



Viva la Tortuga!

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

SeaTurtles.org Wins Gillnet Reprieve for California's Leatherback Sea Turtles

Destructive Drift Gillnet Fishery Kept Out of Prime Habitat

WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR tens of thousands of members and activists, the Sea Turtle Restoration Project (SeaTurtles.org) has won a victory for critically endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtles and their jellyfish “hunting grounds” off the U.S. West Coast. For at least the next year, we have stopped the destructive drift gillnet fishery for swordfish from dragging their immense, indiscriminate nets in the prime sea turtle habitat of the protected Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area (PLCA).

SeaTurtles.org educated and mobilized ocean conservation groups, the California Coastal Commission, California State Assembly, scientists and thousands of people who registered their opposition to expansion of the drift gillnet fleet into protected sea turtle habitat. The expansion would have increased the risk of endangered sea turtles, whales, dolphins, sea lions, sea birds and sharks becoming tangled and drowning, as well as the waste of tons of unwanted “non-target” fish.

The PLCA prohibits gillnetting during peak sea turtle foraging season each year, and protects not only sea turtles but also all the marine animals that use this biologically rich area. Since SeaTurtles.org won the PLCA protections in 2000 through litigation to stop high numbers of sea turtle deaths, only one leatherback sea turtle has been observed entangled in the gillnet fishery, compared to dozens in the past.

However, the reprieve could be temporary unless we keep up the fight. Federal fishery managers in the Pacific Fisheries Management Council voted to maintain

continued on page 2



MARK COTTER



Victory for Australian Flatback Sea Turtles!

ROD HARTVIGSEN, WWW.MURRANJI.COM.AU

BIG OIL WITHDRAWS PLANS

Australian activists have won a major victory in the fight to save the pristine Kimberley coast from a massive natural gas plant.

After three years of non-stop opposition from environmentalists in Australia and around the world, oil giant Woodside Petroleum scrapped its plan for a Browse Basin natural gas refinery at James Price Point.

Thanks to our supporters, SeaTurtles.org helped turn the tide against this massive fossil fuel project which would have destroyed the habitat of sea turtles, humpback whales and marine species that rely on the Kimberley coast for feeding, migration and breeding.

Letter from the Director

LOGGERHEAD “TEENAGERS” DYING IN MEXICAN BAJA WATERS

AS TINY COOKIE-SIZED HATCHLINGS, North Pacific loggerheads that leave their hatching sites on Japan’s southern beaches are extremely vulnerable to predation, and only a small percentage will reach adulthood, after spending their young lives floating in the open ocean. This is not unique to loggerheads, but is a common life history trait of all sea turtles.

If you were a sea turtle among the lucky survivors that begin to approach adult size, the tables would be turned in your favor. Only a few predators are big enough to take on a large turtle. Now your chances of survival are quite good.

This evolutionary strategy has allowed sea turtles to survive for a hundred million years... until modern times. But now new, more “efficient” fishing gear often catch and drown these large adult turtles, circumventing the process that allowed the loggerhead population to survive for millennia. Sub-adult “teenage” turtles move from open ocean habitat to near-shore areas, where food is abundant. For loggerheads born in Japan, this means heading for Baja California where the red crab are plentiful. They may spend ten or more years here chowing down at this crab feed before reaching sexual maturity, at which time they make the remarkable reverse journey back to Japan to lay eggs and continue their ancient legacy.

Thankfully, in the U.S., loggerheads on both coasts now receive additional protections. It was nearly two years ago that SeaTurtles.org used legal action to get more protections for the Pacific loggerheads, by compelling the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to up-list North Pacific loggerheads from “threatened” to “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act. Now NMFS has begun to designate “critical habitat,” where stronger protections prevail, for loggerheads that nest in the U.S. The new protections also mean that the California drift gillnet fishery must stop fishing off our coast when warm El Niño conditions bring the loggerhead sea turtles near our shore.

