



Science-Based Sea Turtle Conservation Since 1959

Issue 1, 2019

## STC Expands Sea Turtle Lighting Retrofit Program to Florida's Southwest Coast



Photo by: Ralph Pace

An STC researcher prepares to tag a nesting green turtle, with no light visible aside from the stars above and a small red headlamp. STC's newly-expanded lighting project hopes to restore this kind of darkness to nesting habitat along Florida's southwest coast.

Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC) is excited to announce a major expansion of its sea turtle-friendly lighting retrofit program. Through a recently-approved four-year grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, STC will now be able to retrofit beachfront properties along the entire southwest coast of

Florida. NFWF began supporting STC's lighting retrofit work in 2010, in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, as a way to mitigate the impacts of the spill on Florida's sea turtle nesting populations. Since 2014, the project has focused on lighting retrofits solely in the Florida panhandle. Under this newly-approved grant, STC's lighting team will

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**Inside: Adopted Turtles  
Return to Tortuguero**



*A sneak peek into this summer's Tour de Turtles!*

### ... from cover

now target the southwest region with the same goals of reducing sea turtle disorientations and improving the quality of nesting beaches by eliminating problematic artificial lighting on the coast.

“The project has been very successful in other parts of the state. We’ve already darkened over 27 miles of nesting habitat and seen disorientation rates decrease to essentially 0% in front of the properties we’ve retrofitted! STC plans to continue making this kind of positive impact on Florida’s southwest coast,” said Rachel Tighe, STC Lighting Project Manager.

STC will spend the first half of this year collecting preliminary data about disorientation rates in different coastal communities and identifying problem properties in this heavily-populated region, which spans nearly 200 miles of coastline from Clearwater to Naples and hosts the highest density of sea turtle nesting on Florida’s Gulf Coast. The grant will allow STC to retrofit properties across six coastal counties. Many beaches in this region see hundreds of sea turtle nests each season; unfortunately, hatchling disorientation rates on these beaches are among the highest in the state. STC will address this growing problem by retrofitting the exterior lights on beachfront businesses, multi-story condominiums, and resorts lining the coast. The grant also allows STC to conduct dune vegetation enhancements at retrofitted properties to serve as a natural barrier to block artificial light from the nesting beach.



Before (left) and after (right) photos of properties retrofitted by STC. Top row: Eastern Mist, a single family home in Franklin County; Bottom row: the grill area at Breaker's East, a condominium in Okaloosa County.

As the project gets underway, STC already is working with property managers, code enforcement officers and local sea turtle monitors to pinpoint areas of the beach and specific properties that will benefit the most from retrofits.

“It’s important to spend the necessary time strategizing our approach due to the sheer size of the southwest coast and the amount of disorientations that occur in the area. We want to make sure STC tackles problematic properties in the most efficient way possible in order to create darker beaches and better nesting habitat for sea turtles,” Tighe said.

## VELADOR {bel.a.dor}

In Caribbean cultures, *Velador* translates as “one who stands vigil”—referring to turtle hunters who waited at night for turtles to come ashore. STC claims this title for its newsletter, and around the world 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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*Scientific Director*  
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**Pat McCloskey**

*Research Biologist & Grants Manager*  
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*Sea Turtle Lighting Project Manager*  
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The project will encompass more geographical area along the Florida coast than any past lighting project headed by STC. A portion of the new grant funding also will allow STC to conduct light management training workshops in southwest Florida. These workshops, which are targeted toward local

code enforcement officials and building design professionals, will help expand awareness about and use of the latest sea turtle friendly lighting technologies. Funding to expand these training workshops also has been provided by the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research and the Disney Conservation Fund.

