

# NOAA IN THE CARIBBEAN

CONNECTING NOAA & PARTNERS ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN



## NOAA in the Caribbean Newsletter - Summer Edition

Hello NOAA in the Caribbean Community,

Below, please find the Summer edition of our community newsletter. Thank you so much to those of you who have shared and/or contributed.

A few quick announcements:

1. **New website:** The NOAA in the Caribbean Executive Team is in the process of revamping our website! If you all have any photos of you or your team in the field, your work site, etc., we would love to try and incorporate them in the new website. If you would like to contribute, please send your photos with captions to [CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov](mailto:CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov). If we can not add them to the website we will make sure to feature them in our next newsletter. Please submit content by **November 13**.
2. **Community Group Meeting Topics:** Please fill out this [form](#) to indicate what topics you would like to discuss or learn more about in our upcoming community group meeting. There is also a place for you to sign up to present or to suggest speakers.
3. **Mailing lists:** Please fill out this [form](#) to indicate if you would like to remain on or sign up to be a part of our community group, and/or if you would like to continue to receive the newsletter. There is an option to receive the newsletter and not be a member of the community group. This would mean you would not receive any community announcements, notifications of upcoming events or meetings outside of those featured in the newsletter.

Should you have questions or want more information, please contact [CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov](mailto:CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov). We hope to see you at our next NOAA in the Caribbean Community Group Meeting November 17th from 10:30am-12pm ET!

Thank you,  
The NOAA in the Caribbean Executive Team

---

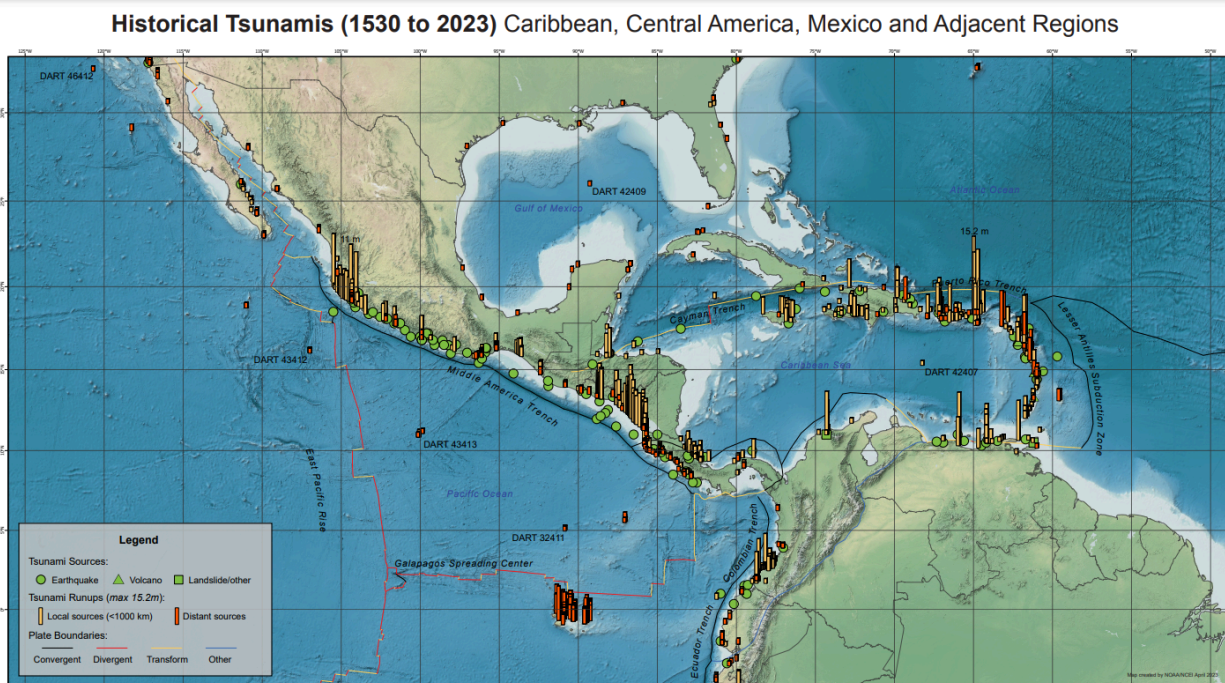
## Table of Contents

Historical Tsunami Effects: Caribbean, Central America, Mexico and Adjacent Regions	2
Updating Caribbean MPA Management Priorities	3

