



SEA TURTLE CONSERVANCY

2019 Annual Report



From the Executive Director

This is a very special year for Sea Turtle Conservancy as we celebrate our 60th anniversary—a milestone that is unmatched in the sea turtle conservation world and which speaks volumes about the passion and dedication of our loyal members. Together, we have accomplished so much on behalf of sea turtles, but there really is no time to rest on our past successes. Even as I write this, there are new and returning threats to sea turtle survival that demand immediate attention by STC.

Sea turtles are showing strong signs of recovery at many of STC's long-term project sites, but major threats such as climate change, accumulating plastic in our oceans, and illegal poaching threaten to undo much of our progress. As it happens, this summer I visited STC's long-term project sites in Panama and Costa Rica, and what I saw there was both inspiring and very concerning. The tireless, dedicated work of STC's staff and volunteers, often in very harsh conditions on the beach, gives me great hope for the future. Unfortunately, I also witnessed an old nemesis to our efforts that has returned with a vengeance. Illegal poaching of both nesting turtles and eggs is on the rise in both locations—making it absolutely critical that STC ramp up its beach monitoring work and redouble our efforts to support local law enforcement and wildlife protection agencies.

After decades of successful conservation efforts, sea turtles can be seen more regularly on the beaches where we work and in the waters off these beaches. Unfortunately, the poachers are seeing more turtles too and have increased their activity. STC researchers are documenting an increase in illegal poaching activity in both Costa Rica and Panama. Armed with this concerning data, STC works very closely with and supports law enforcement and wildlife protection agencies to spot illegal activity and deter poachers. In the photo to the left, STC Research Coordinator Jaime Restrepo and an STC volunteer are reburying a nest of sea turtle eggs that a poacher was caught red-handed taking off the beach at Tortuguero, Costa Rica.

Here in the United States, STC's in-water research program in Florida is making new discoveries and protecting juvenile sea turtles. The near-shore coastal waters from Florida's Cedar Key to the Panhandle are inhabited by juvenile turtles that grow up in this productive habitat. As green turtle nesting in Florida increases dramatically, it stands to reason that the juvenile population is growing exponentially as well. However, very little is known about its abundance, overall health and habitat usage. STC is applying its expertise to conduct a rigorous, long-term program to track the size and health of this population, while also monitoring and eliminating threats to the survival of sea turtles on Florida's Gulf coast. The information from this ongoing study is expanding our knowledge of this important sea turtle life phase and guiding conservation efforts in the Gulf of Mexico

We have so much to be proud of as we look back at six decades of work. Our success emboldens us as we rise to tackle new and unexpected challenges facing sea turtles in the years ahead.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Godfrey".

David Godfrey
Executive Director

U.S. Staff

David Godfrey - Executive Director
Dan Evans - Technology & Research Specialist
Dr. Roldan Valverde - Scientific Director
Pat McCloskey - Controller
Kim Aslan - Office Manager
Lexie Beach - Communications Coordinator
Taylor Swoyer - Membership Coordinator
Stacey Gallagher - Development Coordinator / Lighting Project
Rick Herren - Biologist
Rachel Tighe - Lighting Project Manager
Emily Asp - Lighting Project Specialist
Cypres Ferran - Lighting Project Specialist
Sarah Rhodes-Ondi - Community Stewardship Coordinator

Staff

Costa Rica Staff

Roxana Silman - Costa Rica Director
Maria Laura Castro - San José Office Assistant
Santiago Martinez - Tortuguero Station Manager
Jaime Restrepo - Research Coordinator
Michelle Dorantes - Education & Outreach Coordinator
Jimena Gutierrez - Visitor Center Coordinator

Panama Staff

Cristina Ordoñez - Panama Research Coordinator
Raul Garcia Varela - Panama Assistant Coordinator
Guillermo López Torrents - Outreach Coordinator
Xavier Ow Young - Panama Assistant Research Coordinator

Programmatic Achievements

Tortuguero and Panama Research and Conservation Programs

STC researchers recorded more than 25,000 green turtle nests in just the northern 5 miles of Tortuguero beach in Costa Rica. Annual nesting by green turtles along the full length of Tortuguero beach regularly exceeds 100,000 nests, making it by far the largest nesting colony of green turtles in the Western Hemisphere, and possibly the world. Additionally, we also counted 37 hawksbill nests.

