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NEWSLETTER OF THE SEA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT OF TURTLE ISLAND RESTORATION NETWORK SEATURTLES.ORG

Remembering STRP's First Victory—Closing a Sea Turtle Slaughterhouse Forever

LETTER FROM TODD STEINER, STRP'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WHEN I ATTENDED this year's International Sea Turtle Symposium that was held along the Oaxacan coast of Mexico, it gave me an opportunity to revisit the site of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project's first victory—the former sea turtle slaughterhouse site where more than 50,000 sea turtles were killed annually before members and activists helped us close it down forever in 1990.

I first visited this area about 25 years ago after discovering that tags we were attaching to sea turtles in Nicaragua were being found in high numbers in this area off Mexico's Pacific coast. Armed with a household video camera, with our one-year-old son in a backpack carrier, my

wife and I pretended to be lost tourists. We snuck into the infamous slaughterhouse, filmed its horrifying activities, and then helped lead an international campaign that closed it and ended the legal harvesting of sea turtles in Mexico.

What I found on this recent visit was heart-warming—a beautiful beach full of family-owned restaurants offering cold *cerveza* (beer) and the aroma of fresh seafood cooking, instead of a blood-stained beach and a putrid stench that could be smelled from a mile away. The horrifying mountain of sea turtle shells that once stood there as a testament to the massacre is now gone.

The same type of skiff that once harvested thousands of turtles for turtle-leather used to make purses and shoes in Japan now takes tourists on eco-tours to see sea turtles and dolphins frolicking in the surf. And just over the hill, in the town of Mazunte, a

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The shutdown of sea turtle slaughterhouses in Mexico has helped to advance the recovery of olive ridleys and shift the economy to local tourism.



Members are Critical to Our Campaigns!

The Sea Turtle Restoration Project has saved thousands of sea turtles and other marine species through advocacy campaigns made possible by the support of STRP members like you! Our dedicated campaigners have limited wasteful fishing, protected crucial sea turtle habitat, and established Endangered Species Protections for sea turtles and much more. Contributions help us keep the pressure on decision makers! Please make a special gift today using the envelope enclosed with this newsletter, or online at www.SeaTurtles.org. Thank you for your kindness!



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Letter from the Director *continued from cover*

turtle aquarium celebrates the diversity of Mexico's turtle species.

This aquarium grew out of an idea I presented to the Mexican government to create a community-based "grass-roots-up" economic alternative to turtle hunting. The project brought a bit of prosperity to the town, which now has electricity, a new road, and a continuous flow of tourist dollars.

Even more inspiring was visiting Escobilla, the mass nesting "arribada" beach, once the source of olive ridley turtles for the slaughterhouse. Though the population teetered on collapse a quarter century ago, today it boasts three-quarters of a million nesters annually!



Sea turtle skins being prepared for export at Mexican slaughterhouse, now closed, circa 1988.

The recovery of the olive ridley in Mexico shows the power of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project's activist campaigns—and proof that together

we can make the world a better place—for people and wildlife!

Todd Steiner

West Coast Waters Protected for Endangered Leatherbacks



THANKS TO THE SUPPORT of STRP's members and activists, Pacific leatherback sea turtles finally have a safe haven where they can feed on their favorite food, jellyfish, along the U.S. West Coast. The turtles arrive here after making an epic 6,000-mile journey across the Pacific Ocean from distant nesting beaches in

Indonesia. Nearly 42,000 square miles of ocean along the California, Oregon and Washington coasts are now forever protected as critical habitat for these endangered sea travelers. This is the first permanent habitat protected for leatherbacks in continental U.S. waters and is the largest area set aside to protect sea turtle habitat in the U.S. or its

territories. The new protections took effect Feb. 27, 2012.

Any new wave energy, offshore drilling, aquaculture or coastal projects in the designated critical habitat must now avoid harming leatherback feeding areas and jellyfish. The protections resulted from a petition submitted in 2007 by SeaTurtles.org, and a lawsuit threatened in 2011 after years of delay by federal fishery managers missing multiple legal deadlines specified in the Endangered Species Act.

Even so, the designated area falls short of the 250,000 square miles we originally proposed. Important sea turtle migratory pathways to the habitat were left out. The final designation also excluded protections for the habitat from commercial fishing, such as mile-long drift gillnets used to target swordfish and shark off California's coast. Water pollution and plastics were also ignored as threats to the leatherback's habitat.

