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# Viva la Tortuga!

NEWSLETTER OF THE SEA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT OF TURTLE ISLAND RESTORATION NETWORK [SEATURTLES.ORG](http://SEATURTLES.ORG)

## The Pacific Leatherback Now California's State Symbol

### New Recognition Paves the Way for Enhanced Protection

**T**HIS SEPTEMBER, thanks to the support of our members and activists like you, the Sea Turtle Restoration Project achieved a historical milestone for the Pacific leatherback sea turtle when California's Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill designating it as the official Marine Reptile of California and establishing October 15 as Leatherback Conservation Day.

This was a first-of-its-kind recognition of the importance of this critically endangered species, whose population has been reduced by more than 90 percent in the past 50 years.

Because Pacific leatherbacks don't nest on our California beaches, most residents have been unaware that these ancient ocean dwellers are swimming right off our coast, after traveling an incredible 6,000-mile journey from Indonesian nesting beaches, to feed on the abundant jellyfish there as their primary food source.

More than 20 leatherback sightings have been reported off the coast of California so far this year and the Sea Turtle Restoration Project is tracking the data in order to better understand the leatherbacks' migration patterns and to increase public awareness that these gentle giants of the ocean are depending on us for their safety and continued survival.

*For more information on the Leatherback Watch Program, go to [www.SeaTurtles.org/leatherbackwatch](http://www.SeaTurtles.org/leatherbackwatch).*

## We ♥ Honu!



ANGELA HADDEN

**M**ore than 125,000 [SeaTurtles.org](http://SeaTurtles.org) members, activists and others responded with letters and petition signatures to our campaign opposing the delisting of the Hawaiian green sea turtle (or "honu" in Hawaiian). This grassroots outcry came in response to a proposal by a Hawaiian civic association and the National Marine Fisheries Service to strip their Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections.

continued on page 2



# Letter from the Director

## COCOS RIDGE SUMMIT

**T**HE UNDERWATER mountain range of the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, known as the Cocos Ridge, runs for more than 600 miles from the Central American mainland to the Galapagos. These seamounts thrust above the sea at two sites—creating the Cocos and the Galapagos islands.

The Cocos Ridge intersects several major currents, a collision which creates great upwelling and high primary productivity, which in turn attracts a large food web of marine biodiversity, and an important swimway for highly migratory species such as the scalloped hammerhead sharks and leatherback sea turtles.

But this swimway is also under threat from the massive industrial fishing fleets that target and kill vast tonnage of tuna, swordfish and shark from the area, overfishing some species, as well as injuring and killing endangered and protected species such as sea turtles and marine mammals.

In August, I was able to meet with Costa Rica's Minister of the Environment, Dr. René Castro to discuss that country's ambitious hopes for marine conservation. During the course of our discussion, he noted that the Presidents of Costa Rica, Ecuador, Colombia and Panama will be meeting in 2013 to discuss their shared marine resources—and we agreed this presented an amazing opportunity to begin to galvanize political will. As a result of this dialogue, SeaTurtles.org and PRETOMA are planning to hold a Cocos Ridge Summit in conjunction with Dr. Castro's office, as well as his counterparts in the other Eastern Tropical Pacific nations.

As currently conceived, the Summit will bring together conservationists, scientists, diplomats and philanthropists to identify the current threats to this area and, most importantly, create a plan of action to better protect it. The goal is to establish a formal and internationally recognized Marine Protected Area that sets aside large swathes of the ocean and safeguards all marine life (especially endangered sharks and sea turtles) that migrate through this area. By coordinating with this Presidential meeting, we hope to have an opportunity to present our recommendations directly to elected leaders of the countries that have direct control over the economic activities that occur in these precious waters.

The details are still being hammered out, but we are targeting the month of April, and planning to host the meeting in the Galapagos Islands.

## INTRODUCING THE TURTLE ISLAND FAMILY

You may have noticed something a bit different about this Sea Turtle Restoration Project (SeaTurtles.org) newsletter—we are including a couple of articles on other initiatives of Turtle Island Restoration Network, our nonprofit “parent” organization, including Shark Stewards and SPAWN—the Salmon Protection And Watershed Network. Check out all of Turtle Island's programs at TIRN.net or visit their separate websites at SpawnUSA.org and SharkStewards.org.

