

VELADOR

Science-Based Sea Turtle Conservation Since 1959

Issue 3, 2013

STC provides training and advice to sea turtle projects in Colombia and Cuba



One of two sea turtle nesting beaches in Cuba being considered for turtle-based tourism with STC's guidance

Part of Sea Turtle Conservancy's (STC) mission is to share its expertise in sea turtle research and conservation methods by offering training to other organizations, aspiring biologists, and start-up projects around the world. For example, STC's Research Assistant program in Tortuguero, Costa Rica, provides hands-on, practical field experience to dozens of participants each year, with a focus on recruiting people from Caribbean and Latin American countries. In 2011, three members of the community of Vereda el Lechugal, located on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, came to Tortuguero for training during the annual Green Turtle Program. These individuals belong to a community that recently established a sea turtle monitoring program on Playa Bobalito close to their village. After spending the sea-

son training in Tortuguero, their experiences were put into practice back in Colombia, where they incorporated newly-acquired skills to further develop their own turtle monitoring and protection project.

STC's Dr. Emma Harrison remained in contact with the biologist overseeing the Playa Bobalito Project, and in 2012 learned of their interest to initiate a tagging program for leatherbacks. Recent aerial surveys and other anecdotal evidence suggest that the leatherbacks nesting along this particular stretch of Colombian may be from the same population that nests at several beaches monitored by STC in Costa Rica and Panama. Given the potential connection with STC's own conservation

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Inside: Leatherbacks - Cold or Hot? The answer may surprise you.



Maura Kraus

Shopping Guide: Check out all the sea turtle-themed gift ideas!

Member Spotlight

Craig Fulton and Rebecca Whiddon have more than their STC membership in common. They both love the ocean, nature, and conservation. They also share a life together. Craig and Rebecca were married this past September in Florida. Realizing they didn't need anymore "stuff," they asked their wedding guests to make donations to STC in lieu of wedding gifts. To get a better sense of what motivates Craig and Rebecca to support STC's work, we asked them a few questions:

Q: What interests you about sea turtles?

A: We both love watching these gentle giants in and out of the water. We have seen them in the water while snorkeling in Hawaii and the Florida Keys. They live a long time compared to other animals which is interesting.

Q: How did you first learn about Sea Turtle Conservancy?

A: We saw an article in the newspaper and went down to the Barrier Island Center in Melbourne Beach, Florida.

Q: You chose to ask your wedding guests to make donations to STC instead of bringing gifts. What made you decide to do that?

A: We don't need anymore "stuff." We felt that all our guests from the area would be more than willing to contribute to this worthy cause. All of our friends and family are nature and animal lovers! We feel that STC does wonderful work in our local area to help preserve the nesting areas and educate people about sea turtles.

Q: Any favorite sea turtle facts or personal anecdotes?

A: I (Rebecca) saw my first large sea turtle in the wild while snorkeling in about 60 feet of water off the big island of Hawaii. It was such a thrill and the turtle was not afraid at all. It came very close to me. He/she was curious about this creature floating on top of the water! The turtle surfaced and then dove down with such grace. It came back to the area where I was swimming and just hung out, until another snorkeler came over and tried to "ride" it! The turtle shot down and swam so fast; it was amazing to me. 

The 2013 Tour de Turtles has concluded with Calypso Blue II winning the Marathon and Carrie winning the Causes Challenge!

Special thanks to this year's turtle sponsors: Calypso Blue II - Atlantis, Paradise Island; Carrie - Disney's Aniaml Programs & Disney's Vero Beach Resort; Banjo and Caribelle - Four Seasons Nevis; Claire - Disney World-wide Conservation Fund; Cruz - Shark Reef Aquarium; Ripley - Ripley's Aquariums; Tampa Red - Tampa Bay Green Consortium; Relay - Turtle & Hughes, Inc; and Johnny - John's Island Real Estate Company. Panama Jackie and Mora were supported by the Sea Turtle Conservancy. The Tour de Turtles program was funded in part by the Florida Sea Turtle License Plate Grants Program, NOAA & FL DEP, The Boeing Company, and the Community Foundation for Brevard County. You can find a full re-cap of this year's Tour de Turtles on our website. 

In Caribbean cultures, **Velador** translates as "one who stands vigil" — originally referring to turtle and egg harvesters who waited at night for turtles to come ashore. Now STC claims this title for its newsletter, and around the Caribbean STC's researchers and volunteers are replacing poachers as the new veladors.

The **Velador** is published for members and supporters of the nonprofit **Sea Turtle Conservancy**. STC is dedicated to the conservation of sea turtles through research, advocacy, education and protection of the habitats upon which they depend.

