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VIVA LA TORTUGA!

Newsletter of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project of Turtle Island Restoration Network

Issue No. 2, 2010

LEADING THE FIGHT TO SAVE SEA TURTLES FROM THE BP OIL SPILL WE STOPPED BP BURNING ENDANGERED SEA TURTLES!



Dr. Chris Pincetich and veterinarian Dr. Brian Stacy aboard a Gulf rescue boat examine a young Kemp's ridley sea turtle.

The tragic BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico triggered a rapid response from Sea Turtle Restoration Project staff, supporters, and advisors. With their help, STRP undertook successful legal actions, engaged our community in massive advocacy campaigns, and began scientific documentation that gained international recognition through the media.

Our efforts to save endangered sea turtles from the toxic oil and deadly cleanup operations resulted in unprecedented growth in our network of committed partners, collaborators, members and contacts in the Gulf. Members from across the nation stepped up to help with resources and emergency contributions!

Within hours of hearing firsthand accounts that sea turtles were being burned alive and fishermen blocked from rescuing them, we mobilized a campaign that halted BP's horrifying "controlled burns" of oil, dramatically increased sea turtle rescue from the oil, and demanded all oil cleanup operations be made safe for sea turtles. Hundreds of thousands of activists emailed BP and, when we filed legal action against Unified Command and BP, they halted the burns and agreed to our demands that sea turtle rescue protocols be developed before burn operations continued.

Dr. Wallace 'J' Nichols, a prominent sea turtle biologist and STRP board member, joined STRP campaigner Dr. Chris Pincetich in the Gulf in June to multiply sea turtle rescue efforts. Though they were originally approved by the federal government to participate in on-the-water sea turtle rescue,

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Photo © Steven Stones

Kemp's ridley hatchlings head for the surf at Padre Island National Seashore, Texas.

THE KEMP'S RIDLEY: FORGOTTEN BY BIG OIL

The Gulf of Mexico is the Kemp's ridley sea turtle's primary habitat, but the species was largely forgotten in oil spill cleanup efforts. Though nesting beaches weren't oiled, Louisiana foraging grounds and the sargassum seaweed hatchlings rely on were fouled. After the oil spill, 400 Kemp's ridleys were killed by the shrimp industry, which was allowed an emergency rush season just after the spill. The government didn't move Kemp's ridley hatchlings or protect nesters. Female adult nesters were tracked foraging along the upper Gulf coast where the oil lay thick. Ten thousand hatchlings released in Texas were probably caught up in currents and taken into oiled areas. STRP will be working to protect the Kemp's throughout their lifecycle in the months and years ahead!

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STRP's campaign stopped BP's "controlled burns" which were killing sea turtles, and dramatically increased sea turtle rescue from the oil.

FROM THE DIRECTOR:



Sinkey Boone

THE LEGACY OF SINKEY BOONE

Sinkey Boone was born into a shrimp fishing family. He, his daddy and his brothers were all shrimpers, and some of his sons and grandsons are still shrimpers. And the Boone women have always been equally engaged in the family business, running the Boone docks in Darien, Georgia, where the shrimp was readied for sale and distributed around the country.

But Sinkey was also a welder, a net-maker, a generous purveyor of folk wisdom and an inventor. And one of his inventions saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of sea turtles and helped the sea turtle and shrimp fishing communities better understand each other's motivations and needs.

Sinkey is rightfully credited with inventing a turtle excluder device (TED) that shrimpers were willing to accept. Called the "Georgia Jumper," it was a modification of his earlier version called the "Jelly-ball Excluder," which kept "cannonball" jellyfish from clogging shrimp nets and damaging the target catch of shrimp. He liked to call it a "trawling efficiency device" because it helped reduce unwanted catch of many species besides sea turtles, and he thought it would make it more acceptable to other shrimpers.

Sinkey's Georgia Jumper was also an alternative to the government-created big, clumsy and boxy TED that shrimpers rejected as dangerous and unworkable. Sinkey's TED resembled a giant barbecue grill, an oval-shaped grid that allowed shrimp to pass into the far end of the net and directed turtles and other unwanted "bycatch" out an exit flap. It became the acceptable standard for most shrimpers.

