



A new marine sanctuary for Costa Rica: Golfo Dulce Hammerhead Shark Sanctuary officially announced last week

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7th, 2018, San Jose, Costa Rica - The President of the Republic of Costa Rica Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera and the Minister of Environment and Energy Edgar Gutiérrez Espeleta signed an executive decree last Thursday for the creation of a marine sanctuary of 4,210.3 hectares in Golfo Dulce. The marine sanctuary aims to protect hammerhead shark breeding area.

The Golfo Dulce Hammerhead Shark Sanctuary located in the Golfo Dulce wetlands is unique and the first sanctuary of its kind in Costa Rica. The sanctuary also promotes sustainable fisheries and encourages the participation of fishermen's associations to frame new commercial activities and trading alternatives to align with the decree.

The decree describes the sanctuary as a defined area characterized by exceptional biodiversity of flora or fauna, with the presence of species, subspecies or habitats we should preserve for future generations. The wetlands of Golfo Dulce represent an essential habitat for the newborn and juvenile scalloped hammerhead sharks.

"Hammerhead sharks are born in coastal waters where they spend the first 3 to 4 years of their existence, and use them as breeding areas all along their lives. Since 2010, Misión Tiburón has been studying hammerhead sharks population in Golfo Dulce and identified Coto River wetland as an important breeding area. The turbid and highly productive waters offer shelter and food to the offspring of this endangered species," explains Andrés López, researcher and co-founder of the Costa Rican NGO Misión Tiburón.

The declaration signed last week recognizes the importance of the wetland ecosystems in Golfo Dulce for hammerhead sharks. The scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) is an endangered species listed on the IUCN Red List and the World Conservation Union reports a steady decline since 2008, which also forced international trade to be regulated by CITES since 2013. "For decades, conservation efforts of this migratory species in the Eastern Tropical Pacific region focused on oceanic islands: Isla del Coco, Malpelo, or Galapagos where large groups of adult sharks stand in cleaning stations. The lack of attention and protection of their breeding areas located in coastal waters have resulted in a continuous decline of sharks. For example in the Isla del Coco National Park hammerhead sharks have declined by nearly 40% in the last 30 years", says Ilena Zanella, marine biologist and co-founder at Misión Tiburón. This declaration is also an opportunity to develop educational and training programs in local communities

Local communities, the tourism industry and private enterprises play a key role in the development of sustainable alternatives to protect marine resources and the newly established sanctuary. "The Golfo Dulce Hammerhead Shark Sanctuary represents a new model of governance for Costa Rica, where local communities are involved in the protection of a endangered species, as well as the development of socio-economic activities that are alternatives integrated with our marine-coastal resources", explains Fernando Mora, Vice-Minister of Water, Seas and Wetlands in Costa Rica.

For more information about the Golfo Dulce Hammerhead Shark Sanctuary, [watch this video](#) or [view this short video animation](#)

For more details about educational programs, [check this webpage](#).



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About the Ministry of Environment and Energy in Costa Rica (MINAE)

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About Misión Tiburón

Misión Tiburón is composed of young professionals committed to marine life and shark conservation. The leaders of this organization, Ilena Zanella and Andres Lopez, are marine biologists who have worked for several years in educational projects and marine research, especially with sharks, rays and turtles. During these years, they have acquired an extensive experience and knowledge to lead new marine conservation projects. Misión Tiburón's mission is to promote the responsible use of marine resources through the development of integrated projects associating marine education and scientific research. In our efforts to ocean conservation, we hope to be firm and true to our ideals, always respecting the environmental and human welfare.

Learn more about Misión Tiburón: misiontiburon.org