  
TODD STEINER



seaturtles.org

*The 2013 Cocos Ridge Summit will bring together conservationists, scientist, diplomats and philanthropists to create a plan of conservation action for the Cocos Island region.*



EDUAR HERRERO

## Honu! continued from cover

*If these groups, backed by the fishing industry, succeed in “delisting” Hawaiian green sea turtles, this is the first step toward allowing hunting of sea turtles again, a key impact that drove them to the brink of extinction prior to ESA protections.*

*“The number of Hawaiian green turtles is growing, but they have a long way to go before the population of nesting females is big enough to ensure their long-term survival,” said Teri Shore, Program Director at SeaTurtles.org. The honu are already currently facing the serious impacts of climate change and rising sea levels that could damage their nesting beaches and disrupt sea turtle life cycles in decades to come.*

*Hawaiian green sea turtle populations have increased steadily since hunting was banned in 1978 but are still only at about 10 percent of the ESA goal of at least 5,000 nesters per year.*

*You can declare your love for the Honu by donating \$25 or more and receive a special “I ♥ Honu” window decal at [SeaTurtles.org/HonuDecal](http://SeaTurtles.org/HonuDecal). You can also purchase decals at [SeaTurtles.org/shop](http://SeaTurtles.org/shop).*



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*Giant Pacific leatherback sea turtles are threatened by a proposed expansion of drift gillnet fishing within the currently protected waters of the Leatherback Conservation Area off the coast of California.*

## Shark Stewards at Work Around the Globe



### Exposé: Behind the “Curtains of Death” in the Pacific

**S**EATURTLES.ORG has learned of an absurd new proposal by U.S. fisheries regulators to expand the deadly California drift gillnet fishery—and we’ll need our members’ help to stop it!

The drift gillnet fishery, which targets profitable but mercury-laden swordfish, drags nearly invisible “curtains of death” just under a mile long, through the rich congregation of marine life that migrates off the U.S. West Coast.

Critically endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtles migrate here from Indonesia year after year to forage on delicious jellyfish. Thankfully, the gentle giant leatherbacks are currently protected in their most populated habitat, thanks to SeaTurtles.org members who supported the organization’s campaign to establish the Leatherback Conservation Area (LCA), over 250,000 square miles of protected ocean.

But the fishery is still taking a terrible toll on marine mammals, sharks, rays and other species that swim outside the protected area. In 2010, as many as 16 sperm whales and 49 dolphins were drowned or fatally injured, unable to escape the curtains of death, according

to the government’s own biologists. Additionally, hundreds of blue sharks, ocean sunfish (mola mola), thresher sharks and shortfin mako sharks died. One government report showed that as many as 27 sunfish were injured or killed for each swordfish caught!

No sea turtles were caught, thanks to the LCA. But now, absurdly, NMFS in collusion with the powerful fishing industry is forwarding a proposal to begin fishing within the LCA too—although this protected area has saved hundreds or thousands of sea turtles over the past 11 years.

SeaTurtles.org is fighting back this latest expansion attempt, and shining light on this fishery’s terrible toll on ocean life. Our members and activists will be critical to the campaign’s success, just as you have been for the past 20 years!

#### How you can help:

- 1) Don’t eat swordfish
- 2) Pledge to eat only Turtle-Safe Seafood at [SeaTurtles.org/SeafoodPledge](http://SeaTurtles.org/SeafoodPledge)
- 3) Please make a contribution today to support our campaigns to reform destructive fishing at [SeaTurtles.org/Donate](http://SeaTurtles.org/Donate).

**S**HARK STEWARDS is the Sea Turtle Restoration Project’s sister conservation initiative, focusing on the protection of shark species around the globe. Shark Stewards is working to gain Endangered Species status for great white sharks and put a stop to shark finning that is decimating hammerheads.

#### Great Whites at Great Risk

Juvenile great white sharks continue to be killed as incidental bycatch in U.S. and Mexican commercial gillnets—with no limits on this bycatch. At the same time, recreational fishermen are targeting juvenile great white sharks as food fish, unaware that this species has some of the highest levels of mercury, DDT, and PCBs found in any shark species worldwide. That’s why Shark Stewards is fighting for recognition of these sharks’ endangered status.

#### Hammerheads Getting Hammered

Millions of hammerhead sharks are killed each year through the cruel and wasteful practice of shark finning, the act of removing shark fins and discarding the living shark overboard to drown or bleed to death. Especially coveted for their fins to make shark fin soup, hammerhead populations are getting hammered. For this reason, Shark Stewards, Turtle Island, and our allies are calling on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list all species of hammerhead sharks under Appendix II at the next Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.



