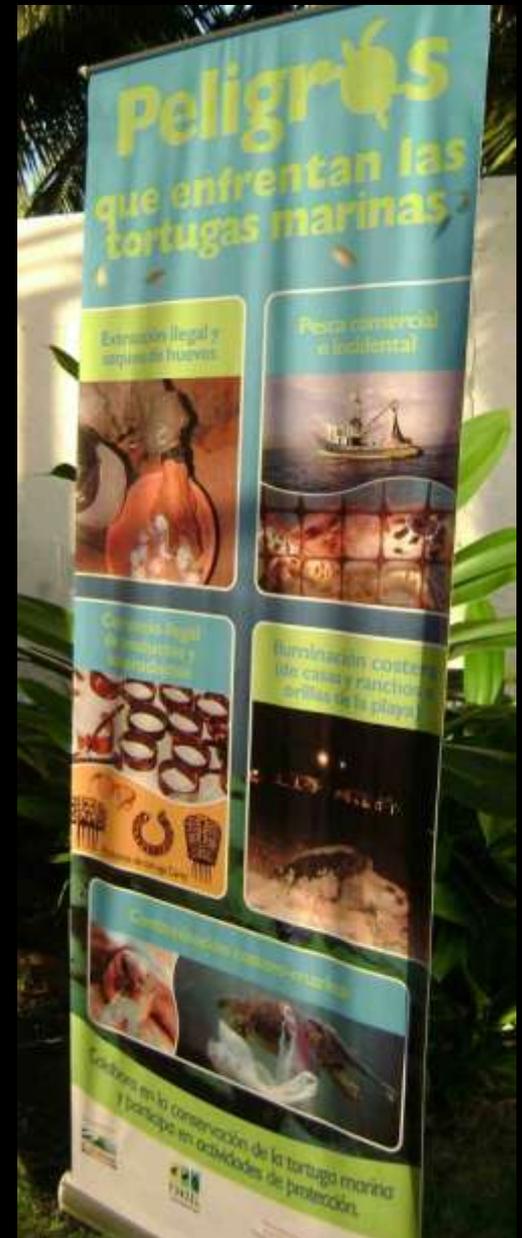


FUNZEL (Zoological Foundation of El Salvador) representative, Marina Muñoz, talked about the species of sea turtles that nest in El Salvador, the dangers that face them, and the local conservation efforts.

Details of the ban on the sale and consumption of eggs and other turtle parts.



Types of threats that face the turtles: Egg poaching, commercial fishing, jewelry sales, coastal lighting, & pollution.





The guides explained how they walk along the beaches at night, waiting for the turtles to emerge. They wear dark clothing and move very quietly as to not disturb them as they dig their nests. They measure the shells and check for identification tags and injuries while they eggs are being laid.



The guide demonstrated how the eggs are carefully harvested and transported to the incubation corral. Plastic bags are used because they do not absorb the protective coating around the egg and keep the eggs from drying out.



The sea turtle incubation corral is constructed with bamboo, mesh fencing and sand bag reinforcements to keep predators like dogs, birds and humans out. By adjusting the position of the palm fronds on the roof, incubation workers can control the temperature of the nests.



The guides simulated an egg burial inside the incubation corral. They explained that the eggs must be buried as identically as possible to how the mother laid them. The nest must be the same depth and shape, the eggs must face upwards, the hole must be covered very carefully and then labeled with the specific information of the nest: species, hour and date of burial, number of eggs, estimated hatching date (45 days), etc. Each square holds one nest.



Before the liberation could begin, the guides explained the rules: how to properly handle the turtles, no flash photography, etc.



All participants needed to wash their hands in ocean water to remove any foreign substances that could have contaminated the turtles' sensitive body.





Time for the liberation of the Olive Ridley turtles!



In awe.



Each group of 10 participants received a private bucket of newborns to release.



Participants were kept behind a yellow line to allow the turtles to crawl into the ocean. The guides commented that placing the turtles directly into the ocean prohibits them from developing memory of their beach of origin, which they need in order to return to lay eggs as adults.





Watching the newborns crawl into the ocean.





Their first wave!





Bon voyage!