

# Viva la Tortuga!

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

## SeaTurtles.org Wins New Safeguards for Loggerheads

SEATURTLES.ORG's relentless advocacy and legal actions have won long-overdue safeguards for loggerhead nesting beaches and ocean habitat. This work is possible thanks to the strong support of our members and activists. After years of delay, the federal government has finally established protection of more than 739 miles of shoreline and 36 areas of ocean along the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf coasts that are essential for loggerhead migration, feeding and nesting. This could make the difference between recovery and extinction for declining loggerhead populations.

"These gentle ocean dwellers need safe passage to beaches and coastal waters where they can feed and breed with as lit-

tle human interference as possible," said program director Teri Shore.

While the new protections are good sea turtle conservation measures, they fall short because they don't include some important loggerhead beaches and waters in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Habitat protections for highly endangered Pacific loggerheads were completely left out.

Recently, sea turtle researchers discovered that Gulf loggerheads nest at multiple beaches, sometimes hundreds of miles apart. This finding confounds current thinking that sea turtles always return to the same beach to nest. The new science supports the need to expand protections for the loggerhead's ocean habitat in the Gulf and beyond.

Critical habitat designation does not limit public access to protected shorelines and seas, but ensures that activities such as wave energy, aquaculture, power plants or other coastal projects do not harm habitat that loggerheads rely on for survival and recovery.

Endangered and threatened species with protected habitat are twice as likely to be recovering as those without.

Learn more at [SeaTurtles.org/Loggerhead](http://SeaTurtles.org/Loggerhead).



## Kemps Ridleys Become the Texas State Sea Turtle

*On May 10, Texas Gov. Rick Perry signed a bill proclaiming the Kemp's ridley sea turtle as an official Texas state symbol! Each year, beginning in April, Kemp's ridleys come to the Texas coast to lay their eggs, and the hatchlings begin to emerge in June and July.*

*Guided by Carole Allen, SeaTurtles.org Gulf Director, the Fourth Grade Green Team of Oppe Elementary in Galveston, led by teacher Katie Blaser, wrote the resolution that Rep. Craig Eiland introduced and that eventually became law.*

*These turtles are making a slow recovery from near extinction, but remain on the Endangered Species List. Being honored in this way by the Texas legislature will help promote the education and advocacy needed to protect them.*



## Letter from the Director

### ACTIVISTS DEMAND JUSTICE FOR BRUTALLY MURDERED SEA TURTLE CONSERVATIONIST

ON THE EVENING OF MAY 30, 2013, Jairo Mora Sandoval, three young women from the U.S. and another from Spain were kidnapped by armed masked men as they patrolled leatherback nesting sites at Moín Beach on Costa Rica's northern Caribbean coast near the town of Limon.

Taken to an abandoned shack, the women were left inside, and the mask men drove off with Jairo. The women were sexually assaulted, but eventually escaped and called police. Jairo's body was found in the sand the next morning. He had been bound and beaten and was dragged behind a vehicle, dying from head trauma and asphyxiation from swallowed sand.

Locals report that sea turtle poaching and narco-trafficking are intertwined activities of criminal elements in the area—that rely on dark, isolated beaches.

The work of protecting nesting beaches is basically done by nonprofit organizations and individuals who donate their time and resources to help. This entire conservation strategy is at risk, if we can't keep conservationists safe.

It's critical that the whole world pays attention to this and assures that these murderers are brought to justice and there is a commitment from the Costa Rican government to protect individuals, the endangered species and the tourists who make the economy of Costa Rica work.

To ensure justice for Jairo and protection for other front-line conservation workers, TIRN coordinated a coalition of organizations and individuals by launching an online petition, creating a Reward Fund for information leading to arrests and convictions, and a Memorial Fund to help the victim's family and to create conservation programs in his memory.

More than 150,000 signatures from individuals in 150 nations were collected, with over \$56,000 for the reward fund and \$11,000 for the memorial fund.

To coincide with the two-month anniversary of the murder, a week of actions was announced and reported in the Washington Post on July 29, which included activists delivering copies of the petition to Costa Rica embassies and consulates in Los Angeles, Houston and Washington DC, and in El Salvador, India, Spain, Ecuador, Germany, and Australia.

On July 31, the same morning the protests began, Costa Rican security forces launched raids in several towns near the murder site and arrested eight suspects.