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... from cover

projects, this presented a good opportunity to help expand existing knowledge about regional leatherback populations, while also supporting a new turtle conservation initiative. At the outset, it was important to STC that beach monitors receive proper training in how to correctly tag a leatherback, as well as other basic data collection and management skills. Thus, in April 2013, Dr. Harrison travelled to Colombia to provide a thorough training course to beach monitors participating in the Playa Bobalito Project (*pictured above*). The training covered general sea turtle biology, research methodology, and practical sessions on measuring turtles, marking nests and flipper tagging. STC will continue to provide technical support and assistance to the project at Playa Bobalito, and it is even possible that they might come across a leatherback that was tagged by STC at Tortuguero or Chiriquí Beach in Panama, adding another piece to the puzzle about where leatherback turtles from this population are nesting.



In addition to being a leading sea turtle research and conservation organization, STC has significant experience helping develop sustainable tourism activities. For example, STC conducts annual train-

ing of tour guides at Tortuguero and oversees a novel sea turtle-walk system that helps minimize negative impacts of tourism on nesting turtles and their habitat. This expertise lead to an invitation for STC to participate in a workshop held in Cuba this October to share experiences, both good and bad, of turtle tourism. Dr. Harrison represented STC and provided important guidance to colleagues in Cuba hoping to develop a model ecotourism program. Their goal is to develop sea turtle tourism as a sustainable source of financial support for conservation efforts in the country. Dr. Harrison reviewed lessons from tourism activities at two STC sites and offered general recommendations that will help guide the development of turtle tourism in Cuba. STC will remain involved in planning over the next few months as these endeavors move forward. 🐢

STC and UF Conservation Law Clinic shine a light on protection.

Every year in Florida, tens of thousands of sea turtle hatchlings emerge from their nests and head inland or wander aimlessly along the beach rather than quickly scurrying into the surf. These turtles are disoriented by artificial lights from buildings, roads and infrastructure that interfere with the sea-finding ability of hatchlings. Disorientations are a major source of hatchling mortality, but the problem can be eliminated or greatly reduced through proper management of artificial lighting near nesting beaches.

Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC) teamed up with the Conservation Clinic (the Clinic) at the University of Florida College of Law to assess and improve the effectiveness of local lighting regulations, which are supposed to help protect sea turtles. Clinic students and faculty reviewed the current regulatory framework for protecting sea turtles from the adverse effects of artificial lighting. The Clinic then worked with STC's lighting experts to develop a set of "best lighting practices" and tested current local ordinances against these best practices. The Clinic concluded that advances in lighting technology and a greater understanding of how sea turtles respond to lighting rendered many existing ordinances outdated.

The Clinic worked with STC to draft a new model lighting ordinance that reflects current state of the art "sea turtle friendly" lighting. The model can be used as a basis for replacing or modifying existing ordinances that fall short or by coastal governments seeking to establish their first ordinances to protect sea turtles from beachfront lighting. In addition, the Clinic drafted a set of governing documents for planned communities and homeowner associations wishing to address beachfront lighting. Both of these legal instruments encourage the use of effective new technologies. Each document was reviewed by attorneys knowledgeable in local government and community association law, as well as a representative of the regulated coastal development community. Local government and sea turtle advocates should be careful to consider local circumstances when developing new ordinances. The model is intended to be a guide to best practices, not a "one size fits all" approach.

The full report can be found online at <http://www.law.ufl.edu/academics/clinics/conservation-clinic>.

STC thanks the Clinic and its students for their excellent work on behalf of the long-term recovery of sea turtle populations in Florida and elsewhere. 🐢

Holiday Gift Guide

A.



C.



B.



D.



A. **2013 Ornament** - featuring a Kemp's ridley sea turtle based on a drawing by wildlife artist, Dawn Witherington. Approx. 4". **\$9.95**

B. **2014 Sea Turtle Scenes Calendar** - 11" x 17" (open) wall calendar features some of STC's favorite sea turtles in action. **\$12.95**

C. **STC Reusable Shopping Bag** - a perfect alternative to plastic store bags. This eco-friendly bag is 14.5" x 18" and stores easily in its own pouch to become 4"x3". Includes carabiner clip. Black with STC logo on both bag and pouch. **\$12.95**

D. **Sea Turtle 8GB USB Flash Drive** - plug-and-play, compatible with most Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems. **\$19.95**

Visit conserveturtles.org/store to shop for these items and other great turtle gear!

E.



F.



G.



H.



Pistachio



Light blue



I.

J.