But in Mexico’s Baja California, the loggerheads haven’t been so lucky. Nearly a thousand drowned in the past year in gillnets set for halibut, the highest sea turtle bycatch rate recorded for sea turtles anywhere in the world! This carnage threatens to wipe out this critically endangered species in our lifetime—if we don’t make sure it is stopped!

And we will stop it—with the help of our members and other caring people like you around the world. If you haven’t already, please sign our online petition at SeaTurtles.org/Baja and send a letter to the President of Mexico. And rest assured, besides organizing grassroots action to force changes, we are also preparing legal strategies to keep the pressure on, while we work to create protected “swimways” to connect critical nesting and feeding grounds for marine turtles.

Together, we will give Mexico’s teenage loggerheads a fighting chance to reach adulthood and return home to the waters of Japan.

Viva La Tortuga,



TODD STEINER

Leatherback

continued from cover

the protection for at least another year while the fisheries agency collects more data on the potential impacts to sea turtles and other species.

“If the fisheries Council seriously looks at the science, they will keep it closed, but we fear politics, not science may dictate their decision,” said Teri Shore, Program Director. “We need to focus on phasing out high bycatch gillnet gear now, not keeping the door open to more gillnetting later.”

SeaTurtles.org is committed to protecting the Pacific Ocean’s sea turtles and all marine animals for good. Though the expansion has been halted for now, the fishery—one of the last drift gillnet fisheries in the United States—can still drag its mile-long curtains of death just off the California coast outside the PLCA, with deadly consequences for ocean wildlife. Gillnets “soak” in the ocean overnight, entangling and killing marine animals and fish indiscriminately. As a result, more than 80 percent of fish and sea life caught in California’s large mesh drift gillnet fleet is neither targeted swordfish nor thresher shark.

In the coming year, with the help of our committed members and activists, SeaTurtles.org will be developing a clear path to phasing this deadly fishery out. Stay in close touch with us to learn the latest developments in this important campaign. Join our sea turtle Action Alert Email list at SeaTurtles.org. Learn ways to take action now to help sea turtles.



130,000+ Supporters For the Honu!

THE RECOVERY of the beautiful green sea turtles that live in the Hawaiian Islands is a wonderful success story with a little-known dark side. Hawaiian fishers have petitioned to remove protections from the local green sea turtles, known for centuries as Honu by natives, and legalize turtle hunting. Thanks to SeaTurtles.org, over 130,000 people who care about sea turtles have registered their opposition to this destructive proposal.

Now federal managers must decide whether or not to keep the Honu protected under the Endangered Species Act. Hunting nearly drove them to extinction in the 1970s. Sea levels are rising at their remote nesting islands, hotels are expanding on their beaches, and fisheries kill them on hooks and in nets.

We will fight for protections for the Honu and all sea turtles that rely on the Hawaiian Islands. Take action by going to SeaTurtles.org/Honu.

Coastline Protections for Atlantic and Gulf Loggerheads

RESPONDING TO A LAWSUIT by SeaTurtles.org and its allies, the federal government has finally—after a delay of five years—proposed to create more than 739 miles of critical habitat for threatened loggerhead sea turtles on their nesting beaches along the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

“At last, these precious and well-loved sea turtles will find a safe haven when nesting and swimming along our coasts,” said Todd Steiner, executive director of SeaTurtles.org. “Thousands of volunteers who spend their summer nights walking the beaches looking for nesting turtles will breathe a bit easier knowing that these gentle giants will face less

danger when they return to the sea.”

These sea turtles face serious threats to their long-term survival due to drowning in fishing nets (see the Letter from the Director on page 2), loss of nesting beaches due to coastal development and sea-level rise. The area proposed for protection spans from North Carolina to Mississippi and encompasses 84 percent of all known nesting areas.

The final critical habitat protections are expected to take effect in 2014. Species with critical habitat protected under the Endangered Species Act are twice as likely to show signs of measurable recovery compared to those without.