To help achieve all the goals of the project, STC recently hired two additional sea turtle lighting specialists, who will now join our experienced lighting team. Together, STC's five-member lighting team will be responsible for gathering data



STC Lighting Project Specialist Natalia Bayona enters pre-retrofit light fixture information into STC's database.

about disorientation rates; identifying problematic properties; negotiating with property owners and lighting suppliers; designing and overseeing lighting retrofits; conducting light management workshops and conducting other educational outreach efforts around Florida. STC already is receiving interest from property owners

in southwest Florida that would like to retrofit problematic lights at their properties, and we welcome suggestions from local sea turtle groups and members of the public that will help our lighting team identify areas of concern. If you live in Pinellas, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee or Collier County and are interested in retrofitting your beachfront property, please contact STC at 352-373-6441. You can learn more about STC's grant progress at [www.conserveturtles.org/stc-beachfront-lighting-program](http://www.conserveturtles.org/stc-beachfront-lighting-program).

*By Natalia Bayona  
Lighting Specialist*

## Tortuguero Update

Tortuguero is one of the most biologically diverse and fragile spots in Costa Rica, with around 2,000 human inhabitants and over 130,000 eco-tourist visitors per year, making it one of the most popular national parks in the country. Both local residents and visitors use energy and water, produce solid waste and can create harmful impacts to the nesting beach and other habitats. However, it is essential to the local, nature-based economy that tourists continue to visit this wonderful area to experience nature and see Tortuguero's world-renowned turtles. It is equally important that they do so in the most sustainable and harmonious possible way.

To address these issues, STC conducts ongoing public education campaigns and also works with local businesses to reduce the impact of tourism.

For example, we have virtually eliminated plastic bag use by local vendors, and we created a program to recognize businesses that do everything in their power to lessen their footprint. This "Eco-Labeling Program" was launched in 2017 as a joint effort of STC, Tortuguero National Park, ASVO (Volunteer's Association for Protected Areas in Costa Rica) and the ADI (Tortuguero's Development Association). The program is promoting sustainable practices in the different establishments in Tortuguero, including hotels, restaurants and supermarkets.

After a slow start, the Eco-Labeling Program now has certified 22 establishments as eco-friendly: 11 with the highest "Golden Turtle" standard (at least 5 measures implemented), 6 with the Silver Turtle (at least 4 measures) and 5 with bronze turtle (at least 3 measures).

*By Georgina Quílez  
Education and Outreach Coordinator*

# Tour de Turtles 2019

The 12th Annual Tour de Turtles is right around the corner! Officially kicking off the first week of August, this year's marathon migration promises to bring fun, education and new turtle friends.

As part of the Tour de Turtles, STC has released over 130 satellite-tagged turtles from research sites in Florida, Bermuda, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Nevis, West Indies. These turtles have provided invaluable data on migratory routes and foraging grounds for five sea turtle species in the Western Hemisphere. The public turtle releases conducted as part of each Tour de Turtles annually draw more than 5,000 people, and the online portion of the event has reached millions of avid turtle enthusiasts over the years.



This year, STC is placing satellite transmitters on 16 turtles and is hosting live sea turtle release events in Florida and Tortuguero. In addition to the public turtle releases, STC will also be tagging and releasing turtles in Nevis, Panama, and Cuba.

A schedule of public turtle releases is provided below. Mark your calendar so you don't miss any of the fun!

## ANNA MARIA ISLAND LIVE TURTLE RELEASE

Date: June 21

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Coquina Beach, Anna Maria Island, FL

## CUBA SEA TURTLE RELEASE

Dates: During STC's Trip to Cuba (July 6 - 13)  
See the back cover of this issue to learn how you can be a part of STC's trip to Cuba.

Location: Guanahacabibes Natural Park, Cuba

## FL KEYS REHAB SEA TURTLE RELEASE

Date: July TBA

Time: TBA

Location: Sombrero Beach, Florida Keys

Entrance: This event is free and open to the public.

## TORTUGUERO LIVE SEA TURTLE RELEASE

Dates: August TBA

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: STC's John H. Phipps Biological Field Station, Tortuguero, Costa Rica

## TOUR DE TURTLES KICK-OFF EVENT

Join Sea Turtle Conservancy as we kick off Tour de Turtles with a celebration featuring hors d'oeuvres, refreshments, live music, and a silent auction to benefit sea turtle conservation and habitat protection in Brevard County. All proceeds from the event support sea turtle conservation efforts.