E. STC Logo Medallion - bronze medallion with STC logo created by Reller Gold. Includes leather cord. **\$24.95**

F. STC Hatchling Bead - sea turtle bead in sterling silver created by Reller Gold. Fits all popular bead bracelets. **\$44.95**

G. STC Logo Pendant - sterling silver pendant with STC Logo created by Reller Gold. Available in 5/8" or 7/8". **\$19.95 /\$34.95**

H. Sea Turtle Plush - an adorable plush sea turtle makes a great soft toy or collectible. The perfect gift for children of all ages. 5" in length. **\$6.95**

I. Sea Turtle Shirt - cotton t-shirt with artwork donated by artist Damien Share. Available in adult sizes SM, MD, LG & XL. Colors: pistachio and light blue. **\$19.95**

J. Nail File - nail file has images of sea turtles on both sides. It is a fine-medium grit file designed to not tear your nails. Images are durable and designed not wear off. Approximately 7". Two for **\$5.00**

K.

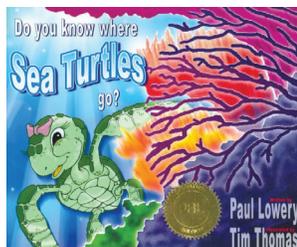


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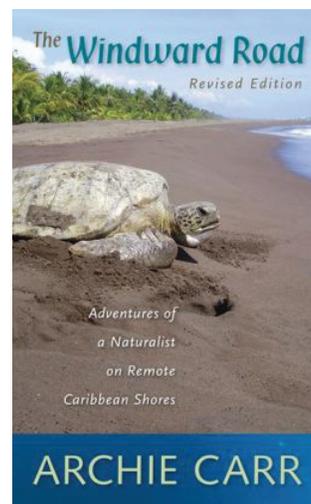
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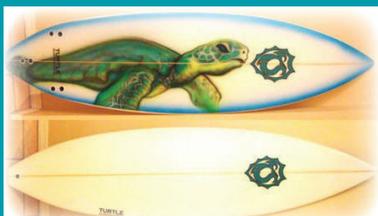
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loggerheadapparel.com

K. STC Cell Phone Case - protect your cell phone with the STC logo neoprene case. Measures 3" x 5", royal blue with white logo. **\$5.99**

L. Replica Sea Turtle License Plate - mock version of Florida's sea turtle speciality plate for the front of your car. Metal, size of a standard American license plate. **\$12.95**

M. Do You Know Where Sea Turtles Go? - this children's book, by Paul Lowery, takes readers on an adventure following the life cycle of a sea turtle from hatchling to adulthood. **\$15.99**

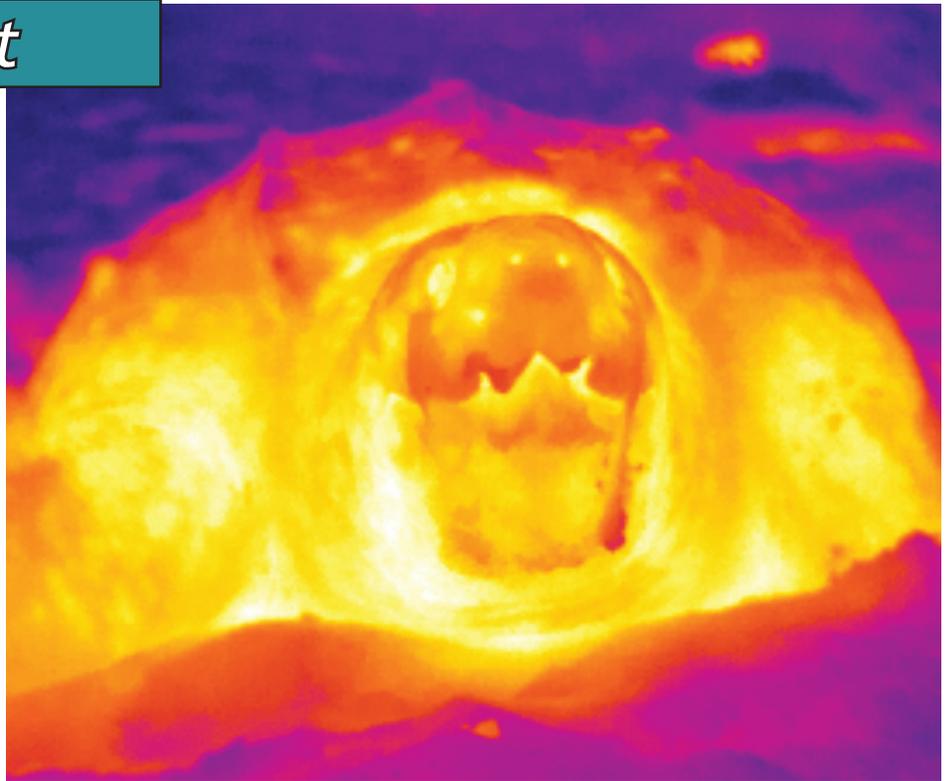
N. The Windward Road - with the publishing of this book in 1956, Dr. Carr started the global movement to protect sea turtles. 2013 ed. with a Foreword by STC's David Godfrey. **\$19.95**

Visit conserveturtles.org/store to shop for these items and other great turtle gear!