Turtle Advocates Speak Out on Capitol Hill

BY PROGRAM DIRECTOR TERI SHORE



A DAY BEFORE THE OPENING of the International Sea Turtle Symposium in Baltimore, I spent a day on Capitol Hill with other sea turtle advocates seeking new sea turtle champions. The goal was to secure a Congressional inquiry into why no actions have been taken to end three straight years of high sea turtle strandings in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic coast.

We updated more than a dozen legislative staff on the dire threats to the survival and recovery of sea turtles due to accidental capture in shrimp trawls, longlines and drift gillnets.

Dr. James R. Spotila, a well-known sea turtle scientist and expert on the Pacific

leatherback, described the life cycles and threats to vulnerable sea turtle populations. I spoke about the federal government’s failure to close a loophole in fishery conservation law to require all shrimp boats to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs). The National Marine Fisheries Service is allowing as many as 20,000 sea turtles to be captured by skimmer trawls that operate primarily in the shallow waters and bays of Louisiana in violation of the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Now SeaTurtles.org is working with Senate and House offices to finalize an inquiry seeking immediate action from National Marine Fisheries Service to protect sea turtles from shrimp nets and stop the high strandings of sea turtles.

The Kemp's ridley has made an incredible comeback in Gulf Coast waters.

The Kemp's Ridley On the Way to Being the State Sea Turtle of Texas



TEXAS HAS A STATE BIRD, flower, song, small and large mammals, fish, shell, tree, insect, plant, fruit, stone, shrub and many other symbols, but no official state sea turtle.

The Fourth Grade Green Team at Oppe Elementary in Galveston and their teacher, Katie Blazer, hope to solve this problem. Working with the SeaTurtles.org Gulf Office, the students researched the incredible history of the Kemp's ridley.

Students wrote a resolution asking that the Kemp's ridley sea turtle be proclaimed the official sea turtle of the state of Texas. They asked Texas Representative Craig Eiland of Galveston to help them and he introduced their HCR 31 to the Texas legislature in

January. The resolution was sent to the Culture, Recreation and Tourism Committee in Austin where it awaits moving to the full House for a vote.

The last paragraph of the resolution sums up the document:

“Once the most imperiled of all sea turtles, the Kemp's ridley is today becoming a more common resident of the Gulf Coast waters; its comeback is a testament to its resilience and to the admirable work of those Texans who have aided its recovery, and this noble animal is indeed a fitting symbol of the Lone Star State.”

Texas residents and students in Texas schools are asked to contact their own representatives to support HCR 31. You can find out more at SeaTurtles.org/Texas.

Gulf of Mexico Update: Activism Campaign and Plans to Open New Office

EXTENDING ON ITS HISTORY of success in the Gulf of Mexico, SeaTurtles.org will expand its operational footprint in Texas by hiring an Associate Campaign Director to support the ongoing efforts of Gulf Director Carole Allen in leading community organization and advocacy programs, and managing interns and volunteers.

In order to provide a beachhead for its activist and advocacy “on the ground,” SeaTurtles.org will also open an office and visitor's center in a high foot-traffic corridor on Galveston Island. The office will serve as a hub for volunteer activities such as nesting patrols and outreach to both the area's residents and its large (and growing) tourism sector. We plan to have the office doors open by June 1.

The upper Texas coast—and Galveston Island in particular—is an increasingly important area for Kemp's ridley conservation efforts.

This species of turtle has a large nesting presence at the Padre Island National Seashore and on South Padre Island (near the Mexican border), but establishing a sustainable satellite population will be an important step in long-term recovery.

At present, a growing population of females nest each year on the Upper Texas Coast, and we hope to increase that number with both on-the-ground conservation efforts and greater policy protections. In the short term, one of the key goals is to have eggs laid on upper Texas beaches hatch out “in situ,” thereby increasing both the hatch rate

and, over time, the size of the nesting population. Longer term, multiple self-sustaining populations will help insulate the species from high-impact weather, ecological or pollution events such as hurricanes or oil spills.