Jairo will not be forgotten, nor will we allow his death to be in vain. Until there is justice and additional protection for conservation workers, we will keep this issue alive in the media and in the streets.

Learn more and take action for Jairo at [SeaTurtles.org/Jairo](http://SeaTurtles.org/Jairo).

Viva La Tortuga,



TODD STEINER

### SeaTurtles.org Expands Reach with New Staff Member in Galveston

SEATURTLES.ORG is making big news in Galveston, Texas! We have recently hired Associate Campaign Director Joanie Steinhaus and are planning a new office in the coastal town.

"We have wanted a representative in Galveston for a long time," said Carole Allen, Gulf Office Director, "and after just a few weeks, Joanie has spread the word about SeaTurtles.org and sea turtle conservation to schools, clubs and countless individuals."



With an extensive background in teaching, Joanie brings a wide range of experience including 11 years as a Zoo Instructor and Keeper at the Houston Zoo. She served as Natural Science Program Coordinator for the Lower Colorado River Authority establishing relationships with educational institutions, governmental agencies, businesses, industry, youth and non-profit groups over a 64-county area.

"I am enjoying this opportunity to focus my passion and skills helping with the protection of the Kemp's ridley," Joanie said. "My vision includes working with other organizations toward a common goal that allows for economic growth but also conserves our natural resources."

Joanie and her husband Jeff moved to Galveston where she started immediately by testifying for sea turtle protection at a hearing about oil and gas exploration in the Gulf. She has already been invited to join several boards and committees and is beginning a schedule of presentations about the Sea Turtle Restoration Project and the Kemp's ridleys.



## California's Deadliest Catch

SEATURTLES.ORG'S new report, *California's Deadliest Catch*, reveals that the state's drift gillnet swordfish fleet captured and killed 1,300 protected whales, dolphins, and sea turtles over the past ten years. The gillnets also caught an estimated 100,000 ocean sunfish and 10,000 blue sharks that were dumped overboard dead, dying or injured.

This bycatch is higher than any other commercial fishery along the U.S. West Coast. "The gillnet fishery is a curtain of death and should be shut down forever," said executive director Todd Steiner. He added, "The swordfish and shark that the fishery catches is so high in mercury that the FDA warns women and children never to eat it."

*California's Deadliest Catch* was released just as new emergency measures were imposed that will stop gillnetting for the season if a single endangered sperm whale gets entangled. While this may prevent whale deaths in the short term, the real fix is to phase out this obsolete and wasteful fishery once and for all.

In March of this year SeaTurtles.org successfully halted a fishing industry proposal to re-open protected leatherback sea turtle foraging habitat to this fishery, with the support of our members.

Drift gillnet fishing involves setting out mile-long nets at dusk that drift freely where whales, dolphins, turtles, swordfish, shark and other fish feed during the night. The boats retrieve the nets the next day and haul in whatever marine life is ensnared in the nets. Go to [SeaTurtles.org/DeadliestCatch](http://SeaTurtles.org/DeadliestCatch) for more information and to download the report.

## Biggest, Fastest, Deepest: The Leatherback Sea Turtle

LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLES are truly unique! Of all the seven sea turtle species, only the leatherback has no hard shell, hence its name. Its outer protection is a leathery skin made of tough, oil-saturated tissue raised into seven prominent ridges. The largest sea turtle ever recorded was a male leatherback, found on the coast of Wales in 1988. He was 9.5 feet long and weighed almost 2,000 pounds—the size of a small car!

They dive deeper and swim into colder waters than other sea turtles because of their ability to regulate body temperature and their greater body fat. Adult leatherbacks have been known to dive up to 4,922 feet deep.

Leatherbacks live all around the world, but nest only on tropical and subtropical sandy beaches. Their primary nesting grounds are the Pacific coasts of Mexico and Costa Rica; French Guyana and Suriname on the north Atlantic coast of South America; Gabon on the west coast of Africa; the Caribbean coasts of Costa Rica, Trinidad and Colombia; and the beaches of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

Tiny hatchlings emerge from their sandy nests after 60 days and crawl to the sea. Their first several years are a mystery to scientists. About one in a thousand survive to adulthood. In natural conditions, adult leatherbacks have few predators, but human activities have driven the population down by 95% in the past 50 years due to the capture and drowning in industrial fishing operations, egg poaching, destruction of nesting beaches, and ocean pollution.

