



# SEA TURTLE CONSERVANCY

## Organizational Profile

Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization located in Gainesville, Florida, and is the world's oldest organization solely dedicated to the study and protection of marine turtles and their habitats. STC concentrates its conservation activities in areas containing globally-significant sea turtle populations, particularly the Caribbean, Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The organization uses research, education and advocacy to achieve its mission.

### U.S.-based Programs:

- Tour de Turtles Migration Marathon
- Sea Turtle Migration-Tracking Education Program
- Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge & Barrier Island Ecosystem Center
- Florida Sea Turtle Grants Program
- Florida Policy Program

### Internationally-based Programs:

- Tortuguero Research Program, Costa Rica
- Chiriquí Beach Hawksbill and Leatherback Research & Conservation Program
- Bermuda Turtle Project
- Caribbean Tracking & Conservation Project
- International Fisheries Bycatch Reduction Program

The successes of STC's programs are highlighted by the Tortuguero Research Program. Through this five-decade-long conservation program, STC has reversed the decline of green turtle populations in the Caribbean. Ongoing analysis of sea turtle nesting trends at Tortuguero have documented a 500% increase in the number of green sea turtle nests laid on the beach since 1970. In the U.S., STC was instrumental in the establishment of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, which protects globally-important nesting beaches along Florida's mid-Atlantic shoreline. As a result of this effort, STC now partners with the local county to run educational programming from the Barrier Island Center located in the Carr Refuge.

## Major Program Overviews

**Tortuguero Research Program:** The turtle tagging and research program at Tortuguero, Costa Rica, has been conducted annually since 1955. Because it is the longest study of its kind, it is the most complete dataset for green turtle and leatherback populations in the world. The continuation of this data-collecting program is essential to maintaining a barometer on size, health and threats affecting important green and leatherback turtle populations. The project has resulted in major nesting increases in the Tortuguero green turtle colony, making it the largest in the Western Hemisphere.

**Chiriquí Beach Hawksbill and Leatherback Research & Conservation Program:** In 2003, STC initiated a long-term research and protection program at Chiriquí Beach, Panama, with the goal of protecting and recovering important colonies of leatherback and hawksbill turtles that nest at this site. STC coordinates the project in collaboration with diverse partners, including the



Panamanian Government and the local Ngöbe-Bugle indigenous community. The program is utilizing successful strategies, developed by STC at Tortuguero, to monitor and protect these populations.

**Bermuda Turtle Project:** The juvenile turtle tagging and research program in Bermuda has been conducted annually since 1968. This joint program between STC and the Bermuda Aquarium and Zoo is the longest continuous in-water study of sea turtles in the world. The Bermuda turtle database provides one of the most complete and reliable sources for information on sea turtle growth rates, developmental behavior and migration. The continuation of this program is essential to monitoring changes in the health, size and behavior of juvenile sea turtle populations in the Western Hemisphere. The program is coordinated by STC research associates, Drs. Anne and Peter Meylan.

**Advocacy and Education programs:** STC is one of the most effective advocates for sea turtles and their habitats in the U.S. In Florida, where more than 90% of all sea turtle nesting in the continental U.S. takes place, STC monitors all issues relating to sea turtles. STC works to reform coastal development policies impacting nesting beaches, and develops and distributes innovative educational programs and materials about marine turtles. STC also runs the Sea Turtle Migration Tracking Education Program, used for both research and educational purposes. The program uses satellite-tracking technology to follow the migratory patterns of several sea turtle species, giving people around the world the opportunity to follow the turtles' movements on the STC's website. The Florida Policy program was also instrumental in creating the sea turtle specialty license plate in Florida. Revenue from the license plate is the only source of funding for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Marine Turtle Protection Program that supports research and management activities related to sea turtles. Specialty License plate funds are also allocated to the Sea Turtle Grants Program. Administered by STC, the program helps support sea turtle conservation statewide.