



THE QUARTERLY CATCH E-NEWSLETTER

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A Seasonal Message

The end of another year is upon us, and as we celebrate this holiday season, we take a few moments to reflect on the events of the past few months.

For us, here in Belize, the year has been marred by unrelenting economic challenges, weather-related misfortunes, and crime continues to be our most reprehensible quandary.

However, amid all the negative turmoil, the spirit and will of the Belizean people has remained stalwart. Through all these challenges, we have proven that we are resilient, determined and tenacious people. We have withstood the storm once again and proven that we have what it takes to build for our selves a country we can all be proud of.

At the BHSFU, we have faced our own challenges this year, but as we enter 2022, we renew our promise to you, our valued partners and stakeholders, to do our very best to continue to provide you with the most efficient services for the effective management of our high seas fisheries operations. Thank you for the trust and loyalty you have in us that have been developed over the years. We are convinced that you will journey with us into 2022.



Photo: Courtesy of Delice Pinkard

And now in the spirit of the season, let us reflect on Christmas as a time to look after each other and our community. The pandemic has caused so many loses to families and businesses, so let us reach out to the less fortunate during this holiday season. While we may not be able to fraternize and socialize as we normally would during this time, let us spare a thought for our friends, families, co-workers and especially those in the emergency and medical profession, our "front line workers" who may be working long and unsocial hours during these holidays. They are our unsung heroes and deserve our thoughts and prayers.

Our hearts goes out also to those that have lost loved ones this year, those battling Covid-19 and those experiencing difficulties of all types during this holiday season. Hope is in the year for 2022. We have much to be thankful for and much to hope for.

We extend sincere and warm wishes to all for a safe, healthy and peaceful holiday season, and a prosperous 2022.



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A Synopsis of ICCAT COM 2021

by: Robert Robinson- Deputy Director



The 27th Regular Meeting of ICCAT was held this year from 15-23 November under very different circumstances than ever seen before in the Commission. As the world adapted to doing business amid a pandemic so too did the Commission have to adapt as it migrated to a virtual setting. The

logistical and technical arrangements were onerous and difficult to navigate at times, but the Commission emerged at the end of the 9-days session with new Officers of the Commission as well as 20 new Recommendations and 4 new Resolutions. There was participation by Members of the Commission from all its geographic regions: the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia, which meant that some delegations had to start their days very early in the pre-dawn morning, while others worked very late into the night.

While some of these management measures were new initiatives to strengthen ICCAT's regulatory framework, much of them were simple rollovers of existing management measures to ensure the continuity of a management regime for ICCAT-regulated species. The adaptability of the Commission to hold virtual meetings was commendable, but these arrangements proved inadequate to bridge the gap between the divergent views expressed by the members of the Commission for the management of certain species. Bilateral consultations in the margins of the meeting and coffee-break discussions have proven to be instrumental in converging points of view. However, these were minimal due to the meeting arrangements and the Commission was forced to rollover several existing measures despite the availability of new scientific information.

Belize's participation in this year's Commission meeting was very active. There were several priority areas on its agenda which included a new management measure for tropical tunas, the conservation of sharks as well as the protection of sea turtles. Belize would have welcomed a new tropical tuna measure which was aligned with scientific advice and balanced in terms of its conservation efforts and fishing opportunities for developing states. Nonetheless, there was no consensus in this regard, so concessions were made to rollover the existing management measure.



This year's annual meeting will undoubtedly be etched in the annals of the Commission history, noting its successes, shortcomings, and the bloopers that provided some comedic relief during the intense negotiations. Nonetheless, the Commission remains steadfast and resolute in fulfilling its mandate as it looks to the future. This is evident in the Commission's ambitious meeting calendar for 2022 which has a schedule of 15 Commission meetings and 16 meetings for the Scientific Committee. While most of these meetings are scheduled to be online, the Commission remains optimistic that it will have the opportunity to convene at least a few physical meetings in the coming year.



That the mistletoe is an aphrodisiac.

DID YOU KNOW?

The holiday decoration isn't just pretty. It is also an ancient symbol of fertility and virility - and the Druids considered it an aphrodisiac. So the next time someone cracks a joke about meeting you under the mistletoe, consider yourself warned.

The Blue Bonds, Belize Paving the way for Ocean Conservation

By: Delice Pinkard- Senior Fisheries Officer

As a small island developing State (SIDS), Belize like so many others have been burdened by the effects of the pandemic and has now reached an almost catastrophic point of severe economic fiscal debt that has left the government with no other alternative but to seek innovative measures to improve the country's dire financial situation. With the restructuring of the country's debt, more specifically the looming "Super Bond", a bond which was initially created in 2007 between Belize and primarily the Bolivian Republic of Venezuela bondholders. Belize was able to cut US\$250 million from its principal external debt by accessing financial alleviation through a subsidiary of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as part of the 'Blue Bonds' for Ocean Conservation Program.