Scientists predict that the giant Pacific leatherback sea turtle, which has survived unchanged for over 100 million years, could vanish in the next 5 to 30 years if current threats from wasteful industrial fishing are not curtailed.

### Celebrate Leatherback Conservation Day

The first-ever Pacific Leatherback Conservation Day in California is coming up on Oct. 15. To celebrate, SeaTurtles.org invites you to take action to help protect the biggest and fastest of all endangered sea turtles.

Leatherback Conservation Day was designated last year through state legislation drafted by SeaTurtles.org that named the Pacific leatherback the state's official marine reptile.

Our new Leatherback Action Pack provides tools for schools, clubs, and individuals to build support for conservation of highly endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtles that swim along our coast. Whether you take the Leatherback Pledge or hold a bake sale, every action makes a difference. Visit [SeaTurtles.org/actionpack](http://SeaTurtles.org/actionpack) to download your free action pack.

To mark the inaugural Leatherback Conservation Day, SeaTurtles.org is hosting leatherback expert Ricardo Tapilatu of Indonesia to participate in a Leatherback Summit in Monterey, CA. Early this year Tapilatu's research revealed drastic declines in leatherback nesting on key beaches in West Papua. His new study predicted the Pacific leatherback's extinction within 20 years if new conservation measures are not implemented.



## Protecting Australia's Environment from Fracking, Gas and Coal

WHEN I RETURNED to Australia's Kimberley to hike the Lurujarri Trail this summer, I thought it might be the last chance. It was along this stretch of untouched coast that a massive natural gas refinery was proposed for James Price Point (Walmadan) north of Broome. Thankfully, the proposal was defeated earlier this year after a successful campaign, and the trail is safe for now.

Aboriginal leaders have led the nine-day, 60-mile trek each year since the 1980s to bridge the cultural gap between "blackfellas and whitefellas." The Lurujarri Trail follows ancient songlines (cultural and spiritual navigation routes) along coastal dunes, red cliffs and deep blue ocean. So I joined more than 50 walkers, volunteers and traditional owners in solidarity and celebration of the defense of this beautiful country.

Next, I helped count humpback whales with the Kimberley Community Whale Research project centered about half-

way along the Lurujarri Trail. From a platform atop ancient limestone cliffs, we counted pairs of cows and calves breaching and waving their pectoral fins, and fast-moving bulls spouting and slapping their tails. The citizen science project has successfully countered oil industry claims that the offshore waters near James Price Point (Walmadan) were not important to humpback whales.

To the contrary, last year more than 200 volunteer researchers from around the world counted 2,669 individual whales, extrapolated to an estimated 15,876 whales over three months. This greatly exceeded the 1,000 whales that oil company consultants estimated would pass by.

Finally, on the other side of the country, I was alarmed to see the massive dredging, construction and ship traffic that is threatening the Great Barrier Reef. More than a dozen planned port and fossil fuel projects will destroy and degrade critical nesting, feeding or migration habitat for globally signifi-

cant populations of six species of marine turtles, as well as rare snubfin dolphins and endangered dugongs.

Ship strikes alone have killed 45 sea turtles in Gladstone Harbor over a two-year period after the Curtis Island natural gas projects began, compared with an average of two per year in the past decade. The glare from heavy industry is already so bright that on flatback nesting beaches patrollers can read flipper tags at night without a flashlight.

SeaTurtles.org has joined the Fight to Save the Reef campaign with a lawsuit against the U.S. Export-Import Bank that is funding two natural gas projects in the Great Barrier Reef. We hope you'll join us as we gear up help reverse the industrialization of this treasured region. Go to [SeaTurtles.org/FossilFuel](http://SeaTurtles.org/FossilFuel).

Learn more about the Kimberley at [SeaTurtles.org/KimberleyWhale](http://SeaTurtles.org/KimberleyWhale).