### TOUR DE TURTLES KICK-OFF PARTY

Date: Saturday, July 27th

Time: 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Location: Barrier Island Center

8385 S. Hwy A1A, Melbourne Beach, FL

Entrance: Cost: \$30 in advance.

### LIVE SEA TURTLE RELEASE

Date: Sunday, July 28th

Time: 7:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

*(Turtles will be released promptly at 8 a.m.)*

Location: Barrier Island Center

8385 S Hwy A1A, Melbourne Beach, FL

**Make sure you subscribe to our E-newsletter or follow us on Facebook to receive updated information regarding releases.**

# International Symposium

## STC presents scientific papers and hosts training workshops at the 39th International Sea Turtle Symposium

In addition to being one of the main sponsors of the 39th annual International Sea Turtle Symposium in Charleston, South Carolina, STC staff showed up big at this year's gathering of turtle experts from around the world. Nearly a dozen scientific presentations and posters were presented by STC staff, including papers about STC's work in Florida, Costa Rica and Panama. STC executive director David Godfrey also gave an invited presentation about using science to influence coastal policy.

STC hosted a workshop to share its expertise on sea turtle friendly lighting. Our experienced lighting team discussed the importance of collaboration, education and persistence when retrofitting beachfront lights. The workshop featured presentations and by sea turtle scientists and conservationists from around the world. The team also presented a poster and gave an oral presentation on lighting topics.

By sharing some of the lessons learned over the past nine years of retrofitting beachfront properties, STC helped attendees get a new perspective on the turtle friendly lighting industry. The team's workshop, "Finding the Solution for Light Pollution through Collaborative Management," brought 65 attendees face-to-face with a panel of lighting professionals, including certified lighting specialists, marine turtle permit holders and biologists. The workshop addressed common hurdles the public often faces when promoting sea turtle friendly lighting and conducting retrofits, ranging from lighting for safety to facing anti-environmentalism.

"STC enjoyed sharing its sea turtle lighting knowledge with the international sea turtle community, and we hope that it will lead to similar projects taking place around the world," Rachel Tighe said. 

**By Natalia Bayona**  
Lighting Specialist



Lighting Project Manager Rachel Tighe hosted an oral presentation titled "A Blueprint for Navigating the Sea Turtle Lighting Industry" to provide resources for symposium attendees interested in finding sea turtle-friendly lighting and to discuss how conservationists can form partnerships with lighting professionals to achieve conservation goals. The long-term success of STC's beachfront lighting retrofit program can be largely attributed to the many beneficial partnerships the team has formed over the years with marine turtle permit holders, code enforcement officers and lighting distributors.



Lighting Project Specialist Natalia Bayona presented a poster at the symposium titled "Reducing Artificial Light on Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches," documenting the progress of STC's retrofit program since 2010. By following a standardized method for completing retrofits and working collaboratively throughout Florida, STC has granted sea turtle-friendly lights to more than 200 properties and darkened nearly 27 miles of critical nesting beach along the state's coast.



Stacey Gallagher, STC lighting project specialist and development coordinator, hosted a presentation about managing lighting retrofits at STC's workshop during the 39th annual International Sea Turtle Symposium.

Each year from July to September, Sea Turtle Conservancy researchers tag and collect data on green turtles that nest on the beaches of Tortuguero, Costa Rica. Many of these turtles are “adopted” by individuals or families in a symbolic show of support for STC’s work. If a turtle that you or your family sponsored was observed on the beach during the 2018 nesting season, your name will appear in list below:

Marnie Alban	Michael Downs	Kathy & Stuart Kitts	Suzanne Reed
Rachel Albin-Davis	Kieran Duncan	C.E. Kone	Andy Riedlinger
Beau Andre	Etheridge Family	Anna Kootje	Rob & Riette
Deborah Antoniades	Hum & Kawahara Family	Pam Koski	Cori Roach
Adolfo Avila	Hazel Farren	Ethan Kuchma	Eunice Roberts
Cheryl Bailey	Flanagan Family	Steffen Kunz	Ava Breck Robinson
Disa Bunker	Linda Flemhood	Susan Kuveke	Jack Robinson
Amber-Lynne Barnaby	Angela Force	Claudia Langemeyer	Kelli Rosander
Janine Barr	Zach Foret	May Miranda Langridge	Lea Ruesing
Sarah Barringer & Family	Kevin Gabel	Lissette Laurel	Gregory & Miehong Salapatas
Arthur Bartram	Jean-Sebastien Gagnon	Cheryl Lechtanski	Sabrina Schipper
Tom & Monieu Bastiaansen	Jocelyne Galivel	Ulises Liranzo	Barbara & Johannes Schmidt
Angela Bauldree	Mauricio & Selena Garcia Hogbin	Allison Loftis	Aria Schonberg
MaryAnne Bebin	Pam Garrett	Isabel & Preston Long	Bruno Schuler
Noah & Eden Bedrosian	Missy Ghiselli	Addison Lucas	Olivia Shattler
Fran Berger	Davy & Annick Goethals-Vermeersch	John Mace	Brian Shea
Luke Berty	Jeff Goldberg	Jane Maguire	Hailey Shepherd
Jackie Biederman	Christina Gonzalez	Manola Monique Martinez	MaryShopis
Helen Blake	Josh Gonzalez	Didac Martin-Lock	Ann Short
Pierre Boeglin	Joel Greiner	Ann Mastrandone	The Sisterhood
Annette Boehm	Sarah Guillaume	Sandra Maynard	Karen Solle
Bianca Boscher	Jackson & Andrew Hammond	Scott McAllister	Jasper Spicero
Hyke Bouma	Nathja Groth Harpsoe	Janet McCormack	Heidi Stephan
Kim Bousquet	Jolein Harro	Michael F. McGuire	Wuehue Stockhowe
Brigitta Bowers	Marieke Heinsbergen	Sheena McNally	Monte Stokes
Emily Boyle	Ashleigh Heldstab	Andrew Mendola	Terry Stone
Judy & Alan Brainard	Laurie Henson	Clara Menssen	Leslie Strand
Julie Brandt	Pat Herbert	Sandie Milleman	Sheila Sullivan
Jamie Bricker	Reina Hewes	Angela Milstein & Family	Jessica Tai
Walter & Evelyn Bristol	Maya Howard	Irene Mirkin	Libby Taylor
Clara Brous	Carter Hudec	Elizabeth Moran	Isiah Telly
Gilbert Brouwer	Joey Hughes	Moss Family	Stefan Tischler
Skye Brunt	Arthur Mathew Hui	Brandon Moxley	Matthew Toquero
Mark Brush	Danielle Hyde	Lauren Murdock	Famille Tremblay-Dion
Debbie Bryant	Seitchi Hzrai	Hannah Nalley	Tad Trier
Morgen Burton	Sarah Ingle	Aisha Nash	Tyler Jane Trigo
Linda Caplinger	Madeline & Matthew Inman	Samantha Navarro	Teagan Trigo
Arlette Charlier	Michelle Iorio	Devin Nicholson	Marita Tuohy
Homer Chin	Deanna Iverson	Greetje Nienhuis	Michelle Valverde
Max & Miles Chodes	Tomomi Iwano	Betsy Odell	Frank Van Beede
Joseph Clark	Azra & Sanza Jain	Kollin Otto	Marian & Maarten Van der
George Clark	Pierre-Yves Jaquet	Anne Owens	Putten
Kelli Clark	Sylvia Johns	Victoria Page	Van Hest Family
Cleveland Family	Amanda Jones	Crystal Pajak	Patricia Van Hoorn
Abby Colarusso	J Jongeruis	Bill Parson	Ron & Corrie Van wassenaar
Benjamin Crofton	Cindy Jordan	Patrick Peller	Desi Van Wijk
Crystal Curtis	Laura Juergens	Theresa Peterson	Jack & Lisette Van Zuidland
Kevin De Vos	Dawn Kelley	Francisca Pinochet	Lydia Vanderbilt
George DeMaria	Caitlin Keng	Allan Prang	Vanessa Vaughan
Dehina Diem	Saya & Sianna Khandhar	Rochelle Quinn	Mascha Vos
Andrew Dollhopf	Barbara Kimbell	Sohail Rakhshan	Britta Voss