What exactly will this handsome 'Blue Bond' entail? Well, for the most part the country will expand its biodiversity protection zones to 30% of Belize's waters, provide conservation grants through a new conservation endowment fund, provide a pathway for defining the priorities for conservation through the Marine Spatial Planning Process, managing the conservation fund where investments can best support Belize's biodiversity, inter alia. As the Prime Minister, Honorable John Briceno stated, "the transaction will pave the way for strong and long-lasting economic growth and allow Belize to achieve its marine conservation objectives". When this Blue Bond is realized in Belize, our country will be the second recorded nation globally to benefit from such an arrangement. In 2012, testing of a Blue Bond prototype took place and in 2018, Seychelles became the first country to sign onto the first ever Blue Bond Program. This country is now on its way to protecting 154,000 square miles of its ocean habitat. With this Blue Bond for Ocean Conservation, Belize will be afforded the opportunity to exculpate its debts and the savings will go into a trust fund for marine conservation to benefit the country's economy.

The BHSFU applauds the government for this outstanding initiative. We are delighted to know that this deal was accomplished in the best interest of conservation while leading the way in innovative "debt-for-nature" swaps. Congratulations Belize.

DID YOU KNOW?

St. Nick was more generous than jolly

You probably already knew that the idea of Santa Clause came from St. Nicholas. The saint wasn't a bearded man who wore a red suit; that tradition came much later. In the 4th century, the Christian bishop gave away his large inheritance to the poor and rescued women from servitude. In Dutch his name is Sinter Klaas, which later morphed into Santa Claus in English

Electronic Monitoring Systems - An Innovative Method for At-Sea Monitoring

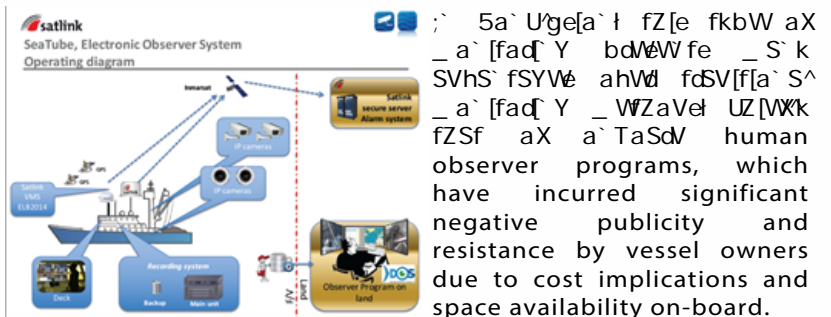
By: Ian Constantino- Monitoring Officer

Successful fisheries management is predicated primarily upon the collection of data from ALL fishing activities. Given the recent technological and electronic advancements of the century, this is most popularly accomplished using a process known as electronic monitoring. A multi varied; multi-faceted methodology, utilized to collect at-sea data during a fishing voyage. This is realized, through the installation of devices that assess: the number of fish caught, the fishing effort (days/hours spent fishing), and by-catches, inter-alia. The records of which are processed and undergo critical assessment and interpretation for further analytical application, usually with regards to stock assessment, quota allocations, and access to certain markets.

Many fisheries managements institutions across the world have begun to implement EMS on-board their fishing fleet making it possible for them and RFMOs to have raw and transparent data available that reflect catches in the millions of tons and incurring profits into the billions of dollars.

While there is no standardized system that has been established or mandated by RFMOs, the set up universally consists of on-board cameras recording live footage as crew members haul in catches and carry out other fishing activities. The footage of which is stored in a hard drive, that has also been installed on-board, principally for purposes of later analysis by authorized fisheries managements ashore.

<http://www.franciscoblaha.info/blog/2016/3/23/cud5ifuynu0cuwxk3wa9v0s1lz3ch>



Comparatively, electronic monitoring has proven itself to be an efficient and cost-effective alternative to human observers.

Season's Greetings

From our homes to yours



"It is the time to forget all your problems, leave behind all your stresses and have a wonderful time with your friends and family. Wishing you all the joy of the season and prosperity in the coming year. Thank you for being such an important part of what we do." Valarie Lanza - Director of High Seas Fisheries

*"For unto us is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11)
May the Christmas season fill your homes with joy, your heart with love and your life with laughter. Here's wishing you and your families an extra measure of comfort, joy and hope this Christmas to last throughout the New Year!
Robert Robinson - Deputy Director*



"Christmas is most truly Christmas when we celebrate it by giving the light of love to those who need it the most. Wishing you and your family peace, health and happiness throughout this very special season and a Happy New Year!" Delice Pinkard - Senior Fisheries Officer



*"Warmest greetings of this festive season and best wishes for happiness in the new year."
Ernie Howe - Fisheries Officer*



"Keep a warm heart and spread the joy around you. Merry Christmas from my family to yours." Ian Constantino - Monitoring Officer