

**JAVIER ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ LEIJA (XX), Mexico**



***Alex (centre) and colleagues on patrol***

Oceanologist Javier Alejandro Gonzalez Leija has dedicated his life to the care of the only living coral reef in the Gulf of California.

As Director of Cabo Pulmo National Park in Mexico, Alejandro works every day to maintain marine biodiversity in the Park.

He points out that a fundamental part of this process is obtaining community support. “Proper management of resources in the Park helps improve the local community’s quality of life,” he says. “My biggest contribution so far is that the community perceives us as allies.”

By listening to all stakeholders, Alejandro has streamlined conservation agreements at federal, state, and municipal levels, and has strengthened partnerships with NGOs as well as with local leaders.

An important result was to reinforce the ‘no-fishing zone’ character of the Park. His other achievements include increasing his staff from two to seven in 18 months making it possible to conduct several new studies in the Park and improve monitoring.

His dedication is best summed up in his own words: “I think I’m here because I was given the opportunity and responsibility to care for a significant portion of our world.”