While Sinkey had an economic interest in promoting his invention, his concern for sea turtles, the shrimping community and the oceans was his strongest motivation. He opened his home, his boat and his heart to promote understanding between environmentalists, shrimpers and the public, working closely with the Sea Turtle Restoration Project to promote TED use worldwide. He welcomed fishery technicians from Mexico and Central America into his home and shop; traveled with us to Mexico and Costa Rica to meet with local shrimpers; and attended many of the annual Sea Turtle Symposiums to promote understanding. He built a half-size shrimp net complete with TED for the Monterey Bay Aquarium's "Fishing for Solutions" exhibit, and helped arrange interviews for a STRP-United Nations TED video which was translated into several languages and distributed around the world. Sinkey and his family also helped promote STRP's groundbreaking Turtle-Safe® Shrimp Certification Program of the 1990s.

All in all, Sinkey's contribution to sea turtles, the oceans and a better understanding between environmentalists and shrimpers were monumental and effective. His recent passing is a loss for the Earth.

¡Viva la Tortuga!

Todd Steiner

Visit our Web Site: www.SeaTurtles.org

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LEADING THE FIGHT

after their arrival (which coincided with the successful legal action against BP) Unified Command rescinded their permissions. So they teamed with local scientists, activists, and STRP members in the Gulf to document the deadly conditions for sea turtles. Within weeks sea turtle rescue teams doubled, then tripled, and continued to grow through August.

The recovery of the world's most endangered sea turtle, the Kemp's ridley, now faces a serious setback due to BP's failure to protect nesting females and hatchlings released into the oil spill. Over two hundred million gallons of oil and unknown amounts of toxic dispersant are believed to be trapped underwater in polluted plumes that threaten sea turtles and their habitat. Experts agree the impact of the BP spill to Gulf sea turtles and their ecosystem will take many years to fully understand. STRP, with the help of supporters, will continue to fight to save endangered sea turtles in the Gulf until every last drop of BP oil is cleaned and sea turtle populations rebound and thrive.



In late August, Louisiana marshes were still coated in oil and littered with failing booms.

SEA TURTLES AND THE FOSSIL FUEL FRENZY

BIG OIL ASSAULTING SEA TURTLES AROUND THE GLOBE

Along the Texas coast, Kemp's ridleys were expected to return in record numbers before the BP oil spill. Instead, far few nesters returned, and those that did swam into toxic waters where the season's hatchlings also headed into an uncertain destiny.

While oil gushed into the Gulf, Chevron began an assault on Australia's sea turtle country, which STRP exposed in the Chevron Alternative Annual Report (downloadable at www.seaturtles.org/chevronreport). In the Kimberley region in remote Northwest Australia, Chevron is building the Gorgon natural gas plant on top of an Australian flatback sea turtle nesting beach and plans to construct another plant in the turtle's feeding habitat. In protest, STRP staff, disguised as sea turtles, marched with international activists on Chevron's shareholder meeting in Houston carrying huge signs that read: "Dear Chevron, thanks for destroying vital sea turtle habitat."

In a Big Oil blunder similar to the BP oil spill, flatback sea turtles had



Photo © Glenn McFarland

Natural gas development in the Kimberley region of Australia is severely threatening sea turtle nesting and feeding habitat.

already been dumped on when the Montara oil rig off the Kimberley coast poured nine million gallons of oil into the sea before exploding and burning down in late 2009.

Despite the impacts of fossil fuel development on marine wildlife and their contribution to climate change, the U.S. government still rewarded ExxonMobil \$3 billion in financing from the tax-payer funded Import-Export Bank to build a massive natural gas project in Papua New Guinea. The pipeline will cut through sea turtle feeding areas, dugong seagrass habitat and coral reefs and rip apart mangrove, rainforest and human communities. STRP has filed a lawsuit to halt this project due to its environmental harm.

In the meantime, fossil fuel frenzy continues. Together we must end it. The sea turtles are depending on us.



STRP's Teri Shore protests with international activists at Chevron's shareholder meeting in Houston in May.



Eco-Beach resort volunteers help monitor and record nesting in pristine Australian flatback sea turtle habitat.