### Cocos Island Spring 2014 Expedition & Raffle Announced

If you or someone you know is an advanced scuba diver, you can join us on our next Cocos Island Research Expedition May 26 to June 5, 2014 to help with our sea turtle and shark research at beautiful Cocos Island, Costa Rica. Visit [SeaTurtles.org/Cocos](http://SeaTurtles.org/Cocos) to find out more about the trip and our work gaining knowledge about these species' migratory patterns in order to underpin our protection efforts in the region. Or, purchase a Raffle ticket for chance to win a free spot on the expedition at [SeaTurtles.org/Raffle!](http://SeaTurtles.org/Raffle!)

## Protecting Loggerhead Sea Turtles in Baja Mexico

THE COASTAL WATERS of Baja, Mexico provide juvenile loggerhead sea turtles a cornucopia of crab—their primary food. But this foraging ground is not a safe haven for the sea turtles, which arrive hungry after their migration from Japanese waters. Sadly, Mexican gillnet fishers have been catching and drowning the turtles as bycatch in their fishing operations—over the past year, 2,000 loggerheads washed up dead.

When SeaTurtles.org called on our activists this spring to help with this issue, we received an amazing show of support. More than 45,000 messages were sent to officials in the U.S. and Mexico calling for an end to the deaths.

SeaTurtles.org, with our legal allies, filed an official petition in the United States under the federal Pelly Amendment, seeking an embargo on Mexican seafood imports to the U.S. until Mexico reduces its sea turtle mortality.



Although it is unclear yet whether the sea turtle deaths have diminished, the petition and the associated threat of an embargo has prompted Mexico to work with fishermen on gear changes and modifications to protect the endangered animals. Scientists from U.S. federal fisheries agency NOAA have also travelled to Mexico to assess the situation. SeaTurtles.org's experience with both advocacy campaigns and

environmental legal action has enabled us to help elevate the issue to gain the attention of the Obama administration and the Mexican government.

We will continue to work to ensure that the United States helps halt the loggerhead deaths, and to draw international attention to this critical issue.

Learn more at [SeaTurtles.org/Baja](http://SeaTurtles.org/Baja).

## Exciting Challenge Match for Cocos Island Protections



SEATURTLES.ORG has exciting news about our efforts to conserve the wildlife and habitats of Cocos Island National Marine Park, Costa Rica, and the Eastern Tropical Pacific region!

Two individuals who care deeply about Cocos Island have challenged the organization to raise at least \$30,000 to save the region's irreplaceable wildlife. When we meet the challenge, these generous donors will match the contributions dollar for dollar.

Cocos Island wildlife needs our help. The sea turtles, sharks, rays and other species of Cocos Island are under continual pressure from illegal fishing even within the park boundaries. If these animals are unlucky enough to venture beyond park boundaries, all bets are off on their survival.

Contributions towards this exciting challenge match will support SeaTurtles.org's efforts to track sea turtle and shark migrations to demonstrate the need for

greater protections, help us identify, train and empower Latin American conservationists and move forward efforts to create broad regional protections for some of the Eastern Pacific's remaining ocean wildlife hotspots.

We invite our members and donors to be a part of this exciting effort to meet the \$30,000 Challenge Match. Gifts of any size are tax-deductible, and will help us meet this giving challenge. Please visit [SeaTurtles.org/CocosChallenge](http://SeaTurtles.org/CocosChallenge) to learn more and give through our secure server today, or contact us at [info@seaturtles.org](mailto:info@seaturtles.org) or 1-800-859-SAVE (7283).

With your support, we can help the wildlife of Cocos Island survive.

# Shop at the Sea Turtle Store



## Our newest additions: SeaTurtles.org Hats and Scented Soaps!

Our hats are 100% organic cotton and come in black and natural **\$20 each**

Our specially made, hand-crafted artisan soaps come in three rich, natural fragrances: **\$7.50 each**

Cinnamon Spice (with Orange)

Lavender (with Spearmint)

Ginger (with Orange and Ylang Ylang)

Order online on our secure server at [SeaTurtles.org/Shop](http://SeaTurtles.org/Shop) or send a check to STRP, P.O. Box 370, Forest Knolls CA 94933.

