

# Latin America and Caribbean Section

Society for Conservation Biology

## 1 LACA members survey

LACA Board of Directors (BOD) designed and implemented a member survey in order to know our members' needs and expectations. The survey included topics such as social network content, scholarship and grant usage, membership status, conservation interests, networking, etc. To read the results [click here](#).

## 2 Student Conference in Conservation Science - NY

The sixth Student Conference in Conservation Science (SCCS)-New York was held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York this past October, and included participation from many students and early-career professionals from the LACA region. The 2015 SCCS-NY convened 225 participants and 63 mentors, from 29 countries and 15 states in the US.

The Society and in particular the LACA Section board members were actively involved in this conference. Ana Luz Porzecanski, director of the AMNH's Center for Biodiversity and Conservation and Director of Education for the LACA section, worked with the Society to facilitate their participation during the conference's Resource and Career Fair, which helped publicize SCB to potential new members from around the world. Both plenary talks at SCCS this year featured conservation research taking place in the LACA region. Past SCB President, Rodrigo Medellín, spoke on "How to Do



Conservation Science, Implement it, and Not Die Trying," and participated as a mentor during the conference. Anthony Giordano (LACA's new president elect) participated as an abstract reviewer and a student mentor during the conference. More details, and videos of the talks and panels are available at SCCS-NY at

<http://cbc.amnh.org/sccsny>.

## 3 Save the Vaquita

SCB's LACA and Marine Section raised to the challenge of saving Mexico's critically endangered vaquita. Drawing inspiration from the new SCB Working Group on Conservation Marketing and Engagement, the Marine and LACA Sections recently put out a call for help over social media: we needed people living and working



near vaquita habitat to help us find new ways to reach the people of the region. Monica Michelle Medina answered our “Vaquita Ambassador” call. Monica is a bi-cultural, bi-national grassroots community activist and influencer who has studied business administration, marketing and has more than 15 years working in the non-profit community development field. On the other hand, LACA and Marine Section are part of a Vaquita Conservation group that has regular email conversations and calls with several NGOs, US Officials, and academics and people interested and willing to contribute to this porpoise’s conservation. In a joint effort, this group got SCB to support the 2015 gillnet ban for the benefit of the vaquita, an important first step towards the conservation of the species.

## 4 LACA Professional Development Scholarship



LACA Section launched a Professional Development Scholarship available to graduate students working in the Latin American and Caribbean region. We offered four competitive scholarships of \$2,000 each to provide support for emerging conservation professionals to address costs associated with the attendance of the 27th International Conference on Conservation Biology (ICCB) and the presentation of their work. These were the grant

winners: (1) Angelica Menchaca (MEXICO), working on the landscape genetics of jaguars in Belize; (2) Igor Berkunsky (ARGENTINA), working in Bolivia on the last remaining population of critically endangered blue-throated macaws; (3) Luis Roberto Viquez (COSTA RICA), working in the Mexican Lacandon rain forest on the role of environmental disturbance on disease transmission by bats in community-managed forests; and (4) Martin A. H. Escobar (CHILE), working on endangered small mammals, including the critically endangered Chilean Chinchilla.

## 5 ICCB – Montpellier 2015

**Workshop “WALKING THE TALK: WHY WE NEED TO BE CONSISTENT WITH OUR ACTIONS TO BE SUCCESSFUL CONSERVATIONISTS”** - Delivered by Karla Pelz (LACA Secretary) and Rurik List (LACA President) at ICCB2015 Montpellier, France

Most, if not all, conservation problems are caused by people’s actions; therefore in order to advance in their solution, people’s attitude and conduct in their daily lives need to change, not just the general public, but also us, conservation biologists. This implies being not only field or research conservationists but also becoming role models in our daily lives. Therefore, in order to be consistent with the ultimate goal of maintaining biodiversity, we need to self-assess our daily-life actions.

To assess the daily-life actions that conservation biologists take to contribute to biodiversity conservation, we conducted an online survey in which we asked questions about lifestyle, such as meat, dairy, and seafood consumption habits. This survey was sent to email lists from SCB, other societies, Universities, NGO’s, friends and family, and social networks. The results from our survey show that contrary to what one would expect from conservationists, most of us do not follow a sustainable lifestyle. This shows how inconsistent we can be with our actions in relation towards Nature conservation in general. If you would like to contribute to our study, please complete the survey: English version: <https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/LXRWCP7>; Spanish version: <https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/53CCQ3V>

### LACA Members Meeting at ICCB 2015



There were about 53 attendees. Rurik gave a presentation about LACA, introduced Board members, talked about ways to get involved with LACA, etc. Eduardo Ponce (Director of Chapters) talked about the importance of having Chapters within LACA, he also talked about the progress in creating Mexico Chapter, and invited members to create chapters. Then, each of the three LACA Professional Development Scholarship awardees gave a short presentation about their work they were presenting at the conference.

## 6 Social Networks

LACA's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/LACAsection>) and Twitter (@LACA\_SCB) platforms are used in addition to the mailing list for communication and exchange of important information and research ideas. Everyone is welcome to follow LACA.

### LACA 2016 Board of Directors

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