



SEA TURTLE
CONSERVANCY

2013 Annual Report



www.conserveturtles.org

From our Executive Director

As STC looks back at 2013, the organization's 53rd year of operation, there are a number of major milestones to celebrate. And we do so while acknowledging that none of this year's many important accomplishments for sea turtles would have been possible without the generosity and support of STC's members, donors, corporate partners and foundation supporters.

Green turtle nesting in the southeast United States shattered all records last year, especially in Florida. In the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge alone more than 13,000 green turtle nests were documented! When the Carr Refuge was established in 1990, green turtles deposited fewer than 50 nests per season on this beach. That's what makes this year's nesting numbers so remarkable. The colony of green turtles nesting in the Carr Refuge is now by far the fastest recovering population of this species in the world—an important success story achieved through three decades of collaborative conservation work. STC's critical role in this conservation success has been sustained through support by numerous foundations, along with thousands of STC members and volunteers who have given their time, energy and resources to protect this vital nesting beach.

Another significant achievement of 2013 was STC's establishment of a permanent research and conservation project at Soropta Beach, Panama, where the organization is monitoring and protecting a regionally-important nesting population of leatherback turtles. Already critically endangered throughout much of their range, leatherbacks had been under intense pressure from poachers at Soropta Beach—an 8-km, black-sand stretch of coast that hosts up to 700 leatherback nests each season. Until recently, nearly every nest deposited at Soropta was subject to poaching. Fortunately, STC's presence at Soropta and at the neighboring Chiriquí Beach is eliminating this gruesome occurrence and giving leatherbacks a chance at recovery along the Caribbean coast of Panama.

As 2013 was drawing to a close, STC learned that the organization had received a \$1.5 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to continue our successful beachfront lighting project in the panhandle of Florida. This project will help mitigate the damages to wildlife caused by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The project will allow STC to continue working with beachfront property owners to convert their lights to the latest sea turtle-friendly technology. To date, STC's lighting program has darkened over 10 miles of critical nesting habitat in Florida, saving an estimated 20,000 hatchlings that otherwise would have been disoriented by lights. The new grant will support this project through 2015.

While STC has made great progress in the protection of sea turtles, there are still many challenges to overcome. Illegal poaching of turtles and nests still occurs at unacceptable levels in Costa Rica, Panama and other Caribbean countries. Sea turtle migratory corridors are under threat from major dredging projects and planned port expansions. Commercial fishing practices still kill thousands of turtles each year. And in a number of states, regulators are trying to undermine hard-fought protections for turtles—by weakening beachfront lighting standards and expanding the use of sea walls to fight erosion. Together, with our many members and supporters, STC will continue to address each one of these threats in order to ensure the long-term protection and recovery of sea turtles and their habitats. We have no time to waste!



David Godfrey
Executive Director

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Gwen Oberholtzer - Lighting Project Specialist
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Georgina Quilez - Education & Outreach Coordinator
David Aparici - Tortuguero Station Manager
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Maria Laura Castro - San José Office Assistant

Panama Staff

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Shannon Thomas - Community-Based Sea Turtle Tourism Coordinator

Programmatic Achievements

Research and Conservation Programs

Through the Tortuguero Sea Turtle Research & Conservation Program, STC recorded more than 20,000 green turtle nests in just the northern 5 miles of Tortuguero beach. 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.

Through its research and conservation program in Bocas del Toro, Panama, STC monitored and protected both leatherback and hawksbill turtle nests at several project beaches, including Chiriquí Beach, where over 6,500 leatherback nests and more than 1,100 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.

To facilitate STC's new long-term presence at Soropta Beach, Panama, STC purchased a 32-acre tract of beach-front property, which included a modest compound of buildings suitable for a research station. The new station now hosts locally hired beach surveyors—most of whom are members of a nearby indigenous community. During 2013, STC's first full season of monitoring leatherback nesting at Soropta, our researchers documented nearly 450 leatherback nests on this 8 km beach, making it one of the densest nesting sites in the Caribbean for this critically endangered species.