"MEET THE AUSTRALIAN FLATBACK" ECO-TOUR

Join our 'Meet the Flatback' Eco-Tour in the spectacular Kimberley region of Western Australia, December 6 to 13, 2010. We'll stay at the safari-style but luxurious Eco-Beach resort on the shockingly blue Indian Ocean and spend our nights monitoring the mysterious Australian flatback sea turtle that nests here. Early this year, STRP Program Director Teri Shore helped dig up old nests and count how many eggs had hatched. Few people visit this wild and sacred red rock country, but now a wave of industrial and coastal development threatens its future. We need to let the world know these sea turtles need protection before it is too late. See it now with STRP. Contact Teri, tshore@tirn.net for details. View the country on the ABC News clip and learn more at www.SeaTurtles.org/flatbacktour.

WHOLE FOODS BANKROLLS ECO-LABELING OF TURTLE-DEADLY LONGLINE FISHERY

STRP OPPOSES SUSTAINABLE CERTIFICATION OF HIGH-BY-CATCH TUNA AND SWORDFISH

Whole Foods appears to be bankrolling an attempt to greenwash Florida's deadly longline fleets with an eco-label by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), so it can call the fish environmentally safe and charge more for this expensive mercury-laden

swordfish and sushi-grade tuna. Giving the seal of sustainability to a fishery that kills and injures sea turtles and marine mammals would set a dangerous precedent and allow other destructive fisheries to be deemed "ocean friendly".

The longline fishery operates offshore of Florida in ocean waters that provide migration, foraging, and breeding habitat for six species of sea turtles protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Over the past seven years, 631 leatherbacks and 506 loggerheads were hooked in the fishery. Florida's loggerheads will soon be uplisted to endangered, due in part to accidental capture on longlines.

STRP Program Director Teri Shore discovered Whole Foods' interest in the eco-certification during a stakeholder meeting when longline fishers said they couldn't afford the six-figure MSC process without Whole Foods. MSC, a nonprofit based in London, England, was established to reward responsible fisheries with its eco-label, but has begun to certify overfished and declining fisheries. Fisheries scientists recently criticized the MSC in an article in the journal *Nature*, saying it "has turned against biology in favor of bureaucracy."

STRP has already generated opposition to the Florida longline fishery eco-labeling from over 2,800 sea turtle advocates and 17 ocean organizations. Together, we will tell the true story of sea turtle decline and death on longline hooks and halt this seafood greenwashing.



Any life in the path of these shrimp nets will be trapped, dragged, bruised, or drowned, then discarded overboard.

THE BYCATCH EPIDEMIC

By Chris Pincetich, PhD,
STRP Campaigner

Most of our seafood comes at a high cost: the lives of endangered sea turtles. During my recent expedition to the Gulf, I rode along undercover with a Louisiana shrimp fisherman and saw for myself the horrific levels of bycatch. Thousands of juvenile fish and dozens of beautiful rays, crabs and cuttlefish were dumped onto the deck bruised and dying. This skimmer boat was a fraction of the size of the huge trawlers that scour the Gulf, or the immense factory trawlers pillaging the high seas. Deadly bottom trawls and longline vessels catch, injure or kill thousands of innocent sea turtles each year. We can reduce these senseless slaughters each time we choose not to eat the deadly trio of seafood: swordfish, tuna and shrimp.



Photo © www.PRETOMA.org

Longliner fishers set millions of hooks like these into the ocean, killing sea turtles and other marine life as bycatch.

Photo © courtesy of NOAA





Got Mercury's investigation found that 20 percent of tuna sushi contained high amounts of mercury.

SWORDFISH AND TUNA: UNSAFE FOR THE PLATE

The Got Mercury Campaign recently initiated Operation Safe Seafood, a nationwide, volunteer-driven effort to test the mercury levels of supermarket swordfish and tuna.

Volunteers have been purchasing samples from grocery stores and shipping them to an accredited laboratory where each sample is analyzed for mercury content.

The results have been alarming. In the San Francisco Bay Area, over 40 percent of the swordfish and tuna in the study contained mercury levels well above the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) guideline of 1 part per million. Similar results were found in the Los Angeles Basin area, with nearly one-third of the samples over the FDA limit.

Dangerously high levels of mercury are not just a problem on the West Coast. A study of supermarket swordfish and tuna in the state of Iowa found 30

percent contained levels of mercury that exceeded government guidelines. One sample of swordfish registered 300 percent over the limit.

Unfortunately, the government has failed to protect unsuspecting fish eaters from mercury, and still allows seafood exceeding the limit to be sold without adequate warnings or labeling. Grocery stores and restaurants that sell high-mercury fish are not required to notify customers of mercury content.