*Aboriginal leader Phillip Roe shows Teri Shore the threatened Kimberley coast in Northwest Australia.*

# Protecting the Australian Kimberley

*A MESSAGE FROM TERI SHORE, PROGRAM DIRECTOR*

“[W.A. Premier] Barnett can try to paint James Price Point as insignificant, but we know that there are dinosaur footprints, bilbies, turtle nests, whales, songlines, registered sacred sites all here. This is a sacred site worth protecting for all Australians, black or white.”

The movement has galvanized researchers, citizen scientists, artists, filmmakers, musicians and thousands of Facebook friends. Direct action protests and other grassroots activities occurring almost daily on the front lines of the resistance to the Browse Basin Gas Plant have slowed, delayed and may soon permanently end land clearing and construction.

Leaders of the campaign now believe that a decision by the oil companies to abandon the proposed placement of the Browse Basin Gas Hub at James Price Point near Broome in West Australia could be made as early as year’s end.

## A Haven for Whales, Turtles & Dolphins

The Lurujarri coastline and its waters provide nesting and foraging habitat for marine turtles, calving grounds for humpback whales, and a safe haven for the rare snubfin dolphins. The expanse of ocean extending from the Kimberley coast is one of the most pristine and bio-diverse marine areas left on earth.

I spent several days counting humpback whales from an onshore platform at the campaign’s research camp located at Murdudun (pronounced roughly Moo-doo-DIN), not far from Walmadan camp. Here a three-month whale observation project directed by marine biologist Maddie Goodard and activist Tegan Mossop involving hundreds of volunteers over the season was well underway.

The whale count tallied more migrating whales and pairs of cows and calves than ever counted by gas plant consultants. Each splash of a fin or slap of a whale tail added to the evidence that this corner of the world is essential to the life cycle of the world’s largest humpback whale population.

Last sea turtle nesting season, Philip Roe and a research team walked the beaches near Walmadan and for the first time found more than 14 nests and spotted a hybrid hawksbill returning to the sea. The oil company consultants had looked at the wrong time of year and completely missed these nests. They also underestimated the concentration of sea turtles utilizing the offshore waters.



DAMIAN KELLY

As with the whales, the importance of this area to sea turtles is obviously more critical than the oil and gas companies claim.

As part of our ongoing involvement in the Kimberley campaign over the past three years, SeaTurtles.org filed an appeal against the environmental approval of the Browse Basin Gas Plant due to its poor science and flawed conclusions.

Watch for news and actions you can take as we turn the tide in favor of saving the Kimberley.

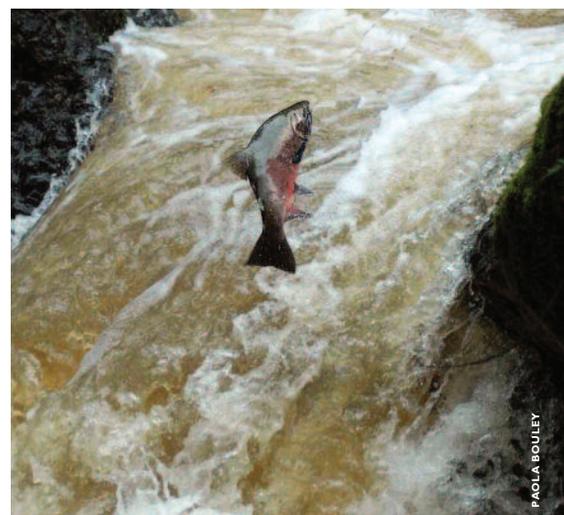


Left, a loggerhead sea turtle uses its powerful jaws to eat a seashell on the ocean floor.

Below, an endangered coho salmon jumps upstream to spawn in the Lagunitas watershed in Marin County, California—one of the last runs of endangered coho salmon in the state.

## SPAWN—Victory for Salmon

**I**N 2010, STRP’s sister organization, the Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN), filed a complaint against Marin County under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). SPAWN sought to compel the County to conduct a more thorough assessment of the cumulative impact of streamside development along the spawning creeks of the Lagunitas watershed, which it had failed to do under its countywide plan.



PAOLA BOULEY

These waters constitute one of the State’s most important concentrations of spawning and rearing habitat for two protected species—the Central California Coho salmon and the steelhead trout. In a decision issued on August 12, County Judge Lynn Duryee imposed a moratorium on new building along these creeks until the County adopts a streamside conservation ordinance. This decision creates a long overdue opportunity for SPAWN to participate in the creation of a comprehensive and meaningful county regulation to protect salmon habitat.