As a result, our work is far from done! With your support, SeaTurtles.org will continue to safeguard Pacific leatherbacks and their habitat.



Naomi and Michael Silver generously donated funds for an extra satellite transmitter to study the sea turtles of Cocos Island, like this serene female green turtle.

Profile—Divers & Donors: Naomi & Michael Silver

NAOMI AND MICHAEL SILVER have given generously both as volunteer divers and donors to help make STRP's Cocos Island project possible.

As children, both were inspired by Jacques Cousteau's televised adventures. By the time they met in Washington DC, their love of the oceans was clear. "Scuba diving was the common denominator that brought us together," says Mike.



Since 2007, they have participated in nine Cocos Island Research Expeditions and hundreds of dives. "I have never seen so many sea turtles as at Cocos Island," says Mike. "They are very curious, each one has its own personality."

Recently, they decided to support the Cocos Island project through a generous gift. "Cocos Island really was the catalyst for me to get into conservation. After learning about the threats to sea turtles from Todd Steiner (STRP executive director), it was so clear how important it is to support this work," says Naomi.

STRP thanks Naomi and Mike and invites you to consider a personally significant, tax-deductible contribution. Learn more at www.SeaTurtles.org/WaystoGive or 1-800-859-SAVE today.

An Underwater Serengeti: Protecting the Spectacular Marine Life in the Waters Around Costa Rica's Cocos Island

BY TODD STEINER, first published in the *Earth Island Journal*, Spring 2012

JACQUES COUSTEAU described Cocos Island as the most beautiful island in the world. Located about halfway between Costa Rica (to which it belongs) and Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, Cocos Island is the only island in the eastern Pacific Ocean that has a tropical rainforest, cloud forests and cascades that tumble 600 feet straight into the ocean.

The geology underwater is just as dramatic as that above: A shallow fringing reef encircles the island's bays and then the seafloor drops sharply. The unique confluence of ocean countercurrents, wind currents, and underwater mountains combines to create an ecosystem that supports one of the most amazing displays of marine life on the planet.

Hundreds of scalloped hammerhead sharks spend their days being "cleaned" by the butterfly and angelfish. Whitetip reef sharks rest on the sand or hunt in packs at night. There are few other places in our world's oceans that equal the sheer variety and number of marine species found near Cocos Island. It is like an underwater Serengeti.

Scientists and scuba enthusiasts often rank the waters as one of the top ten diving spots on the planet. Now marine biologists and divers are teaming up to understand the unique characteristics of the region—and to protect its underwater inhabitants.

Despite its remote location and designation as a Costa Rican National Park and a UNESCO World Heritage site, the waters of Cocos Island face overfishing, plastic pollution from far away places; ocean acidification that harms reefs; and climate change that could unravel the unique mix of currents that make the place such a rich and diverse ecosystem.

The Sea Turtle Restoration Project has enlisted the scuba-diving community to participate in research by catching turtles, tagging sharks, taking photographs, and recording data, helping to ensure that the place will remain worthy of Cousteau-like praise for generations to come.

To become a volunteer research assistant on the upcoming September Cocos expedition, see page 7 of this newsletter or www.SeaTurtles.org/Expeditions.



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Fisheries Campaign Update: Holding the Line on Sea Turtle Deaths in the Pacific

PACIFIC SEA TURTLES are becoming more endangered, not less. That's why, with the help of our members and activists, the Sea Turtle Restoration Project is working to save hundreds of innocent sea turtles from injury and death by holding the line on fishery expansions.

We recently won another victory for the endangered Pacific loggerhead when a federal judge upheld a judgment that limits sea turtle captures in the Hawaii longline fishery. The Hawaii Longliner's Association had appealed the judgment of an earlier SeaTurtles.org

lawsuit, but the judge sided with turtles (and all of us).

Nevertheless, seafood profiteers and compliant federal fishery managers are now pushing to expand deadly swordfish fisheries in Hawaii (again), California and American Samoa that will dramatically escalate the sea turtle death toll in the Pacific.