The FDA has admitted it tests less than 1 percent of the seafood sold in the U.S. for mercury.

It is clear from the results that swordfish and tuna are unsafe for the plate and should not be eaten, especially by women and children.

For more information and to calculate the mercury in the seafood you eat, please visit www.gotmercury.org.

SETTING A HIGH BAR FOR CALIFORNIA'S FISHERIES

STRP Program Director Teri Shore is pushing for zero bycatch of sea turtles and marine life, no mercury or toxic contamination, and low carbon footprint as key components in new sustainability standards for California fisheries. Appointed to the Sustainable Seafood Advisory Panel earlier this year by the California Ocean Protection Council, Teri is collaborating with fishers, seafood purveyors, regulators and academics to develop strong standards for a voluntary seafood certification program that is expected to roll out in 2011. Commercial fisheries that qualify could earn a California eco-label identifying the fish species and landing port. Sardines, crab and sea urchins may make the cut, but fish caught on longlines that harm sea turtles or that are high in mercury must be excluded. "California can lead the way to truly ocean-friendly fisheries," said Teri. "My job is to make sure that protection of ocean wildlife and people's health comes first."



Photo © Photo courtesy of

Fish caught on longlines that harm sea turtles should not be labeled as 'sustainably harvested'.

HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

This holiday season, choose from a variety of sea turtle-themed gifts for your loved ones, and help support STRP's work to save endangered sea turtles and other marine wildlife. At our Sea Turtle Store, you can purchase T-shirts, hats, tote bags, jewelry, books and fine art, all featuring sea turtles! Our STRP T-shirts, hats and totes are all 100% organic cotton and made in the USA.

All net proceeds of sales will benefit STRP. Some of our items have been donated to us by dedicated supporters and so virtually all of the proceeds from those items go directly to fund our programs. These include our beautiful carved onyx sea turtles and our recycled poly tote bags. Go to www.SeaTurtles.org and Click on "Shop" to view and purchase all of our sale items online, or call 1-800-859-SAVE.

You may also send us this form along with a check in the enclosed reply envelope to purchase the following items:



Sea Turtle Restoration Project - Gift Order Form

Name:	Gift Name:
Address:	Gift Address:

		Price	Qty	Total
STRP T-Shirt	Men's L ___ Men's XL___ Women's L___	\$28		
Turtle Island Hat	Black _____ Khaki _____	\$20		
Carved Onyx Turtle*		\$22		
Canvas Tote Bag		\$16		
Poly Tote Bag*		\$12		
Pewter Pendant		\$17		
Total				

*Not pictured here

All prices include shipping and handling.

LEAVE A LEGACY FOR THE SEA TURTLES

Through a bequest to the Sea Turtle Restoration Project in your will and other estate plans, you can leave a legacy for sea turtles.

Visit www.SeaTurtles.org/bequests or call 1-800-859-SAVE for information on including a bequest to STRP in your will, adding a simple codicil to your existing will, and other ways to give through your estate. All information discussed is confidential.

A professional financial advisor may be able to help you identify additional ways to provide you with tax benefits, as well as help protect the earth's oceans and wildlife. Thank you for considering this important way to give.

STRP SUPPORTER MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

LORI WYNN

In August STRP held an Art Show and Benefit Auction event that raised over \$4,000 to benefit the sea turtles threatened by the Gulf oil disaster.

While a dozen volunteers and 52 artists who donated work or exhibited at the show helped make the event possible, one woman was the quiet, driving force behind it – Lori Wynn.

Lori is an accomplished graphic designer and a founding partner of Deutsch Design Works, which hosted the event. Lori has worked with her business partner Barry Deutsch to create logos and materials for the organization.

When STRP contacted Lori, we had found one of our most dedicated volunteers. In addition to her demanding job, Lori contacted

artists, designed promotional materials and contributed countless ideas.

“I just made myself available to do what I could,” Lori says. “I have always felt an appreciation of the interconnection between all beings on the earth. Working with TIRN informed me of the plight of sea turtles, and I was very happy to have a chance to help them.”

Lori is looking forward to helping the event reach a wider audience in future years. “My favorite part of the event was working with people who are passionate for the arts, for protecting sea turtles, and helping with the Gulf of Mexico oil spill disaster. I am rejuvenated by the feeling of bringing people together for a common and meaningful goal.” Thank you, Lori Wynn!