## Adopt a Nest of Sea Turtle Hatchlings

### Adopt-a-Nest Package Includes:

- Personalized adoption certificate
- Sea turtle window decal
- Sea turtle fact sheets
- *Viva La Tortuga!* newsletter
- Optional Antique Brass Pendant or Felted Wool Hatchling



**Regular Nest—\$45** (\$55 outside U.S.)

**Special Nest with Antique Brass Pendant—\$60**  
(\$70 outside U.S.)

**Special Nest with Felted Wool Hatchling— \$75**  
(\$85 outside U.S.)



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 [SeaTurtles.org/Adopt](http://SeaTurtles.org/Adopt), call us at 1-800-859-7283, 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

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

Visit [SeaTurtles.org/Bequests](http://SeaTurtles.org/Bequests) or contact us at [info@SeaTurtles.org](mailto:info@SeaTurtles.org) or 1-800-859-SAVE for information on including a bequest to SeaTurtles.org 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.

## New Website to Unify Sea Turtle, Salmon & Shark Conservation Programs

**S**EA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT has been one of several initiatives under the Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN) banner. Others include SPAWN (Salmon Protection And Watershed Network), GotMercury.org, and programs to protect sharks and other marine species—most with their own websites.

By the end of fall, all Turtle Island programs will share a new single website, at [SeaTurtles.org](http://SeaTurtles.org), that will highlight the depth of work of Turtle Island to protect many ocean species of special concern. Stay tuned!



## TIRN Welcomes First Conservation Science Director

**T**URTLE ISLAND RESTORATION NETWORK, SeaTurtles.org’s parent organization, welcomed Alex Hearn, PhD in March of this year as our first Conservation Science Director. Through hands-on research and analysis, Alex will help inform our science-based conservation policy advocacy for sea turtles, sharks, salmon and other key marine wildlife.

While growing up in Madrid, Spain, Alex knew he wanted to be a biologist—and first discovered his passion for marine biology as a teenager while conducting fieldwork on Spain’s Northern Coast.

After receiving his PhD in marine biology, Alex spent eight years at the Galapagos Islands Marine Reserve with the Charles Darwin Foundation, where he guided policy and research, and initiated the first Shark Research Program in the Reserve. He also spear-

headed the creation of Migramar, a regional scientific collaboration to share information gained from acoustical “listening stations” that track tagged sharks.

“The most satisfying aspect of being a marine biologist is seeing science turned into conservation policy and really making a difference,” says Alex. “I look forward to expanding TIRN’s efforts to protect key wildlife hotspots by developing the scientific data needed to guide critical conservation measures.”

## Intern Profiles

**I**NTERNS PROVIDE crucial helping hands at SeaTurtles.Org and our parent nonprofit Turtle Island Restoration Network, while gaining skills and work experience. To learn more about current positions, visit [SeaTurtles.org/internships](http://SeaTurtles.org/internships). Thank you all for your hard work!

**KELSEY BAKER, Education and Outreach Intern**—Santa Clara University Junior studying Environmental Science, Minor in International Relations

**KATY BIDDLE, Pacific Campaign Intern**—Vanderbilt University Senior studying Communication Studies and Corporate Strategy

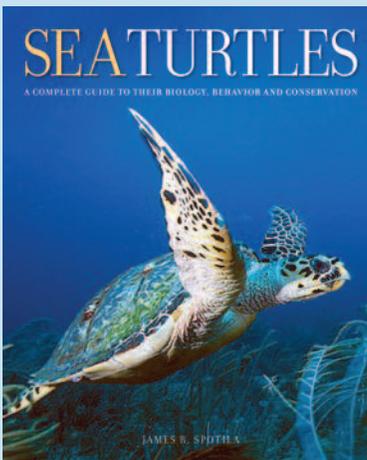
**STEPHANIE HERNANDEZ, Development and Communications Intern**—Recent UC Santa Cruz graduate with a BA in Politics: International Relations

**ESMY JIMENEZ, Pacific Campaign Intern**—University of Southern California Junior studying International Relations & Environment Studies



**RIANA KERNAN, SPAWN Residential Intern**—UC Santa Cruz and Berkeley graduate with a B.S. in Engineering, upcoming master’s student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

**CHRISTINA MORRISETT, Conservation Science Intern**—Stanford University Senior studying Earth Systems: Oceans



## 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 [SeaTurtles.org/STARs](http://SeaTurtles.org/STARs).



Turtle Island Restoration Network  
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ANGELA HADDEN



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### 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.

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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

Layout and design: Daniela Sklan | Hummingbird Design Studio

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Issue No. 2, 2013

Newsletter of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project

*A project of Turtle Island Restoration Network*



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