Hawaii longliners are now seeking to double loggerhead captures and to increase leatherback hookings so they can fish more. In California, fishing regulators want to expand the devastating

Fishery expansions could spell death for leatherbacks, loggerheads, whales and a host of other marine species.

drift gillnet fishery for swordfish and shark into the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area. Not long ago this fishery entangled and killed an estimated 16 sperm whales. Hundreds of whales, dolphins, seals and sea lions as well as thousands of sharks, bluefin tuna and ocean sunfish are caught in this fishery and dumped overboard. Fisheries managers are even bringing up the idea of longlining in these waters, although it is illegal under California law.

In the South Pacific, longliners violated the law by killing too many leatherbacks and olive ridleys in American Samoa but just got the OK to open up a new swordfish fishery anyway.

Worst of all, longline caught swordfish is getting sold as "sustainable." The conclusion that we may all come to is that there is no sustainable seafood and that the only way forward is to give seafood a break.

SeaTurtles.org is now gearing up to halt these deadly fishery expansions and false eco-labeling. We will need the support of all our members to undertake these monumental campaigns. Please visit www.SeaTurtles.org/Fisheries to learn more and pledge your support. Thank you.

The Sea Turtle Wishlist: Top 5

STRP accomplishes significant victories for sea turtles and the oceans with a relatively slim budget. We rely on the generosity of individuals, private family foundations or businesses to get far more done than we could alone. We have a number of urgent needs for new or gently used items and financial support for STRP needs. Please consider our wish list in your giving:

For our internship program, which enables enthusiastic young people to

gain the skills needed to become the next generation of marine wildlife advocates and stewards:

▲ **1. New and gently used major appliances** for our new intern housing—dishwasher, refrigerator, washer, dryer, stove.

▲ **2. Tile for the intern housing**—\$1,500 for tile and \$3,500 for labor. Or donate your tiling skills if you are located in the SF Bay Area.

▲ **3. Intern housing**—funds donated

will support the new intern housing. The total cost is \$1,000,000 and we have raised \$300,000 as of April 2012. Your financial support is important to this project. Call 415-663-8590 ext. 108 for more information.

▲ **4. Travel stipends for interns**—Your support of \$300 or more will allow us to pay interns \$300 per month for their travel. These are otherwise non-paid internships.

▲ **5. New or gently used digital projector** to allow our campaigners to present STRP's important work at multiple events at the same time.

Gulf Office Update: Building a Community of Support for Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles

Nesting Season Begins:

The Sea Turtle Restoration Project is helping to coordinate daily patrols on the Texas Coast to protect nesting Kemp's ridley females and their eggs this season. We recruited the Texas Master Naturalists and other volunteers to ensure that the Upper Texas Coast is monitored.

Last year 199 nests were documented with many calls being made to the STRP sea turtle reporting number 1-866-TURTLE-5. When beachgoers see a nesting sea turtle, they are encouraged to call immediately so the closest biologist can get to the site to gather the eggs and move them to a safe place.

Restoring the Texas Dunes:

Over 100 volunteers were recruited by STRP, including many students who traveled to Galveston beaches on their March spring break to help sea turtles. Dunes destroyed by Hurricane Ike are necessary for successful sea turtle nesting. The turtles leave the water and

crawl onto the beach until they find a sand dune where they dig their nest to lay eggs.

Home schoolteacher Kathy Pratt of Deer Park, Texas, brought three children who planted hundreds of sea oat sprigs. "We all want to do more to help the nesting sea turtles," Kathy said. "This was a great experience for all of us."

Slowing Down for the Sea Turtles:

A finding has been released by NPS lowering the beach speed limit from 25 mph to 15 mph from March 1 through Labor Day. This reduction will increase safety for tourists as well as nesting Kemp's ridleys during the spring and summer months. Thanks to those who expressed their concern about excessive speed at the Padre Island National Seashore.

Kemp's ridleys in Texas need financial and volunteer support! To learn more visit www.SeaTurtles.org/Kemps.



KATHY PRATT



NOAA

Top: Texas schoolchildren plant sea oat sprigs to help stabilize sand dunes for nesting sea turtles.

Bottom: Kemp's ridley hatchlings are making a recovery on Texas beaches.