Through our research and conservation programs in Bocas del Toro, Panama, STC monitored and protected both leatherback and hawksbill turtle nests at several project beaches, including Chiriquí Beach, where over 5,300 leatherback nests and more than 2,500 hawksbill nest were recorded. Based on data collected by STC since 2003, an assortment of half a dozen beaches near Bocas del Toro hosts the fourth largest nesting colony of leatherback turtles in the world and one of the largest colonies of hawksbills remaining in the Caribbean. STC's work in the area is protecting turtles, raising public awareness, fostering community involvement in conservation and promoting ecotourism as a substitute to sea turtle consumption.



Sea Turtle Lighting Update

Sea turtles continue to make significant gains as a result of STC's successful efforts to reduce the negative impact of light pollution on Florida's nesting beaches. Using restoration funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, STC has retrofit the lights on 250 beachfront properties since 2010 darkening more than 25 miles of beach. We have wrapped up our work in the panhandle and are now retrofitting properties in Southwest Florida.

Advocacy in Florida

In 2019, STC advocated against two important issues that could have negatively impacted Florida's sea turtles without STC's intervention. In August, STC learned of a citizen-based plan to allow dogs on 11 miles of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Melbourne Beach. In response, STC created a petition, sent an opposition letter to the county commission and posted action alerts online. STC's Community Stewardship Coordinator and several advocated spoke against the plan at the county commission meeting, where the plan was ultimately not approved. In November, STC also successfully halted a proposed project in Fort Myers that would have installed over 250 white, unshielded LED fixtures along a beachfront roadway. Both great victories for turtles!

Board of Directors

F. Peter Rose – Chairman

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David Ehrenfeld, M.D., Ph.D.

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Elise Frick

Shirley Sanchez, Esq.

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Rick Cleveland

Anthony D. Knerr, Ph.D.

Helen Stamatacos

Jordan Urstadt, Esq.

Tour de Turtles Education Program

STC's most popular education program is the annual Tour de Turtles (TDT), an online education event that tracks the migrations of a dozen or more turtles being monitored by satellite. In 2019, the twelfth year of the program, we released the following turtles with satellite transmitters: five leatherbacks from Soroopta Beach, Panama; three green turtles from Tortuguero, Costa Rica; four loggerheads from the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Melbourne Beach, Florida; one loggerhead from Anna Maria Island, Florida; two hawksbills from Nevis, West Indies; two green turtles from Cuba; and one rehabilitated juvenile green turtle in partnership with The Turtle Hospital in The Florida Keys. As each turtle is released with its satellite transmitter, STC hosts public kick-off events celebrating the start of the race. In 2019, nearly 3,000 people attended live sea turtle releases in Florida, Costa Rica, and Panama. In addition, more than 25,000 people logged on to the Tour de Turtles website in just three months. This includes over 200 new teachers who registered to use the free educational materials provided as part of the Tour de Turtles.



STC Assumes Leadership Role Over the Bermuda Turtle Project

Throughout the 50 years history of the Bermuda Turtle Project, scientific oversight of the project has been carried out by STC partners and affiliates, beginning with Dr. Clay Frick and, for the last 30 years, Drs. Anne and Peter Meylan. This largely reflects the fact that STC did not have its own full-time scientific staff during the formative years of the project. Now two STC staff members have taken on the role of managing the Bermuda Turtle Project. Over the summer, Dr. Dan Evans and Rick Herren, both full-time STC employees, took on the roles of joint scientific managers of the project. STC's ability to take on this new role has been made possible, in part, by an increase in the annual grant awarded by the Helen Clay Frick Foundation, along with a new, recurring grant from the Seedlings Foundation. The Bermuda Turtle Project is focused on filling in the information gaps on green turtle biology so that successful protection may be given to these species. The Project has assembled important data sets on size and maturity status, growth rates, sex ratios, residency, site fidelity, genetic diversity, and movement patterns in immature green turtles in Bermuda waters.

Florida In-Water Project Fully Implemented

STC is excited to report that all elements of our Florida in-water project are now operational, and important new discoveries are being made about Florida's juvenile turtle population on the Gulf coast. Under the scientific direction of Rick Herren, the project has completed the most thorough surveys ever conducted of Florida's Big Bend region. Turtle capture, tagging and release activities have begun, and STC has applied transmitters to six turtles in the area. The project is breaking new ground, establishing STC as an important contributor to scientific research in Florida and revealing important information that will help shape conservation efforts in the state.