Research Spotlight

Not As Cold-Blooded As Once Thought

In school, we learned that there are two types of animals, warm blooded (such as humans) and cold blooded (such as sea turtles). Apparently, leatherback sea turtles missed that day in class. Leatherbacks produce more body heat than the typical reptile but less body heat than mammals. Their large size means they retain that heat longer than smaller animals. With the higher heat production and retention, leatherbacks straddle the line between warm-blooded and cold-blooded animals. This characteristic can be quite useful as it allows leatherbacks to venture into their very cold foraging waters, which are rich in jellyfish, but it also puts leatherbacks at danger of overheating and dying while nesting near the equatorial region. This danger of overheating while nesting could increase as global temperatures continue to rise.



A nesting leatherback with her mouth open, the brighter the color, the hotter the surface. The black Soropta Beach sand shows up as a cool purple.

• Peter Dudley, a Ph.D. candidate in Warren Porter's Lab at the University of Wisconsin, is modeling how global warming will affect leatherbacks. Part of his project includes taking thermal images of leatherbacks as they nest. Data from these images combined with information about the local physical environment (e.g., air and soil temperatures, humidity, and sand moisture) and beach conditions (e.g., beach slope and physical sand characteristics) will both inform and validate the leatherback's modeled response to changing environmental conditions.



Photo showing the body temperature of STC Executive Director David Godfrey (warm-blooded human) next to a nesting leatherback sea turtle ("cold-blooded" reptile).

STC recently assisted in the gathering of data for this project. Mr. Dudley and Samantha Greene (physical geographer) joined STC patrols at Soropta Beach, Panama, over the course of five nights this summer. With the help of the STC crew, Peter and Samantha recorded thermal images of 11 leatherbacks, exceeding the initial project goal. 🐢

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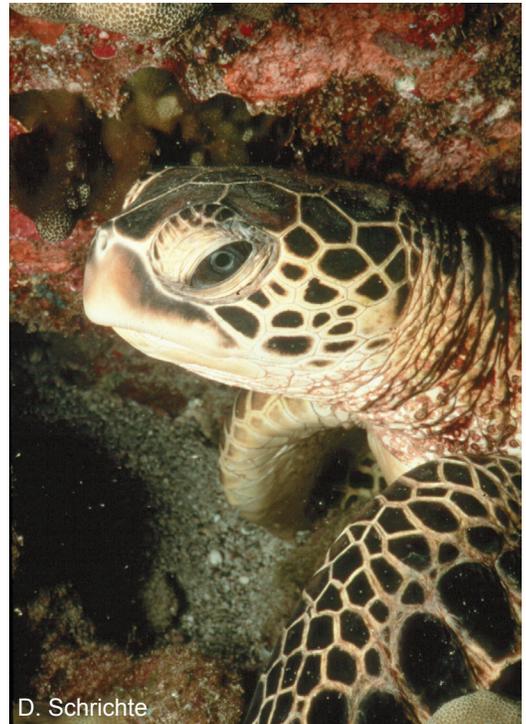
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Membership

Still looking for the perfect holiday gift? A Membership with the Sea Turtle Conservancy is a great way to show the people in your life that you care about them and about making a difference. For a tax-deductible donation of \$30 (\$40 internationally) your friends and family will become STC Members for one year and will receive a Membership kit and subscription to our Membership publication, the Velador. For a donation of \$50 or more you can choose to send them a collectable holiday ornament or STC's 2014 calendar (while supplies last). We'll take care of all the details! Visit <http://www.conserveturtles.org/donate> to give the gift of Membership.

Another great gift idea is to Adopt-A-Sea Turtle for your loved ones. For \$30 (\$40 internationally) or more you can adopt a satellite-tracked turtle or a green turtle from Tortuguero. We'll send your gift recipient an adoption kit and personalized certificate. Gift recipients also receive a one-year Membership to STC. For an adoption of \$50 or more you can choose to include a sea turtle plush, holiday ornament or 2014 calendar (while supplies last). All donations made to STC are tax-deductible. Visit <http://www.conserveturtles.org/adoptaturtle> to give a gift adoption.



To adopt a sea turtle, please visit www.conserveturtles.org/adoptaturtle today!



Sea Turtle Conservancy is proud to be consistently recognized by charity watchdogs GuideStar and Charity Navigator for our commitment to transparency, good governance and fiscal responsibility. STC has received Charity Navigator's coveted 4-Star ranking for eight years in a row. STC uses your donations wisely and efficiently to conduct sea turtle research and conservation. To learn more visit www.guidestar.com and www.charitynavigator.com.

