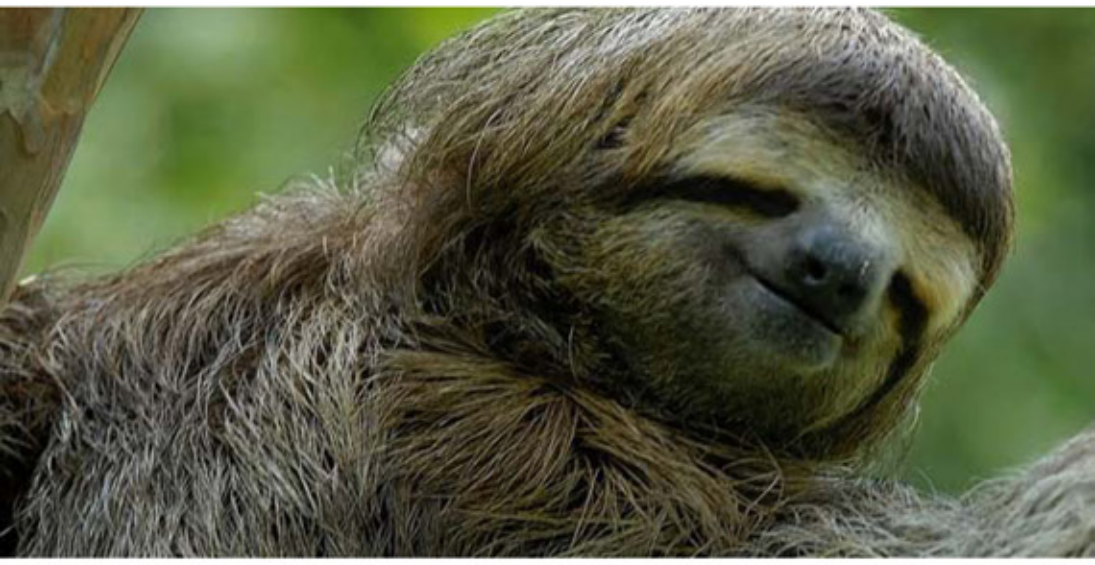
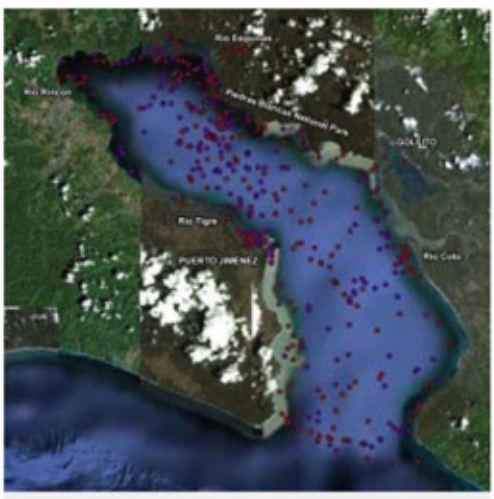


News + Stories

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, FRIENDS OF THE OSA, OSA PENINSULA, WILDLIFE
OSA PENINSULA

Osa Conservation Supports Research in Golfo Dulce: Two Seasonal Marine Surveys

February 9, 2012 | By Brooke Bessesen



Mapping our sighting points from both surveys (Red = dry season, 2010; Purple = rainy season, 2011) shows high-use areas for marine fauna inside the gulf, especially near Puerto Jimenez, the upper coastline of Piedras Blancas National Park and the large river outlets.

As one of only four tropical fiords in the world, the Golfo Dulce is worthy of both exploration and preservation. Much like its terrestrial counterpart, the surrounding Osa Peninsula, the unique oceanic inlet supports an abundance of critical wildlife. Despite this diversity scientific publications about the gulf's extensive marine life remain limited. So when a proposed tuna farm near the mouth of the gulf gained footing in 2009, I proposed a research project to Osa Conservation to collect baseline data about what marine species utilize the embayment and which areas they frequent.

In 2010 and 2011, with vital support from Osa community members and funding from a Greg Gund Memorial Fellowship, two multi-species sighting surveys were conducted in the Golfo Dulce from a small boat — one during the dry season, and another in the rainy season. I was the principal investigator, but the work could not have been done without the expertise of research assistant and boat captain Jorge Largaespada. Jorge has almost 40 years of experience living in the Osa and working and fishing in the Golfo Dulce. He is a masterful guide on land and by sea and can spot wildlife, especially dolphins, from an astonishing distance.

Throughout both surveys, Jorge and I logged a total of 424 systematic observation hours during 55 days on the water. We recorded 458 sightings for over 38 species of fauna, and our study revealed some interesting things.* What were the highlights? Well, here we begin a blog series to help distill some of our most important findings. In the coming posts I will cover a variety of species from whales and dolphins to sea turtles and sea snakes, and share a few photos along the way. I hope you enjoy this peek at some of the amazing wildlife we observed in the Golfo Dulce.

By Brooke Bessesen

*Should you prefer to read a more detailed account of our study, there are two papers available on the website of Osa Conservation: Project Report and Summary of Multi-Species Marine Sighting Survey in Golfo Dulce, Costa Rica, January–February 2010 and the Rainy Season Extension of The Multi-Species Marine Sighting Survey in Golfo Dulce, Costa Rica, July–August 2011.

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