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. Since STC began conducting lighting retrofit projects in late 2010, problem lights at over 80 coastal properties throughout Florida have been retrofitted with sea turtle friendly lighting, helping to restore darkness to over 10.5 miles of prime sea turtle nesting habitat, saving an estimated 16,000 hatchlings that otherwise would have been disoriented by lights.

To learn more about the migratory patterns of different sea turtle species, STC used satellite transmitters to follow the migrations of the following turtles in 2013: two leatherbacks from Chiriquí Beach, Panama; four loggerheads from the Archie Carr Refuge in Florida; two hawksbills from Nevis in the Caribbean; two green turtles from Tortuguero in Costa Rica; and two juvenile green turtles from Bermuda. A rehabilitated sub-adult Kemp's ridley was also released on Florida's West coast, making this the first time STC has ever tracked both a rehab turtle and a Kemp's ridley. Data from this tracking research provides critical information about the migratory routes and destinations of these species, which helps STC and other groups direct conservation efforts where they will be most effective.



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Education

STC's most popular education program is the annual Tour de Turtles, an online education event that tracks the migrations of a dozen or more turtles being monitored by satellite. The event, which helps raise broad awareness about sea turtles and the threats they face, is staged as a "marathon" won by the turtle that travels the farthest over the course of the three-month race. As each turtle is released with its satellite transmitter, STC hosts public kick-off events celebrating the start of the race. In 2013, nearly 5,000 people attended sea turtle releases in Florida, Costa Rica, Panama and Nevis. In addition, more than 9,600 people from 119 countries logged on to the Tour de Turtles website in just three months. This includes over 395 new teachers who registered to use the free educational materials provided as part of the Tour de Turtles. In total, over 16,300 teachers are now registered to use STC's education materials in the classroom. Tour de Turtles was featured in the Huffington Post and countless local news outlets.



2013 was the second year STC held the Tour de Turtles Bermuda as an offshoot of the Bermuda Turtle Project, the world's longest running in-water study of Bermuda's turtles, conducted in partnership between STC and the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo. 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.

Advocacy and Habitat Protection



For the past year, STC has been developing a sea turtle-friendly lighting initiative through grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Florida Sea Turtle Grants Program. Part of this initiative was to create four lighting displays that demonstrate the fundamentals of proper sea turtle-friendly lighting for oceanfront properties. To accompany the displays STC also produced an educational lighting video. For the next several years, the displays will travel around Florida to a variety of public educational facilities. As part of its lighting awareness initiative, STC created a guide to sea turtle-friendly lighting in Florida which is being distributed to coastal property owners, lighting companies and education facilities. STC also developed a distance-learning program which provides K-12 teachers and their students with free, interactive, multimedia content using classroom-ready distance learning technology.

Over 90% of all sea turtle nesting in the continental U.S. takes place in Florida. STC continued its critical work in Florida to ensure long-term protections for sea turtles by helping guide the development of the Florida Beaches Habitat Conservation Plan. This 25-year Plan will establish guidelines for state permitted beach activities so impacts to turtles are minimized as much as possible and unavoidable impacts are adequately mitigated for. This is one of the most significant sea turtle protection initiatives in the country. STC is represented on the 9-member Steering Committee overseeing the development of this Plan. Separately, STC has worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state agencies to identify and address the cumulative impacts of ongoing construction of sea walls adjacent to high density nesting beaches such as Singer Island on Florida's southeast Atlantic coast. This work resulted in significant changes to how these walls will be built in order to better protect nesting habitat.

STC, working with the Law School at the University of Florida, produced a groundbreaking study on the need for better regulation of beachfront lighting to protect nesting turtles and hatchlings. This one-year collaborative effort concluded with the publication of "Sea Turtle Friendly Lighting- A Model Lighting Ordinance For Local Governments." The model ordinance and supporting research has garnered considerable attention and local governments are using it to help develop their lighting ordinances.