New Campaign: Introducing Shark Stewards

THE SEA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT has a new "sister" conservation initiative—Shark Stewards. Sharks are caught as bycatch by the millions in the swordfish and tuna fishery, and scientists estimate that as many as 73 million sharks are killed to make shark fin soup. Nearly one third of open-ocean sharks are now threatened with extinction, largely because of this cruel practice.

David McGuire, the new Director of our Shark Stewards and Got Mercury Campaigns, has dedicated his career to ocean conservation and sharks in particular. "After witnessing finned sharks and tuna ships loaded with shark fins in the



central Pacific, I became motivated to protect shark populations, stop shark finning and the shark fin trade," says McGuire.

McGuire and his team of grassroots volunteers initiated the California Shark Fin Ban, which finally passed last year, that bans the sale, possession and trade of shark fin in the state.

Now McGuire is researching sharks in San Francisco Bay, leading shark fin bans in other states like Texas, Illinois and New Jersey, and advising international efforts.

A Texas shark fin ban will be proposed in 2013 by a new chapter of Shark Stewards initiated by Anna Clark, a Dallas mother working in sustainability and whose daughter loves sharks. New chapters are starting in Chicago and in New Jersey to help combat the fin trade and raise awareness on their importance in the ecosystem. Learn more about Shark Stewards and how you can get involved and support this important work at www.SharkStewards.org.

upcoming events

COME JOIN US at these public events! Education leads to inspiration and action when we host these seminars, expeditions, and meetings listed below. Visit SeaTurtles.org/Events for all the details! Want to host your own inspirational event to support sea turtle conservation? info@SeaTurtles.org

CELEBRATING THE CIRCLE OF OCEAN LIFE FOR WORLD OCEANS DAY

June 1-8, all day, Circle Bank, Marin County, California

Interactive displays link guests to Shark Stewards work to save ocean predators and eliminate shark fin trade around the world.

WORLD OCEANS DAY, A NIGHTLIFE ON SUSTAINABILITY

June 7, 6pm-10pm, California Academy of Sciences, CA

Celebrate World Oceans Day with surrounded by tropical reefs and interactive sustainable seafood action displays from Got Mercury? and other ocean partners.

WORLD OCEANS DAY CELEBRATION

June 8, 6pm-10pm, Fish Restaurant, Sausalito, California

Head down to the waterfront and share your passion for ocean conservation at the West Coast's leading establishment for sustainable seafood. Visit our website for details on dinner and presentation.

BAY DAY EARTH DAY

June 9, all day, Kemah Boardwalk, Kemah, Texas

Connect with fellow conservation minded peers and join our Gulf of Mexico sea turtle teams!

WORLD SEA TURTLE DAY NIGHTLIFE

June 14, 6pm-10pm, California Academy of Sciences, California

The leatherback sea turtle will be the star of the night at this event featuring DJs, cocktails, and interactive educational displays inspiring conservation action.

SALMON PROTECTION AND WATERSHED NETWORK (SPAWN)

NATURALIST TRAINING COURSE

July 11-September 12, Wednesdays 6:30pm-9pm, Marin County, California

This dynamic 40-hour course combines science curriculum, guest lecturers, field trips and project based learning to immerse you in the natural world of California and continue the restoration of the Lagunitas Creek watershed with SPAWN. Contact chris@tirn.net

LEATHERBACK WATCH PROGRAM EXPEDITION

August 18, 8am-2pm, Sanctuary Cruises, Moss Landing, California

Voyage into one of the richest marine ecosystems on earth, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, to discover whales, seals, seabirds, and with luck, the elusive leatherback sea turtle!

LEATHERBACK WATCH PROGRAM EXPEDITION TO THE FARALLON ISLANDS

September 23 & October 7, 8am-4pm, San Francisco, California

Embark on a journey to the amazing Farallon Islands with expert naturalists, learn about the amazing California Current Ecosystem, and search for endangered leatherback sea turtles.

SHARKTOBER FESTIVAL

October, every weekend, San Francisco Bay, California

The Sharktober Festival of events combines family friendly educational workshops, scientific seminars, and fun parties to highlight Shark Stewards ocean predator conservation campaigns.

Welcome Michele Manso



Director of Advancement

JOINING TURTLE ISLAND RESTORATION NETWORK and the Sea Turtle Restoration Project is a real honor. I look forward to engaging people in local communities to protect marine wildlife, watersheds and the

beautiful wild oceans. I have worked for nonprofits my entire career in the areas of development, marketing and strategic communication.