The Endangered Species Act: 50 Years of Conserving Species	4
ESA in Action: Celebrating Sea Turtle Conservation and Recovery Efforts	6
ESA in Action: Final Rule to Designate Critical Habitat for the Threatened Caribbean Corals	8
ESA in Action: Final Recovery Plan Available for Endangered Puerto Rican Plant Announcements	9
	10

## Historical Tsunami Effects: Caribbean, Central America, Mexico and Adjacent Regions

Content from: NOAA's [National Center for Environmental Information](#)



NOAA National Center for Environmental Information (NCEI) scientists collaborated with the International Tsunami Information Center (ITIC) to update the "Historical Tsunami Effects: Caribbean, Central America, Mexico and Adjacent Regions" posters. These posters are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). The posters summarize the sources and impacts of tsunamis observed in the region. In the Caribbean, the deadliest events were the 1692 Jamaica tsunami that resulted in 2,000 deaths, and the 1946 Dominican Republic earthquake-generated tsunami that caused 1,790 deaths.

## Updating Caribbean MPA Management Priorities

*Content taken from OceanDecade.org website*

[MPAConnect's](#) 5-yearly check-in with members of the network is underway. Initiated in 2011 and repeated in 2017, the MPA management capacity assessment is taking place in 2023. This is the chance to see how Caribbean coral reef MPA managers report that they are doing in relation to capacity for twenty different aspects of MPA management. MPAConnect Coordination Team members from the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program and MPA manager mentors are implementing the management capacity assessment with more than 35 sites, both old and new to the network. The MPA managers' input is shaping MPAConnect's priorities for the coming 5 years. The work is made possible with support from NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, USAID and the Blue Nature Alliance. Watch for an update on findings at the GFCI 76 meeting in Nassau, The Bahamas, November 6-10 2023.



*MPA management capacity assessment with new MPAConnect member Bonaire National Marine Park – MPAConnect Coordinator Emma Doyle and Roxanne-Liana Francisca, Ecology Advisor, STINAPA (Bonaire, August 2023) Photo: STINAPA*

### **Caribbean Peer-to-Peer Learning Exchange on Sustainable Financing**



*Participants in the MPAConnect peer-to-peer learning exchange on sustainable financing for Caribbean MPA managers in Saint Lucia September 2023 Photo: MPAConnect*

The MPACConnect network met in Saint Lucia for its 10th peer-to-peer learning exchange. Coming after some major challenges to MPA revenue generation in recent years and following the stresses of COVID-induced austerity programs at many sites, the network returned to the top priority topic MPA sustainable financing. Thirty-three members of the network came together from across the Caribbean to create site-specific strategies and plans for long-term, sustainable financing for MPA management. Experiences, success stories and lessons learned on sustainable financing were shared by Caribbean MPA managers. Working sessions focused on budgeting, scenario planning, forecasting, identifying strategies for sustainable financing, developing communications support and building a case for investment in MPAs and their programmatic activities. Next steps will see the implementation of new financing strategies and partnerships, and follow-up efforts on MPA communications through support from NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, USAID and GIZ.

---

## The Endangered Species Act: 50 Years of Conserving Species

Content courtesy of [NOAA](#) and [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services](#) webpages

This year celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Below you will find more information regarding the ESA and the collaborative work of NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect diverse species, with a focus on wildlife throughout the Caribbean.



Image courtesy of [NOAA](#)

*Brief Description:*

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was enacted in 1973 to prevent the loss or harm of endangered and threatened species and to preserve the places they live. For over half a century, the ESA has proven to be one of the most effective wildlife conservation laws, credited with saving 99 percent of the species it protects. But it has done so much more than just prevent extinction.

Now in its 50th year, the ESA stands testament to the power of partnerships and the conservation successes we can achieve working together. Today, hundreds of species are stable or improving thanks to conservation actions undertaken by federal agencies, state and local governments, conservation organizations, and private citizens. Many others have recovered to self-sustaining levels and no longer depend on federal protection for survival.

The ESA currently protects 1,662 U.S. species and 638 foreign species. With ongoing threats such as habitat loss and new threats like climate change, a commitment to species conservation and the ESA continues to be vital. As we look to the next 50 years and beyond, a renewed commitment to species conservation and the ESA is critical. It is up to all of us to continue the success of the ESA so future generations may experience the natural heritage we all cherish.