Membership

- Total Members - 5,414
- New Members - 1,481
- Renewals - 839
- Other Donors - 3094

Tortuguero Research Station

- Museum Visitations - 24,674
- Research Assistants Trained - 24
- Eco-Volunteers - 146

Barrier Island Center

- Visitors - 25,307
- Turtle Walk Participants - 1,157
- Outreach Hours - 9,694
- Volunteer Hours - 3,306

Websites

- Page Views - 1,483,020
- Visits - 626,513
- Visitors - 460,701
- Avg. Daily Visitors - 1,262

E-Communications

- E-mail Subscribers - 13,500
- Facebook Fans - 51,000
- Twitter Followers - 6,100

Tour de Turtles Program

- Turtles Tracked - 13
- Release Countries - 5
- Educators Registered - 16,300

Sea Turtle Grants Program

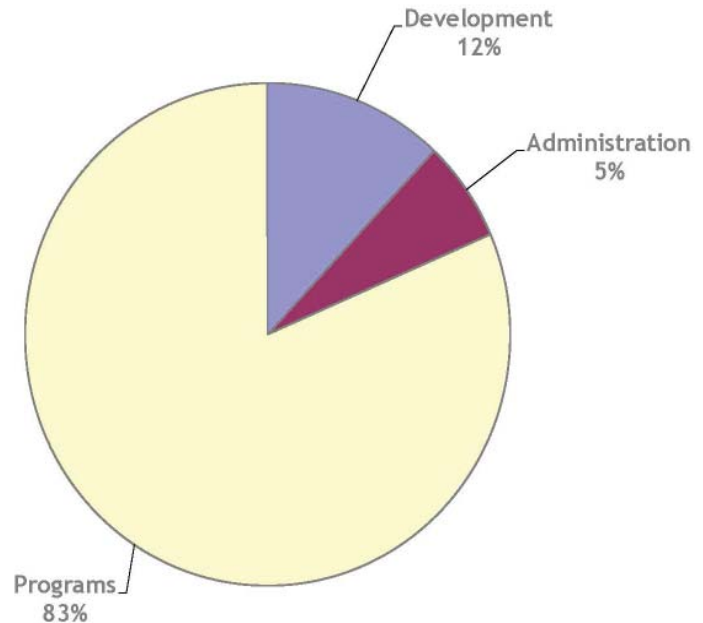
- Total Awarded - \$305,219
- Education Grants - 5
- Research Grants - 7
- Conservation Grants - 10



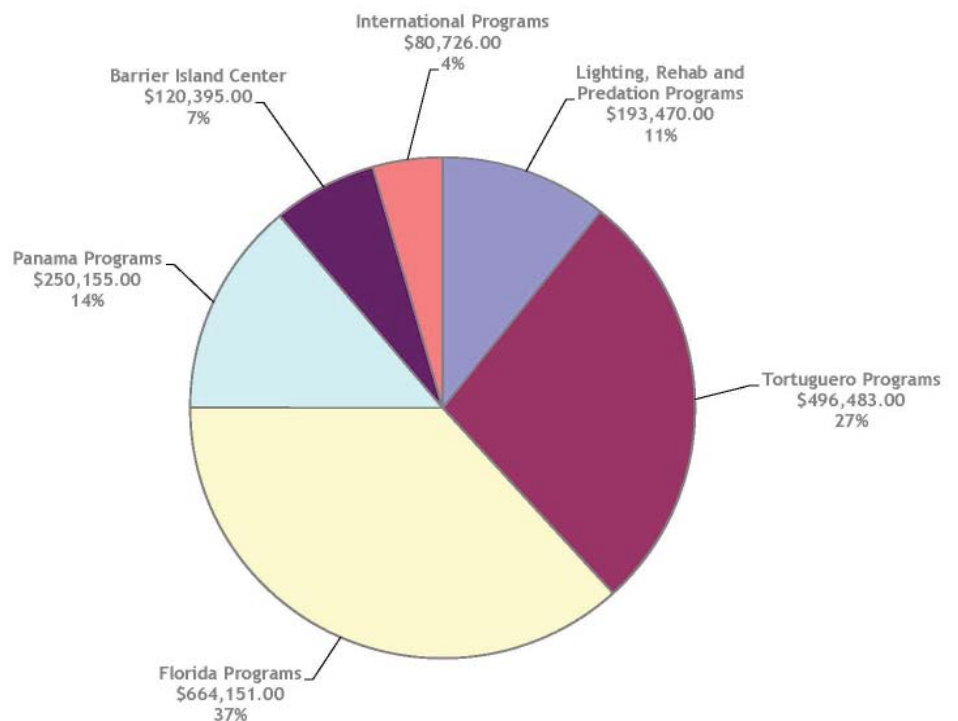
STC received a 4-star rating for the 9th consecutive year!

