



Centro Rescate de  
Especies Marinas Amenazadas



SANDLER  
FOUNDATION

**Challenge Grant**

# Halting Extinction of Highly Migratory Species in the Eastern Tropical Pacific

Silky shark  
(*Carcharhinus falciformis*)



@Andy Reid  
Cocos Island

Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)



@Shmulik Blum  
Cocos Island

Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)



Davidenelmar.com  
Punta Coyote, Guanacaste

Hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna lewini*)



@Shmulik Blum  
Cocos Island

December, 2017

## The Sandler Foundation Challenge Match Grant

The Sandler Foundation (<http://www.sandlerfoundation.org/>) has supported Marine Endangered Species Rescue Center of Costa Rica (CREMA), since 2013. Over the next 12 months (November 2017 – October 2018), the Sandler Foundation will continue to fund CREMA's work for an amount of \$100,000. In an interest to help the organization grow and increase its capacity to protect highly migratory species of sharks, turtles, and other endangered marine species, the Sandler Foundation has offered CREMA a challenge grant. An additional \$50,000 will be donated in October 2018 for the continuation of CREMA's programmed activities upon the condition that CREMA raises an equivalent match through either new donor contributions or repeat donor contributions that are in excess of the last sum given.

Help us meet our goal by:

- Clicking <https://co.clickandpledge.com/sp/d2/default.aspx?wid=41441>, and your support will come through our San Francisco based fiscal sponsor Marine Watch International\*
- Sending a check to our Colorado based Fiscal Sponsor Fins Attached Marine Research and Conservation\*. [www.finsattached.org](http://www.finsattached.org)
- Contact us at [inaranjo@cremacr.org](mailto:inaranjo@cremacr.org) for international bank wire information.

*\*Our fiscal sponsors CHARGE NO OVERHEAD FEES.*

If you would like more information about these projects including details on organizational budgets, please contact Isabel Naranjo ([inaranjo@cremacr.org](mailto:inaranjo@cremacr.org)) or Andy Bystrom ([abystrom1@yahoo.com](mailto:abystrom1@yahoo.com)).

All donations and matches will support CREMA's Eastern Tropical Pacific highly migratory species conservation work. In 2018-2019 CREMA's research will focus on justifying the expansion of current no-take areas, the establishment of new protected areas and innovative transboundary swim ways, and efficient implementation of international conventions. Advocacy will be science based and the organization will rely on strategic litigation when official actions violate basic rights and/or laws.

Finally, this work is strengthened through innovative partnerships and collaborations including the **PEW Environment Group**, the **Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN)** and **Migramar**, a newly created non-profit organization of researchers who study highly migratory species in the Eastern Tropical Pacific, and the **Research Vessel Sharkwater**, a 44 meter marine research yacht equipped to study highly migratory species and owned by the marine conservation non-profit **Fins Attached Marine Research and Conservation**, Colorado, USA. Potential for collaboration with Migramar to foster research in the region is limitless.

Your consideration of financial support for this work is greatly appreciated, and will be used to fund the following conservation actions:

### ***Cocos Island, the hub of highly migratory species in the Eastern Tropical Pacific***

In September 2016, during a high-end intergovernmental meeting in the Galapagos Islands to define Costa Rica's and Ecuador's marine territories and common borders, Costa Rican

President Luis Guillermo Solís voiced his intentions to expand “no-take” protected area coverage around Cocos Island National Park by 10,000 Km<sup>2</sup>, in order to better protect the area’s renown marine biodiversity.

CREMA will take advantage of the current Presidential election campaign (November 2017–January of 2018) and remainder of President Solís’ term (May 1, 2018) to lobby for a no-take marine protected area at least three times larger than the one that currently surrounds Cocos Island, one of the most biodiverse and iconic oceanic islands on the planet. If we aren’t successful by May, we will leave the scene set for the next President to take this important step. Efforts will also be directed toward creating more marine protected areas in the greater Eastern Tropical Pacific and curtailing fishing effort by imposing seasonal and spatial closures on longline operations through international conventions and agreements, and in areas identified as migratory corridors (or swim ways) for pelagic shark species including hammerhead, silky, thresher, galapagos, and tiger sharks.

In order to accumulate more scientific evidence to support the creation of protected swim ways, CREMA is organizing research expeditions to Cocos Island in February, June, and September of 2018, including visits to the nearby seamount Las Gemelas, to deploy acoustic receivers at a depth of 180 meters. This work demonstrates our pioneering research defining aggregation sites, swim ways and migratory routes for sea turtles, sharks, and other endangered highly migratory species. The results of this fieldwork will be used to drive the political protected area development process.

### ***Integrated management of coastal zones***

Costa Rica’s coastal areas maintain the country’s small-scale fisheries and the thousands of families associated with this industry, in addition to providing critical habitat for charismatic marine species, including sharks, whales, manta rays, and sea turtles. Because of this dynamic, CREMA will contribute to efforts to protect these species from unselective and destructive fishing practices through protected area development and the continued creation of eco-tourism and sustainable seafood market opportunities for responsible fisheries. More specifically, the organization will work with the Ministry of the Environment to enlarge the coverage of and develop management plans for the coastal marine protected area network along the southern section of Costa Rica’s Nicoya Peninsula. Similar to the Cocos Island strategy, technical marine species tracking data for near-threatened bull sharks and critically endangered hawksbill sea turtles, in addition to artisanal fishery catch information, will be used to drive the MPA development process.

To collect this data, CREMA will be undertaking an active tracking and passive monitoring study using acoustic tags to track bull shark and hawksbill turtle movements. CREMA will also work with local artisanal fishers to set 1-2 km bottom demersal long-lines with 500-1,000 baited hooks in order to identify rookeries and aggregation sites. Researchers will also deploy baited remote underwater video systems (BRUVS) – aluminum structures anchored to the seafloor and equipped with GoPro cameras – to record organism behavior without human intrusion. The marine fauna tracking data, fishery catch information, and habitat observations will then be used to construct coastal natural resource management recommendations including a coastal zoning proposal for continued MPA development along the Southern Nicoya Peninsula.

### ***Advocacy for highly migratory species conservation policy***

In March 2013, Costa Rica emerged as a global marine conservation pacesetter by leading the international campaign to include three species of endangered hammerhead sharks in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which limits the international trade of products from these species to sustainable standards. On March 1, 2015 the nation became one of the world's few countries to ban the export of hammerhead shark products. Sadly, in recent years the country's support for the inclusion of more shark species in CITES has wavered, culminating in its refusal to support recent silky and thresher shark proposals (these species were voted into App. II of CITES regardless on October 4, 2016). Furthermore, in an effort to circumvent the nature of CITES regulations designed to discourage international commerce of endangered species, the Costa Rican authorities allow the shark fin industry to continue fishing hammerhead sharks with no restriction, allowing them to amass the fins for future export once the export ban is lifted.

This situation is counterintuitive to CITES's intention of regulating the international trade of specimens of wild animals and plants in order to promote their survival because it allows species caught during a time of export prohibition to be commercialized in the future should the law allow.

In order to honor the intent of CITES, CREMA believes that the export of species obtained during the pursuance of an export ban must forever be illegal. For this reason the organization will be implementing a campaign that will raise national and international awareness for this issue, as well as pressure the Costa Rican Fisheries and Aquaculture Institute (INCOPECA) for an eventual ban on the export of products from CITES Appendix II species that were obtained during an export ban, and the public destruction of the products. In addition to its domestic shark advocacy, CREMA will work with conservation organization partners in El Salvador and Guatemala to hold shark fin identification workshops, as well as facilitate the development of silky and thresher shark action plans.