

# MEXICO FIELD PROGRAM

EPI Mexico inspired local youth and teachers through multi-day field ecology and conservation programs in Baja California Sur. **Prior to COVID-19, EPI Mexico safely delivered 11 immersive courses for 176 local youth and teachers.**

Participants engaged in sea turtle monitoring and protection, biodiversity surveys in the Gulf of California and Sierra Cacachila mountains, urban ecology studies in La Paz focused on regional water issues, and conservation service through beach clean-ups.

In a new model aligned with the Mexican Educational System, EPI Mexico worked with fewer schools, but with each over a longer time, providing students with deeper development of environmental literacy, scientific competency, and social and emotional skills.



## FIELD PROGRAMS AT-A-GLANCE



132 LOCAL YOUTH  
44 LOCAL EDUCATORS  
2,030 RESEARCH & SERVICE HOURS

"I have learned that I am good at valuing the conservation of the environment and talking about issues like climate change with others. I am capable of doing great things for my community and for future generations."

-David, La Paz, Baja California Sur

## CONSERVATION RESEARCH

### Marine & Desert Biodiversity Surveys

For four years, EPI Mexico students have conducted snorkel surveys around the Espíritu Santo archipelago to monitor the diversity of endangered and economically important invertebrates. This year, students also surveyed for outbreaks of the coral-eating sea star, *Acanthaster planci*, in the Gulf of California.

In the Sierra Cacachila mountains, students partnered with researchers from the San Diego Natural History Museum to conduct reptile and amphibian diversity studies, and examined their adaptations for the harsh desert environment.



LOCAL STUDENTS IDENTIFY MARINE INVERTEBRATES IN THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA

### Sea Turtle Monitoring and Protection

EPI Mexico students and alumni joined night patrols for nesting olive ridley sea turtles, and assisted with relocating threatened nests in collaboration with Grupo Tortugero.



## DONORS

Alumbra Innovations Foundation  
Catena Foundation  
Paul M. Angell Foundation  
The Builders Initiative  
International Community Foundation

## PARTNERS

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Enseña por México  
Grupo Tortugero de las Californias  
Perlas de Cortez  
Ponguinguola, A.C.  
Red de Turismo Sustentable

San Diego Natural History Museum  
Sociedad de Historia Natural Niparáj  
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur - Ciencias del Agua Urbaneria

# ALUMNI & OUTREACH

Through the work of our dedicated Alumni & Outreach Coordinator, EPI Mexico provided alumni with progressive leadership opportunities for professional development and conservation projects in their own communities. In 2020, despite COVID-19, EPI Mexico safely involved more than 500 alumni participants and more than 3,500 community members via workshops, field trips, eco-rallies, presentations, beach clean-ups, and virtual Californios Verdes Eco Club meetings.

## ALUMNI AT-A-GLANCE



35 ECO CLUB MEETINGS  
149 ALUMNI LEADERS  
3,656 COMMUNITY MEMBERS INVOLVED

## ACTIVITIES

### Protecting Water Resources and Growing Leaders

Baja California Sur is the driest state in Mexico, with less than ten inches of rain per year. In La Paz, water shortages exist due to a rapidly increasing population and aquifer overexploitation, and deforestation in the Sierra Mountains has reduced the aquifer's ability to recharge. EPI Mexico's alumni and outreach programs have increasingly focused on this critical local conservation issue.

EPI Mexico offered twelve internships for alumni in Water Science and Environmental Education Leadership, including five international scholarships to the Teton Science School (on hold due to the pandemic). Eight alumni were also trained as leaders for sea turtle monitoring field trips with Grupo Tortuguero. And in collaboration with three other nonprofits, Californios Verdes Eco Club members obtained six trainings and workshops in subjects ranging from mangrove forests to dune ecology—further developing their cooperative leadership, science, and communication skills.

EPI Mexico alumni in the California Verdes Eco Club also designed their own conservation projects in their communities, with the guidance of the Alumni & Outreach Coordinator, Carolina Navarro. These projects included public talks on sea turtle conservation and facilitation of a beach clean-up at the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Balandra Beach as a Natural Protected Area.



## COVID-19

Like so many in the global community, EPI faced uncharted waters due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Due to the virus, EPI was forced to cancel most of our more than 100 planned field science courses for 2020. In April, we reduced staff by 60%, but retained core staff who strategically adapted all aspects of programming for the safety of our students and communities. Our Board of Directors and Executive and Development teams continue to work hard to harness our 20 years of education experience and strategically pivot within our mission of inspiring and empowering youth through immersive experiences with nature and science. We are incredibly grateful to our funders, most of whom have allowed funding to be unrestricted so that EPI can forge a path through and beyond the pandemic.



EPI MEXICO ALUMNI LED SEA TURTLE MONITORING TRIPS AND ASSISTED IN THE RELEASE OF MORE THAN 11,000 SEA TURTLE HATCHLINGS

## NEW & NOTABLE

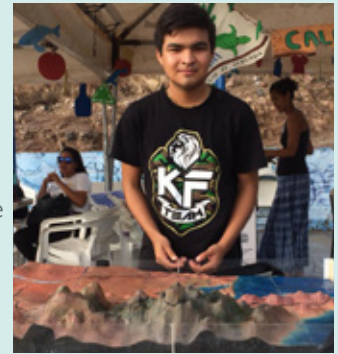


### Whale Shark Ambassador Scholarships

Three students from EPI Mexico's Californios Verdes Eco Club were awarded the title of "Whale Shark Ambassador" by Red Turismo Sustentable A.C. These EPI alumni received scholarships for training and support in order to promote community awareness of the importance of whale sharks in La Paz Bay.

### Water Workshop Internships

Through EPI Mexico's internship program, seven alumni studying Water Science at Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur were trained in EPI's educational model. These alumni helped facilitate 10 water workshops with high schools and public education events in La Paz, reaching more than 1,100 youth and community members.



### Alumni Leadership at Balandra Beach Anniversary

Fourteen Californios Verdes Eco Club members led a beach clean-up during the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Balandra Beach as a Natural Protected Area. Forty EPI alumni, teachers, partners, and community members participated to celebrate Balandra and to generate data about the solid waste at this protected beach.

### Young Scientific Society - Baja California Sur Chapter

EPI Mexico supported the creation of the newest chapter of the Young Scientific Society in Mexico. These students are dedicated to creating and sharing science communication with their peers, meeting weekly at EPI's space to coordinate activities.