

2021 Sea Turtle Program at Bocas del Toro, Panama Research Assistant Application Information

Project description: Conservation and monitoring of sea turtles

Organization: Sea Turtle Conservancy (Formerly Caribbean Conservation Corporation)

Location: Bocas del Toro Province and Comarca Ngäbe Buglé, Panama. **Dates:** Group 1: 1 April – 24 June, 2021

Group 2: 29 June – 17 September, 2021

Application Deadline: Group 1: 5 February, 2021

Group 2: 5 March, 2021

Project summary:

Since 2003, STC (Sea Turtle Conservancy) has worked at important Panamanian sea turtle nesting beaches in the Bocas del Toro Province and the Comarca Ngäbe Buglé, from the Changuinola river to the Chiriquí river. Four sea turtle species are found in the waters of Bocas del Toro and the Comarca; Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Green (*Chelonia mydas*) and Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*). Within this region STC has standardized monitoring, research and protection efforts in collaboration with members of communities close to the nesting beaches. In addition, education and awareness programs have been developed to highlight the importance of protecting and conserving sea turtles and other natural resources. This program has had very positive results. In the last 12 years there has been a reduction in the illegal killing of turtles on the majority of nesting beaches in the area, and an increasing nesting trend for both Leatherback and Hawksbill turtles. Despite these advances, numerous threats remain for the region's sea turtles, including predation of nests by dogs, increasing pressure on coastal and marine habitats through unregulated tourism development, and the continued hunting of turtles for personal consumption and commercial purposes.

Work description:

A maximum of 12 research assistants (RAs) will be trained in sea turtle monitoring techniques by, and work under the supervision of, the STC's coordinators. The season is divided into two time periods, March - June and June - September, with six RAs in each time period. The Leatherback season goes from March - August, and the hawksbill season May - October. The RA team will be made up of individuals from several countries from around the world, with an emphasis on Latin America and the Caribbean. The primary responsibilities of the RAs will include tagging nesting turtles, collecting biometric data from females during nightly patrols, recording nesting activity during morning track surveys, nest monitoring and excavation, and other pertinent data collection.

RAs can expect to work very long hours, throughout the day and night, often with little sleep. Beach patrols require walking between 6 to 12 kilometers in soft sand and in extreme weather conditions. The patrols take from 4 to 6 hours; therefore an excellent physical condition is a requirement for the RA positions.

The work will be developed in three different beaches in Bocas del Toro Province: Soropta, Long Beach and Chiriquí Beach. RAs will rotate among the three beaches while participating in the sea turtle program.

The RAs will work with the STC Education and Outreach Coordinator to develop and participate in various environmental awareness and educational activities with members of the Bocas del Toro community.

Information about Research Assistant Application

Research Assistantship (RA) positions are voluntary and selected RAs are expected to plan and finance their own travel to and from Bocas del Toro. Selected RAs will receive board and lodging at the STC Field Station for the duration of their time working for STC in Bocas del Toro and the Comarca.

Good knowledge of Spanish and English, education in biology or related fields, previous fieldwork experience in the tropics, experience working/living in multicultural environments, experience working/living in isolated locations for extended periods, previous experience in environmental education and availability for the entire period of the program greatly improve the chance of being selected for a position.

STC alumni RAs have gone on to work for conservation organizations, universities and government agencies worldwide.

To apply, please fill out the Application Form (see following page) and send to Raúl García at assistantcoordinator@conserveturtles.org, together with:

A cover letter explaining why you are interested in a Research Assistant position, details of any relevant experience and a statement of your level of proficiency in Spanish and English

A CV or resume with other pertinent information

Names and e-mail contact details of three professional referees

Your application should arrive no later than **5 February 2021**, for first group, and **5 March 2021** for second group. Short-listed candidates will be contacted within two weeks of the application deadline. Please **do not phone or e-mail** to inquire about the status of your application. **Applicants that do not supply all requested materials will not be considered.**

**2021 Sea Turtle Program at Bocas del Toro, Panama
Research Assistant Application Form**

FULL NAME		AGE	
ADDRESS			
TELEPHONE NUMBER			
E-MAIL			
SKYPE			
DATES OF AVAILABILITY			
Please, indicate below which group you would be available for or, if both, which you would prefer			
GROUP 1 1 April - 24 June		GROUP 2 29 June -17 September	