*Collaborative but split duties:*

The Department of the Interior's (DOI) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) administer the ESA. The FWS has primary responsibility for terrestrial and freshwater organisms, while the responsibilities of NMFS are mainly marine wildlife such as whales and anadromous fish such as salmon. Under the ESA, species may be listed as either endangered or threatened. "Endangered" means a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened" means a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. All species of plants and animals, except pest insects, are eligible for listing as endangered or threatened. For the purposes of the ESA, Congress defined species to include subspecies, varieties, and, for vertebrates, distinct population segments.

*Consultation:*

Under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, federal agencies must consult with NOAA Fisheries when any action the agency carries out, funds, or authorizes may affect either a species listed as threatened or endangered under the Act, or any critical habitat designated for it.

For more information regarding consultation under section 7 of the ESA please go [here](#).

---

## ESA in Action: Sea Turtle Conservation and Recovery

Content courtesy of the [NOAA](#) webpage

### Celebrating Sea Turtle Conservation and Recovery Efforts

NEWS: June 29, 2023 *Southeast*

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, we are shining a spotlight on our recovery efforts to reduce bycatch to protect and conserve sea turtles.



*An immature loggerhead sea turtle. Credit: G.P. Schmahl.*

#### **Bycatch is a Serious Threat:**

Sea turtles are a key part of marine ecosystems worldwide and play a vital role in supporting productive oceans. They help maintain coral reef ecosystems and transport essential nutrients from the oceans to beaches and coastal dunes. Sea turtles are an essential part of their environment, and they influence other species around them.

The greatest threats to sea turtles are caused by humans. Sea turtles can become trapped, hooked, or entangled in fishing gear, most commonly in trawls, longlines, and gillnets. This is called [bycatch](#) and is the greatest threat to sea turtles in the United States. Bycatch can harm animals, contributing to population declines and impeding population recovery. Bycatch is a complex, global issue that threatens the sustainability and resiliency of our fishing communities, economies, and ocean ecosystems.

### **Conservation Successes of Sea Turtles through the Endangered Species Act**



NOAA Fisheries leads the conservation and recovery of sea turtles in the marine environment. There are seven species of sea turtles in the world. Six of them live in U.S. waters: [green turtle](#), [hawksbill turtle](#), [Kemp's ridley turtle](#), [leatherback turtle](#), [loggerhead turtle](#), and [olive ridley turtle](#).

All sea turtles found in U.S. waters are listed under the [Endangered Species Act](#) as either threatened or endangered. The Act protects more than 160 marine and anadromous species and has been overwhelmingly successful in preventing their extinction during the last 50 years. The Act has also put many species on the path to recovery.

Learn about actions and requirements we've implemented to minimize bycatch, ensuring our fisheries are sustainable and sea turtle species are given the best chance to recover.

#### **Less Harmful Hooks and Fishing Methods:**

Fishermen use certain types of fishing gear to target specific species. However, these different fishing methods can accidentally capture or injure other non-target species. We work with the fishing industry and other partners to develop or modify fishing gear and practices to minimize bycatch of protected species and reduce the mortality rate for marine life that is incidentally caught.

Current bycatch reduction measures include the use of circle hooks. Their shape and smaller opening reduce the likelihood of turtles ingesting hooks or being caught. When hookings do occur, they are likely to be less severe, allowing a safer release.

#### **International Efforts**

Sea turtles are highly migratory, and no single country can protect them alone. We work with other countries to promote sea turtle conservation internationally and to mitigate sea turtle bycatch in commercial and recreational fisheries. NOAA Fisheries carries out domestic and international conservation activities for sea turtles in the marine environment.

## Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

NOAA Fisheries supports the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles. This intergovernmental treaty provides the legal framework for countries in the Americas and the Caribbean to take action for the benefit of sea turtles. These actions are based on the best available data and the environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics of the Convention's parties.

---

## ESA in Action: Critical Habitat for Caribbean Corals

Content courtesy of the [NOAA](#) webpage

### Final Rule to Designate Critical Habitat for the Threatened Caribbean Corals



*Pillar coral with fish. Credit: NOAA Fisheries*

**Summary:** NOAA Fisheries, designated critical habitat for five threatened Caribbean coral species, *Orbicella annularis*, *O. faveolata*, *O. franksi*, *Dendrogyra cylindrus*, and *Mycetophyllia ferox*, pursuant to section 4 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Twenty-eight mostly overlapping specific occupied areas containing physical features essential to the conservation of these coral species are designated as critical habitat. These areas contain approximately 16,830 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>; 6,500 square miles (mi<sup>2</sup>)) of marine habitat. We have considered economic, national security, and other relevant impacts of designating these areas



as critical habitat, and we exclude one area from the designations due to anticipated impacts on national security.