Graphics created by Lori Wynn and Deutsch Design Works

A number of pieces of artwork are available for sale and auction at www.seaturtles.org/art. Please visit and bid on your favorites! To learn how to coordinate an art auction in your own community to help sea turtles, email us at

info@SeaTurtles.org



Photo © Doug Perrine / SeaPics.com

BE A STAR FOR SEA TURTLES!

By making an affordable donation each month, our Sea Turtle Action Response (STARs) members provide urgently needed help to sea turtles.

Join now as a STARs member at just \$8 a month, or upgrade to this level, and you'll receive a free "Sustainability Pack" including:

- An attractive, heavy-duty 'Bag the Plastics' canvas tote
- A high quality, BPA-free water bottle donated to STRP by Patagonia.
- A cute STRP t-shirt tote created by a dedicated volunteer!

Just go online to www.SeaTurtles.org/STARs or call us at 1-800-859-SAVE to join with your credit card. You can change or stop your gift at any time.

RAFFLE ANNOUNCEMENT: WIN A TRIP FOR TWO ON A COCOS ISLAND SCUBA DIVING SEA TURTLE & SHARK RESEARCH TAGGING EXPEDITION!

Cocos Island National Park, Costa Rica, is one of the premiere scuba diving spots in the world. And the STRP Cocos Island Raffle is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to win a dive trip for two to the Islands, March 13-23, 2011. For only \$145, each raffle ticket gives you the chance to win a trip for two (worth \$5,640 per person) plus \$2,000 to assist with travel expenses.

Total value of the prize is \$13,280! The trip is for experienced divers only.

To purchase a ticket contact us at:

800-859-SAVE ext 101 or visit www.SeaTurtles.org/raffle

Hurry! The winning ticket will be drawn on November 21, 2010.

All proceeds from raffle ticket sales go directly to support our sea turtle conservation work in Costa Rica and around the world.



Photo © George Duffield



Sea Turtle Saturday in San Francisco

STRP invites our SF Bay Area supporters to join us for a day of fun and learning about sea turtles and the marine environment at the Aquarium of the Bay on Pier 39.

November 6, 2010 from noon until 4 pm.
Premiere documentary film screening at 2 pm!

- Premiere screening of STRP's new documentary about sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Sea turtle talks, children's games and activities.
- Free tastings courtesy of Turtle Mountain Frozen Desserts!
- Free admission to the Aquarium of the Bay with ticket purchase
- Adults \$12; Children under 16 \$4; Family of four \$30.
- Sea Turtle Saturday tickets offer up to 50% discounts off regular aquarium admission – our special gift to thank our STRP supporters!

To purchase tickets, go to www.SeaTurtles.org/STsaturday or call STRP at 1-800-859-SAVE ext. 101

www.SeaTurtles.org



SAVE THEM ALL

About the Sea Turtle Restoration Project

The Sea Turtle Restoration Project is a project of Turtle Island Restoration Network, a nonprofit organization. The STRP works to protect sea turtle populations in ways that meet the ecological needs of sea turtles and the needs of the local communities who share the beaches and waters with these endangered species.

We use a multi-faceted approach which includes grassroots action, multi-media campaigns, hands-on conservation projects, environmental action and litigation. We rely on tax-deductible donations from individuals, private foundations, and progressive companies, as well as the pro bono services of numerous supporters. We are grateful for our contributors' help and support, and welcome your input and assistance.

Board of Directors: Todd Steiner, President; Carole Allen, Randall Arauz, Andy Harris, Donna Howe, Steve Katz, Rick Misuraca, Wallace J. Nichols, Susan Sakmar, Debbie Sivas.

Staff: Todd Steiner, Director; Carole Allen, Randall Arauz, Erica Heimberg, Buffy Martin-Tarbox, Maeve Murphy, Chris Pincetich, Madeline Rose, Teri Shore, Chris Van Shaack.

Scientific Advisory Board: Larry Crowder, Scott Eckert, Myra Finklestein, David Hyrenbach, Bill Loftus, John McCosker, Peter Meylan, David Owens, Pam Plotkin, Peter Pritchard

Legal Team: Paul Achitoff (Earthjustice), Brendan Cummings (Center for Biological Diversity), John Hughes (Townsend, Townsend and Crew), Mark Pollock (Mark Pollock Law Offices), Susan Sakmar (University of San Francisco), Deborah Sivas (Stanford Law School)

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