Membership

- Total Members - 12,250
- New Members - 3,862
- Renewals – 638
- Monthly Givers- 426
- Other Donors - 2,651

Tortuguero Research Station

- Visitor Center Visitations - 19,227
- Visitor Center Sales - \$122,036
- Research Assistants Trained - 23
- Eco-Volunteers - 37

Soropta, Panama Station

- Eco-Volunteers - 18

Barrier Island Center

- Visitors - 28,960
- Turtle Walk Participants - 584
- Summer Camp Participants - 46
- Volunteer Hours - 3,464
- Gift Shop Sales - \$75,116

Website

- Page Views - 2.2 million
- Visits - 1 million
- Unique Users - 811,399

E-Communications

- E-mail Subscribers - 21,000
- Facebook Fans - 430,000
- Twitter Followers - 26,500
- Instagram Followers - 57,000

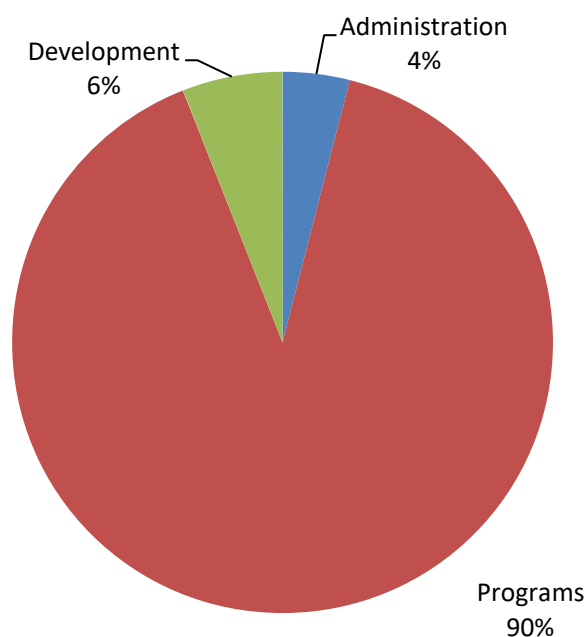
Tour de Turtles Program

- Turtles Tracked - 17
- Release Countries - 5
- Educators Registered - 16,300

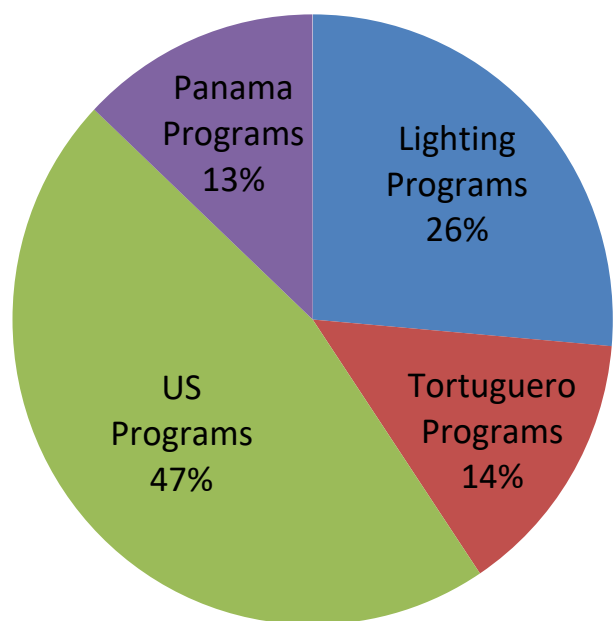
Sea Turtle Grants Program

- Total Awarded - \$419,351
- Education Grants - 3
- Research Grants - 8
- Conservation Grants - 11