Hammerhead sharks are finally now protected from being caught and killed for their fins under the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species Act.

Carole Allen Honored for Commitment to the Texas Coast

SEATURTLES.ORG is proud to announce that Carole Allen, our Gulf Office Director and board member, has been honored with a Sierra Club Hermann Rudenberg award for service to the Texas Coast. Since the 1980s, Carole has successfully turned her passion for sea turtles into effective campaigns to save the critically endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtles of the Gulf of Mexico.



"I first visited the Galveston, Texas 'turtle house' when they were raising hatchlings to regenerate the species from near-extinction. The funding was in jeopardy so I founded a group called *Help Endangered Animals—Ridley Turtles (HEART)* that let schoolchildren help pay for turtle food," says Carole. "Later, the fight to save these turtles from being killed in shrimp nets took over my life."

Today, thanks in part to Carole's tireless efforts, Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) are required by federal law on most shrimp nets, saving thousands of sea turtles each year. In addition to the Sierra Club Award, her work has been honored by a chapter in the book *Eco-Barons* by Edward Humes, *Oprah Magazine*, and numerous other publications and awards. Congratulations, Carole!



GEORGE DUFFIELD

Making the Oceans Safer for Sharks

Victory at CITES Convention

IN MARCH, seven species of sharks and rays, including hammerhead sharks, received much-needed protection under the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), making it more difficult to trade these species' valued body parts.

Hammerheads had previously been excluded from the proposal for increased protections, but this council of CITES approved their inclusion by a two-thirds majority. Shark Stewards, a sister conservation initiative of

SeaTurtles.org, provided data to the appeal for hammerheads and a flood of signatures in support.

"This is a great victory for sharks. Hammerheads are getting hammered because their fins are among the most coveted for shark fin soup and they are easy to catch due to their large aggregations at pinnacles and islands," said David McGuire, Director of Shark Stewards. "This will provide some relief while we continue to fight the shark fin trade."

Texas Shark Fin Campaign Advances

SEATURTLES.ORG and Shark Stewards thank Texas Representatives Eddie Lucio III and Sen. Larry Taylor for introducing a bill in Texas to prohibit the sale, trade, purchase and transportation of shark fins in the state. If passed, Texas would become the sixth state to crack down on the cruel and unnecessary shark fin trade.

Shark Stewards has supported Texas activists in forwarding this important legislation, and recently provided testimony to the state representatives in Austin, Texas. Director David McGuire commented, "Reducing consumption and the trade of shark fins in Texas will help protect sharks, Texas marine ecosystems and the health of fisheries for the future." Go to SharkStewards.org to take action.

Give Your Dad or Grad a Sea Turtle Gift!



Shop at the Sea Turtle Store for T-shirts, Hats, Jewelry and Books—all celebrating sea turtles.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Glass Sea Turtle Pendant | \$48 |
| Organic Cotton T-Shirt | \$27 (Men's size S,M,L,XL) |
| Antique Bronze Detailed Pendant | \$17 |

Adopt a Nest of Sea Turtle Hatchlings

A WONDERFUL PRESENT for Father's Day or Graduation Day! Give a gift that helps protect sea turtles and their nests by supporting our nest monitoring and patrol programs.

Adopt-a-Nest Package Includes:

- Personalized adoption certificate
- Sea turtle window decal
- Sea turtle fact sheets
- *Viva La Tortuga!* newsletter
- Optional Pewter Pendant or Charm Bracelet



Regular Nest—\$45 (\$55 outside U.S.) includes all of the above.

Special Nest with Pewter Pendant—\$60 (\$70 outside U.S.)

Includes the Adopt-A-Nest package plus a pewter stylized sea turtle pendant.



Special Nest with Hatchling 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 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.

Leatherback Research Eco-Tour Tackles Plastic Pollution

PLASTIC POLLUTION in the ocean is the most abundant and deadly form of marine debris. Scientists have identified plastic pollution as a global problem alongside other key issues of our time including climate change, ocean acidification and loss of biodiversity.