Growing up in Mill Valley, California, I spent the greater part of my childhood outside under the redwoods meandering Marin County streams. During this time, I developed a deep love for nature and wildlife.

My most rewarding position was Executive Director at the Tiburon Audubon Center. With NOAA's support, we began the native oyster restoration project in San Francisco at Richardson Bay. Also, thousands of children came through our programs and experienced the wonders of nature.

I look forward to helping Turtle Island Restoration Network and the Sea Turtle Restoration Project continue to grow and become an even stronger force for ocean and marine wildlife protection.

Also, I look forward to meeting you in person!

—Michele Manso



Pacific Leatherbacks – Symbol of Wild Oceans

SEATURTLES.ORG IS THE ARCHITECT and principal sponsor of a new state bill (AB 1776) introduced by Assemblyman Paul Fong (D-Cupertino) to designate the critically endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtle as California’s official marine reptile. Mr. Fong is an ocean hero for authoring last year’s shark fin ban in California. Once AB 1776 passes, the leatherback will join the desert tortoise, gray whale, golden poppy and grizzly bear as symbols of California’s biodiversity and conservation ethic. The bill designates Oct. 15 as Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Conservation Day. Visit SeaTurtles.org to take action to help pass the bill!

Join a Sea Turtle and Shark Tagging Expedition at Cocos Island, Costa Rica

YOU’RE INVITED to join Randall Arauz, 2010 Goldman Environmental Prize Winner, and Todd Steiner, STRP’s Executive Director, on a 12-day live-aboard research expedition to Cocos Island National Park September 24 through October 6, 2012. For more information, go to www.SeaTurtles.org/Expeditions to see amazing 360-degree views of the Cocos Island, the Undersea Hunter vessel and underwater views from the DeepSee submersible.

Adopt a Nest of Sea Turtle Hatchlings

A WONDERFUL PRESENT FOR MOTHER’S DAY AND BIRTHDAYS! Give a gift that helps protect sea turtles and their nests by supporting our nest monitoring and patrol programs.

Adopt-a-Nest package - \$45 (\$55 outside U.S.) includes:

- Personalized adoption certificate
- Sea turtle window decal
- Sea turtle fact sheets
- “Save the Sea Turtles” sticker
- “Sea Turtles of the World” 16”x24” color poster
- *Viva La Tortuga!* newsletter
- Color photograph of sea turtle hatchlings.



Special Nest with Pendant \$60 (\$70 outside U.S.) Includes the Adopt-A-Nest package plus a pewter stylized sea turtle pendant.



Special Nest with Sea Turtle Charm Bracelet \$75 (\$85 outside U.S.)

Includes the Adopt-A-Nest package plus a pewter charm bracelet.

When you order online, you can download a gift certificate immediately to give your loved one so they know their Adopt-a-Nest package is on the way.

Order online at www.SeaTurtles.org/Adopt or send a check with honoree’s name and address to STRP, PO Box 370, Forest Knolls, CA 94933.

Leave a Legacy for the Sea Turtles

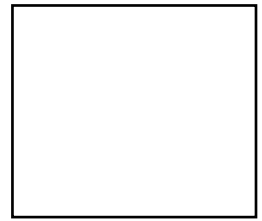


THROUGH A BEQUEST to the Sea Turtle Restoration Project in your will and other estate plans, you can leave a legacy for sea turtles.

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. Any 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.

Turtle Island Restoration Network
Sea Turtle Restoration Project
P.O. Box 370
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VIRGINIA BRIA



DEASY LONTOH

in this issue:

Mexican sea turtle slaughterhouse closure remembered

Pacific leatherbacks get safe haven on U.S. West Coast

Cocos Island: An underwater Serengeti

STRP fights fisheries expansions in Hawaii, California, and American Samoa

Nesting Kemp's ridleys protected in the Gulf of Mexico

ABOUT THE SEA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT

THE SEA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT is a project of Turtle Island Restoration Network, a nonprofit organization. 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 service 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, Donna Howe, Steve Katz, Rick Misuraca, Wallace J. Nichols, Bob Rosenberg, Susan Sakmar, Debbie Sivas.

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Viva la Tortuga!

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A project of Turtle Island Restoration Network



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