## Pushing for Loggerhead Protections

**F**EDERAL AGENCIES just missed another deadline for protecting marine and nesting habitats for the long-lived loggerhead sea turtles as required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). There is no time to waste, so SeaTurtles.org and partners launched a lawsuit to push for immediate loggerhead habitat protections.

Designating “critical habitat” for loggerheads as required under the ESA will help prevent harmful projects where the gentle giants nest, feed and swim. And we know it works, because endangered species with protected critical habitat are twice as likely to show signs of recovery as those without it.

The endangered Pacific loggerhead must

be able to swim safely across the Pacific Ocean from Japan to U.S. western shores to feed and grow if they are to come back from the brink of extinction. We know that the threatened Atlantic loggerhead that nests and feeds in Florida, the Gulf and East Coast also need safe havens to ensure their survival.

Loggerheads also continue to die in shrimp and swordfish fisheries, lose nesting beaches to hotels and vacation houses, and face pollution, oil and gas drilling, nuclear disasters and climate change.

The support of all of our SeaTurtles.org members and activists will help us achieve needed protections for loggerheads to recover to healthy populations!

## SeaTurtles.Org Interns Make Waves!

**E**ARLY-CAREER interns play a vital role in SeaTurtles.org programs, gain valuable experience—and go on to excel in ocean conservation studies and careers.



Madeline McKenna, just one recent, stellar intern, is now embarking on a marine science internship at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute.

“The SeaTurtles.org internship was a great chance to engage in a wide range of projects to benefit the oceans, not just sea turtles,” said Maddy recently. Maddy developed exhibits and presentations, edited videos, and much more. “I appreciated the chance to build a Turtle Excluder Device model to educate the public about shrimping’s impacts, and present a poster at the International Sea Turtle Symposium with the staff.”

For information on how to become an intern at our California headquarters, contact Chris Pincetich at: [chris@SeaTurtles.org](mailto:chris@SeaTurtles.org).

## Shop at the Sea Turtle Store!



Celebrate SeaTurtles.org's exciting victories that protect leatherback sea turtles, the largest and deepest diving turtles in the world, with our new Leatherback Hand Puppet. The puppet is 12" long, 9" wide and 4" tall, and has fully moveable mouth and flippers. Make her dive for food or crawl up on the beach to lay her eggs! **price: \$27 including shipping.**

See our entire collection of jewelry, T-shirts, hats, DVDs and fine art at [www.SeaTurtles.org/Shop](http://www.SeaTurtles.org/Shop).

## Adopt a Nest of Sea Turtles— A Great Gift for the Holidays!

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
- "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](http://www.SeaTurtles.org/Adopt) or send a check with honoree's name and address to STRP, PO Box 370, Forest Knolls, CA 94933.

## Donate your Vehicle to SeaTurtles.Org

SUPPORT SEA TURTLE conservation by donating your vehicle to SeaTurtles.org, no matter where you are in the U.S. Your contribution may be tax deductible. By donating your car, truck or boat, you will be making a vital contribution to SeaTurtles.org, which receives 70-80% of the net proceeds, depending on the sale value of the vehicle.



The process is simple. Just contact Donate For Charity at [www.donateforcharity.com](http://www.donateforcharity.com) or call 1-866-392-4483 and they will arrange to pick up your vehicle. They accept most cars, trucks, vans, fleet vehicles, trailers, boats and RVs that are 15 years or newer from any location in all 50 states.

## Intern Housing for Turtle Island

TURTLE ISLAND Restoration Network welcomes early career conservation interns from around the country, and now they will be made even more welcome with our newly completed intern housing, within biking distance of our headquarters in Marin County, CA.

Turtle Island's newly renovated, energy-efficient house sits in a redwood forest near beautiful San Geronimo Creek in Lagunitas, CA and was built with the help of volunteer labor and donated materials.

The property will also house a Native Plant Nursery as part of our Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN) project. Rainwater catchment gardens grace the perimeter, to protect against runoff into the creek and to harvest rainwater for use in the nursery.

Occupancy will begin January of 2013. If you are interested in interning or would like support the program, please contact us. Email [info@TIRN.net](mailto:info@TIRN.net) or call 1-800-859-7283 for more information.