We are excited to share a new partnership to bring volunteers to sea turtle nesting beaches in Costa Rica and engage them in efforts to study and reduce plastic debris that is harmful, and sometimes deadly, to sea turtles when they mistake it for food.

From June 2-8, 2013 volunteers will join Dr. Chris Pincetich of SeaTurtles.org on an eco-tour through Costa Rican rainforests to remote Caribbean leatherback nesting beaches. Nights are spent patrolling for nesting leatherbacks with conservation scientists and days can be spent surveying and removing the plastics that litter the beach.

For more information, contact Chris at Chris@SeaTurtles.org.



NEIL OSBORNE



Share the “50 Ways to Help Save the Ocean”

THE HEALTH OF OUR OCEANS is crucial to the well being of sea turtles, other marine species and ourselves.

The cumulative addition of all our small actions every day can have a big impact on the ocean. That’s why we’ve begun the “50 Ways to Help Save the Ocean” weekly outreach campaign. Our email subscribers receive a new tip each week for helping with ocean conservation and restoration.

The ocean is connected across the globe—sea turtles voyage through all but the coldest reaches. Pollution, overfishing, global warming, vessel traffic, and fishing with gear destructive to the habitat are all harming the ocean and its inhabitants.

Together, we can bring about change to slow and stop these harmful practices for the benefit of sea turtles, the ocean, and ourselves. It all starts with simple actions like those in our “50 Ways to Help Save the Ocean” messages.

Go to SeaTurtles.org/50ways to check out our weekly tips and share them with your friends, and sign up for our email newsletter at SeaTurtles.org.

November Cocos Trip

LEARN MORE about our sea turtle and shark research at beautiful Cocos Island, Costa Rica. Visit SeaTurtles.Org/Cocos to find out about our research, follow tagged sea turtles online and get the details on how you can participate as a volunteer dive researcher on our next Sea Turtle Tagging Expedition, November 11-21.

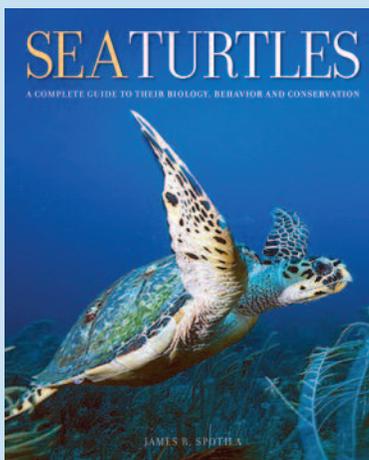
Leave a Legacy for the Sea Turtles

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 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.



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

HELP 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.



Turtle Island Restoration Network
Sea Turtle Restoration Project
P.O. Box 370
Forest Knolls, CA 94933



© DOUG PERRINE / SEAPICS.COM



ANGELA HADDEN

in this issue:

Leatherback Sea Turtles Win Reprieve from Gillnets

Coastline Protected for Atlantic and Gulf Loggerheads

Over 130,000 Supporters for Hawaii's Honu!

Help Stop Baja Mexico Loggerheads from Dying in Gillnets

Leatherback Research Eco-tour Tackles Plastic Pollution

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:

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

Viva la Tortuga!



Issue No. 1, 2013

Newsletter of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project

A project of Turtle Island Restoration Network



Contact Us:

NORTH AMERICAN OFFICE
P.O. Box 370, Forest Knolls, CA 94933
phone 415-663-8590 or 800-859-7283
fax 415-663-9534
e-mail info@SeaTurtles.org
website www.SeaTurtles.org

CENTRAL AMERICAN OFFICE
Randall Arauz (Costa Rica)
phone 011-506-2241-5227
fax 011-506-2236-6017
e-mail rarauz@pretoma.org

GULF OF MEXICO OFFICE
Carole Allen (Houston)
phone/fax 281-444-6204
e-mail carole@SeaTurtles.org