**Effective**  
09/08/2023

**Federal Register:**

[Final Rule \(88 FR 54026, 08/09/2023\)](#)

[Proposed Rule \(85 FR 76302, 11/27/2020\)](#)

**Supporting Materials:**

[Critical Habitat Report](#)

[Pillar Coral Critical Habitat Maps and GIS Data](#)

[Lobed Star Coral Critical Habitat Maps and GIS Data](#)

[Mountainous Star Coral Critical Habitat Maps and GIS Data](#)

[Boulder Star Coral Critical Habitat Maps and GIS Data](#)

[Rough Cactus Coral Critical Habitat Maps and GIS Data](#)

---

## **[ESA in Action: Endangered Puerto Rican Plant](#)**

*Content courtesy of the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services](#) webpage*

### **[Final Recovery Plan Available for Endangered Puerto Rican Plant](#)**

*PRESS RELEASE: Jun 8, 2023, Media Contacts [Jennifer Koches](#)*



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announces the availability of a final recovery plan for *Gonocalyx concolor* (no common name), a plant native to the elfin forests and ausubo forest of the Carite Commonwealth Forest, a public land managed for conservation by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources.

Listed as an endangered species with 198 acres of critical habitat in 2014, the species is threatened by habitat destruction, modification, and fragmentation due to construction and expansion of telecommunication towers and associated facilities, and road improvements. In addition, its limited distribution and highly specialized ecological requirements exacerbate the potential threats posed by other factors, such as landslides, vegetation clearance, human induced fires, competition, and environmental effects resulting from climate change.

To promote and support the conservation and survival of endangered species and threatened species, and provide a transparent path to achieving recovery, we and our partners develop and

implement recovery plans. Recovery plans are unique to each species and serve as central organizing tools that provide important guidance on methods of minimizing threats to listed species, such as restoring and acquiring habitat, removing introduced predators or invasive species, conducting surveys, monitoring individual populations, reproducing the species through controlled propagation programs to augment their current populations, and reintroductions into historic ranges. Recovery plans identify measurable and objective criteria against which progress towards recovery of a species can be tracked over time. Recovery plans are guidance documents and not regulatory. No agency or entity is required by the Endangered Species Act to implement actions in a recovery plan.

**Image: *Gonocalyx concolor*, courtesy of USFWS**

The final recovery plan for *Gonocalyx concolor* is available at the following link:

<https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4195>

For more information on the species, visit the Service's Species Profile below or contact Edwin Muñiz of the Service's Caribbean Field Office at [edwin\\_muniz@fws.gov](mailto:edwin_muniz@fws.gov).

<https://www.fws.gov/species/island-brittleleaf-gonocalyx-concolor>

---

## Announcements

### General:

1. The next NOAA in the Caribbean Community Group Meeting is **Nov. 17th from 10:30am-12pm ET**. Please reach out to [CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov](mailto:CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov) if you would like to join.
2. The Office of Education (OED) offers opportunities for which individuals and institutions in the Caribbean can apply to. Here is a list of opportunities within OED and some other NOAA programs with their respective links for more information on the application process.
  - Institutions
    - [NOAA B-WET Program](#)
    - [NOAA ELP Program](#)
    - [eeBLUE Aquaculture literacy mini-grants](#)
    - [NOAA Ocean Guardian Schools](#)
    - [DEIA Ocean Exploration Education Grants](#)
    - Corresponding Sea Grant offices in regions of interest (e.g., [Florida Sea Grant](#))
  - Individuals
    - [EPP/MSI cooperative science centers](#)
    - [EPP/MSI Undergraduate Scholarships](#)
    - [Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship](#)
    - [NOAA Fisheries Internship \(IN FISH\)](#)
    - [Teacher at Sea](#)
    - [NOAA Planet Stewards](#)

## NOAA in the Caribbean Newsletter

If you wish to subscribe to NOAA in the Caribbean's newsletter or the community distribution list, please fill out this [form](#).

If you wish to submit any questions, comments, story ideas, artwork or photographs, please email us at [CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov](mailto:CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov).

NOAA in the Caribbean Newsletter is produced by the NOAA in the Caribbean Steering Committee, including support from NOAA's Office of International Affairs, Southeast and Caribbean Regional Collaboration Team, Office for Coastal Management, National Marine Fisheries Service SE Regional Office, Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, and National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science.