Total Expenses



Program Expenses Breakdown



Foundation & Corporate Support

Adventure Aquarium	For the Environment, Inc.	Park Foundation
Altruette	Founders Circle Edowment	Pura Vida Bracelets
AmazonSmile	Four Seasons Resort Nevis	Quad Cities Community Foundation
Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research	Frank Cross Foundation	Riverbanks AAZK Chapter
ARIA Foundation	Friends for a Better Way Foundation	Ress Family Foundation
Arizona Community Foundation	FuturePlay Games	Royalty Soaps
Art Studio Company	GIMME Health Foods	Santa Fe Community Foundation
AWC Family Foundation	Greater Houston Community Foundation	Save the Sea Turtles
Beauty21	Helen Clay Frick Foundation	SEE Turtles
Besember National Gift Fund	HONU	Seedlings Foundation
Blinds of All Kinds	IBM International Foundation	Schwab Charitable Fund
Bortell's Lounge	INDO Board	Shark Reef at Mandalay Bay
Clearwater Marine Aquarium	JM Family Enterprises	Solomon Families Foundation
Colina Foundation	KAD Associates	Swamp Head Brewery
Community Foundation for Brevard	Kansas City Zoo AAZK Chapter	Tarte Cosmetics
Community Foundation of North Central Florida	Kernzer Marine Foundation	Totally Turtles USA
Community Foundation of Tampa Bay	Lazy Turtle	The Bay and Paul Foundations
Certina	Leatherwood Foundation	The Cynthia & George Mitchell Foundation
Collins Aerospace	Lilly Pulitzer	The Dreamcatcher Fund
Diageo	MAH Foundation	The Feed Bag Pet Supply, Co.
Disney's Animals, Science & Environment	Marisla Foundation	The Funky Pelican
Disney's Vero Beach Resort	Meraki	The Kaneka Foundation
Disney Conservation Fund	Mey Share Foundation	The Greene Turtle
DivinityLA	Michele & Agnese Cestone Foundation	The Margaret Heins Foundation
Edward Jones Trust Co.	Minera Panama	The Moore Charitable Foundation
Elinor Patterson Baker Trust Fund	National Fish & Wildlife Foundation	The Scoob Trust Foundation
Fidelity Charitable Gifts	New Hampshire Charitable Foundation	The Turtle Hospital
Firedoll Foundation	NOGU Bracelets	Theophilus Foundation
FLOAT Apparel	Norbert Hardner Foundation	Wildlife Collections
Floridana Tropicals	Norcross Wildlife Foundation	World Nomads
	Omidyar Network Fund	YourCause, LLC

Archie Carr Fellow (\$5,000 & above)

Rick Fletcher	Linda Hartig	Jeff Phipps	Gary Skomro
Laura Forte	Alfred Peters	F. Peter Rose	Nancy Taylor
		Pearl Seidman	

Kemp's Ridley Level (\$1000 - \$4,999)

John Alic	Chloe Greenstein	RJ McCaigue	Molly & Mike Sullivan
Linda & Kenny Antonioli	Dale Henderson	John Miller	Stephen Tillinghast
Mark Berte	Susan & Dan Keil	Lisa Milligan	Karen Tisch
Ester Chase	Katie Kemp	John Phipps	J. Jordan Urstadt
Joel Coehn	Jonathan Klein	Deborah Poppel	Rita Watson
Frank & Pam Devours	Karen Kominsky	Virginia Rogers	Ian Westley
Maydele Donnelly	John Konow	Danielle Schulmeister	Benjaman Williams
Suzanne Drake	Tom Kubit	Maureen Setter	
Allyson Felsner	Cristina Macaraeg	Sophia Sokolowski	
George Fenton	Laura Matz	Wesley Stager	
Elise Frick	David Maue	Rachel Streit	

Hawksbill Level (\$500 - \$999)

Debroah Aguirre	Elise Gomez-Sanchez	Paul Nelson	Maxwell Thyen
William Henry Allan	Ryan Greenlee	Mia Nobles	Nancy Tobias
Catherine Bettcher	Hanover High School	Tama Olver	Rebecca Trimble
Pablo Burbrudge	Jennifer Hart	M. Ottone	Mark Valentine
Katherine Carson	Celia Harvey	Jennifer Quedado	James Vanhook
Lynne Crews	Michelle Holiman	Diane Gandgaard	Vasan Venkataraman
David Nip	Joan Kelsch	Rebecca Roberts	Marybeth Von Holle
Curt & Diane Fuhrmann	Jonathan Klein	Jennifer Roberts	Teresa Walsh
Andrew Gillies	Anthony Knerr	Alice Samy	Kennard Watson
Girl Scout Troup 44537	Pamela Maher	Robert Sasser	David Wypij
Zoe Glimcher	Wayne Matthews	William Snell	Carrie Yakola
Natalie Goldberg	John McKenna	Carrie Spates	
Charles Goldsmith	Peter Nathan	Helen Stamatacos	