# Archie Carr Award

Sea Turtle Conservancy is proud to announce the presentation of the **Archie Carr Lifetime Achievement Award** to Drs. Anne and Peter Meylan. During his life, Dr. Archie Carr was the world's leading authority on sea turtles. Through his research, he discovered much of what we know today about sea turtle biology and reproductive ecology. As a professor at the University of Florida, he taught generations of young biologists who today fill leading roles in science, education and conservation around the world. As a writer, he informed the world about these amazing animals and made impassioned appeals for their protection. His "Call to Action" on behalf of sea turtles led to the establishment of the Sea Turtle Conservancy as the first organization in the world dedicated to the study and protection of these species. As a lifelong advocate for sea turtles, Archie helped put in place local, national and international laws protecting sea turtles and their habitats. In short, Archie Carr's life-work helped create the global movement to study and protect sea turtles.

Two decades ago, STC established an award to honor individuals, who, like our founder Archie Carr, have dedicated their lives to the cause of sea turtle research and protection. To date, the award has been presented to just four other individuals (Dr. Clay Frick, Jr., Dr. Llew Ehrhart, Guillermo Cruz and Larry Ogren). It is very much fitting that the award now has been presented jointly to the husband/wife team of Drs. Anne and Peter Meylan. The award fittingly was presented by STC Executive Director, David Godfrey, at a celebratory Gala that took place in Bermuda in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Bermuda Turtle Project.

Anne and Peter have dedicated their lives to the study and protection of sea turtles. As scientific directors of



Drs. Anne and Peter Meylan are shown here pulling in the turtle net in Bermuda--a project they have overseen for three decades.

the Bermuda Turtle Project for nearly three decades, they have maintained a level of scientific rigor that has made this an internationally-renowned project. Through the international course on in-water research conducted each year in Bermuda, they have taught and inspired hundreds of young biologists who are now leading conservation efforts in their own countries. For nearly 40 years, they have monitored and protected a population of critically-endangered hawksbill turtles nesting in Panama – a population that is now showing remarkable growth and recovery as a result of their work.

Between them, they have authored nearly two hundred peer-reviewed papers and articles that have expanded the world's knowledge of sea turtle ecology, migration, feeding ecology, reproductive biology and conservation status. Through their professional careers they have overseen the monitoring and protection of critical nesting sites in the United States; influenced regulatory policies that are helping recover sea turtle populations; and inspired the next generation of sea turtle biologists. They are widely respected by their peers in the international sea turtle conservation community. Like Archie Carr before them, they have made lasting impacts on the study and protection of sea turtles. Therefore, Sea Turtle Conservancy is very proud to include Drs. Anne and Peter Meylan among a select group to have been awarded the Archie Carr Lifetime Achievement Award.

## *... Membership Continued*

Eleonora Vukojevic

Lauren Wagman

Stephanie Wagner

Amy Walker

Theresa Weber

Gary & Laura Wesche

Oscar Whitfield & Paula Andujar

Anna Marie Whiting

Sandra Wong



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## We Are Moving

STC's main office in Gainesville, Florida, is moving to a new local location. Our phone number, website and all email addresses will remain the same.

As of April 22, 2019, our new home-office address will be:

Sea Turtle Conservancy  
4581 NW 6th St., Suite A  
Gainesville, FL 32609

Please save our new address for your convenience.



Photo by Jim Angy

### LAST CALL for 2019 Sea Turtle & Cultural Expedition to Cuba

Join STC July 6th - July 13th, 2019 as we explore Havana, the Guanahacabibes Peninsula and the remarkable Viñales Valley in search of culture and sea turtles.

The deadline to sign up has been extended through April! Only a few spots remain.

For more information, please visit our blog at

<https://conserveturtles.org/join-stc-sea-turtle-expedition-cuba>