Cover Photo by Melissa Ochoa

Total Expenses



Program Expenses Breakdown



Foundation and Corporate Support

Andrea Waitt Carlton Foundation
Altruette, Inc.
Andrew Sabin Family Foundation
B Ocean Hotel
Berri Patch Preschool
Bob & Vivian Smith Foundation
The Boeing Company
Chemonics
Community Foundation for Brevard
Community Foundation of North Central Florida
Curtis & Edith Munson Foundation
Daytona Beach News Journal
Disney Cruise Lines
Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund
Disney's Animal Kingdom
Disney's Vero Beach Resort
Dollar per Month Foundation
Edward John Noble Foundation
Elinor Patterson Baker Trust Fund
Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation
Firedoll Foundation

For the Environment, Inc.
Four Seasons Resort Nevis
Frank Cross Foundation
Helen Clay Frick Foundation
IC Cares Foundation
Jelks Family Foundation
John's Island Real Estate Company
Kerzner International
Lemmon Foundation
MAH Foundation
Marine Turtle Conservation Fund
Marisla Foundation
Merrill G. & Emita E. Hastings Foundation
Moore Charitable Foundation
The Naked Turtle Rum
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Omidyar Network Fund
Park Foundation
Patagonia
Pura Vida Bracelets
Renaissance Reinsurance

Ress Family Foundation
Ripley Entertainment
Rockwell Collins
Sea World & Busch Gardens
Conservation Fund
Shark Reef at Mandalay Bay
Sue Berman & Michael Zamkow Foundation,
Sun Hill Foundation
Tampa Bay Green Consortium
The Bay and Paul Foundations
The Dreamcatcher Fund
The Galesi Family Foundation
The Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust
The Margaret Heins Foundation
The Michele and Agnese Cestone Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
Turtle & Hughes, Inc.
USFWS
Weibel Vineyards

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Patricia Krysiak
Jeffrey Phipps

Jenny & Jerry Randgaard
Peter Rose
Pearl Seidman

Jessica Tai
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Central Middle School
Peggy & Tom Cavanaugh
Sing Chan
Landon Clay
Mr. & Mrs. Wesley Forte
Tom Kubit
Erica Maciel
Dr. Charles Magal

Aubrey McClendon
McFarland Designs
Carmel McGill
Kimberly Nicholls
Pasta Pantaleo Signature Gallery
Susan Place
Deborah Poppel
Diane Randgaard
Tom Randgaard
Nancy Stegans

Rebecca Stockwell
Jonnie & Jim Swann
Tiger Fera Investment,
Nancy Tuma
J. Jordan Urstadt
Steve Van Duzen
Kennard Watson
Renee Watts

Hawksbill Level (\$500 - \$999)

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Michael Brown
Michael Bruyere, Esq.
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