## Fundraise for Sea Turtles!

SEATURTLES.ORG now has an exciting way for you to engage your friends, family and community to help sea turtles! Create your own Fundraising Page at [www.SeaTurtles.org/Fundraiser](http://www.SeaTurtles.org/Fundraiser) and invite your friends to participate. Do you have a birthday coming up and want to invite your friends to donate? Would you like to organize a Run or Walk, or perhaps raise money as a school project?

Go to [SeaTurtles.org/Fundraiser](http://SeaTurtles.org/Fundraiser) or contact us at 1-800-859-7283 and we'll help you get started organizing your fundraising event.



## Sea Turtle Champion: So Delicious Dairy Free

**I**N 1994, Sea Turtle Restoration Project founder Todd Steiner received a call from Mark Brawerman, the CEO and President of Turtle Mountain, LLC, a dairy-free frozen desserts company. Mark was inspired by Todd's fight to protect sea turtles worldwide and committed to give a portion of the rapidly growing company's profits to help.

"Mark and Turtle Mountain have been among our longest supporters," says Todd, "The company's donations and marketing support have helped expand our grassroots activist base and save the lives of thousands of endangered sea turtles."

Now known as So Delicious Dairy Free, the company has grown from a one-man operation to an industry leader employing more than 100 people and offering a wide range of dairy-free products—and has donated more than \$100,000 to support sea turtles!

"Mark and Todd understood even then that animal protection was very important to what So Delicious Dairy Free does. Now we call our gentler approach toward the world our 'SO Kind' pillar, and it permeates our internal culture and our passionate consumer base," says Mike Murray, Vice President of Marketing.

The company will hold a special promotion to benefit sea turtles in January, 2013. For every new "Like" on So Delicious Dairy Free's Facebook page, So Delicious will donate \$1 to SeaTurtles.Org, up to \$5,000! To learn more about this special promotion, and for links to So Delicious and product coupons, visit: [SeaTurtles.org/SoDelicious](http://SeaTurtles.org/SoDelicious).



## Win a Spot on a SeaTurtles.Org Research Dive Trip to Cocos Island, Costa Rica

**W**IN THE DIVE TRIP OF A LIFETIME! We are raffling off a spot on our next Sea Turtle & Shark Research Dive Expedition, valued at \$6,040! (Seats are available for purchase—contact us for more information. Non-divers are also welcome to participate). Accommodations are on the luxurious live-aboard MV Argo, the same vessel used by National Geographic on its scientific expeditions to the region.

Raffle tickets are \$100 each and no more than 200 tickets will be sold. Winner will be selected on February 1.

Be part of our research team—help to tag sea turtles and sharks and collect data that is being used to map their migration patterns through the Cocos/Galapagos Island swimway. This ongoing study will support our campaign to extend protections in this vital marine habitat.

The sumptuous 130-foot-long Argo departs April 11, 2012, for a ten-day trip to stunning Cocos Island off the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica!

Every raffle ticket sold helps fund SeaTurtles.org's research in this important sea turtle habitat. For more information, visit [www.SeaTurtles.org/raffle](http://www.SeaTurtles.org/raffle) or call us at 415-663-8590 x101.

## Be One of Our Sea Turtle STARs (Sea Turtle Activist Responders)!

**H**elp us take swift, sustained and innovative action by joining our STARs program and making a monthly donation to help sea turtles. You can make a difference for as little as \$5 a month and we'll thank you with a beautiful pewter turtle keychain.

Donate \$20 a month or more, and we will thank you with the gorgeous coffee table book, "Sea Turtles" by James Spotila, with amazing photographs and natural history of sea turtles.

You can cancel or change the amount of your donation anytime. Use the enclosed envelope to join, or go online to [www.SeaTurtles.org/STARs](http://www.SeaTurtles.org/STARs).

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ANGELA HADDEN

## in this issue:

**Pacific leatherback now California state symbol**

**We ♥ Honu: A grassroots campaign for Hawaii's sea turtles**

**“Curtains of Death” threaten California sea turtles and marine mammals**

**Defending sea turtles and “songlines” from Big Oil in Australia**

**The Cocos Ridge Swimway from Cocos to Galapagos islands**

## ABOUT THE SEA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT

**T**HE 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.

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Donna Howe, Chair; Carole Allen, Randall Arauz, Steve Katz, Rick Misuraca, Wallace J. Nichols, Bob Rosenberg, Debbie Sivas, Todd Steiner.

Layout and design: Daniela Sklan | Hummingbird Design Studio

## Viva la Tortuga!



Issue No. 2, 2012

Newsletter of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project

*A project of Turtle Island Restoration Network*



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