



SEA TURTLE  
CONSERVANCY

2015 Annual Report



[www.conserveturtles.org](http://www.conserveturtles.org)

# From our Executive Director

As Sea Turtle Conservancy looks back at 2015, the organization's 55th 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. I can't help but share my excitement about the wonderful things I see happening for sea turtles as a result of STC's hard work and steadfast commitment to these animals. I am tremendously proud of what STC is accomplishing for sea turtles – and I know you are too. Here is a brief list of things worth celebrating together:

- Nesting by loggerheads, leatherbacks and green turtles is increasing in the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. In fact, green turtle nesting set a new record just this summer with nearly 14,000 green turtle nests in the Carr Refuge. In 2001 there were just 198 nests!
- The green turtle population that nests at Tortuguero, Costa Rica, continues to grow at a steady pace. After 55 years of continuous monitoring and conservation by STC, this beach is now considered by many to be the most prolific nesting site in the world for this species
- Nearly 16 miles of prime nesting habitat in Florida have been made dark once again through an STC program that is converted thousands of beachfront lights to the latest sea turtle-friendly fixtures. This work is saving tens of thousands of hatchlings each year that otherwise would have been disoriented by lights.
- STC's education programs are generating widespread global awareness and support for sea turtle conservation. Our educational websites and online programs such as the annual Tour de Turtles are used by over 1 million people each year, and our social media followers recently topped 280,000. In addition, a combined 75,000 people visit STC's education centers in Costa Rica and Florida each year.
- Nesting by critically endangered leatherback turtles set a new record this year at Soropta Beach, Panama. There were 781 confirmed nests in 2015—nearly double the number recorded when monitoring at this site began in 2002. This increase in nesting follows a rigorous STC program designed to eliminate illegal poaching of both turtles and their nests at this site.
- STC carried out its first sea turtle expedition to Cuba. Eased restrictions on travel by US citizens has opened the possibility of expanding STC's sea turtle research and conservation to this near-pristine country. During this year's trip, STC established a great working relationship with biologists from the University of Havana, and plans already are underway to partner with our new Cuban friends on a joint project to study the migration of Cuban sea turtles using satellite transmitters.



David Godfrey  
Executive

While STC has made great progress in the protection of sea turtles, there are still many challenges to overcome. 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!

## U.S. Staff

David Godfrey - Executive Director  
Marydele Donnelly - Director of International Policy  
Dan Evans - Technology & Research Specialist  
Dr. Emma Harrison - Scientific Director  
Gary Appelson - Policy Coordinator  
Pat McCloskey - Controller  
Kim Aslan - Office Manager  
Lexie Beach - Communications Coordinator  
Becca Gelwicks - Membership Coordinator  
Gwen Oberholtzer - Lighting Project Specialist  
Rick Herren - Lighting Project Specialist  
Becky Travis - Lighting Project Specialist  
Donna Lee Crawford - Community Stewardship Coordinator

## Staff

### Costa Rica Staff

Roxana Silman - Costa Rica Director  
Raul Garcia Varela - Tortuguero Field Coordinator  
Guillermo López Torrents - Outreach Coordinator  
David Aparici - Tortuguero Station Manager  
Diana Horgen - Tortuguero Visitor Center Coordinator  
Maria Laura Castro - San José Office Assistant

### Panama Staff

Cristina Ordoñez - Chiriquí Beach Field Coordinator  
Georgina Quilez - Education & Outreach Coordinator

# Programmatic Achievements

## Research and Conservation Programs

Through the Tortuguero Sea Turtle Research & Conservation Program, STC recorded more than 18,000 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 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.

During 2015, STC's third season of monitoring leatherback nesting at Soropta, our researchers documented 781 leatherback nests on this 8 km beach, up from just 379 in 2014, making it one of the densest nesting sites in the Caribbean for this critically endangered species. Also important to note was that only seven nests were poached, down from 57 in 2014.

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 retrofitted the lights on 141 beachfront properties since 2010 darkening an estimated 84,600 square feet or 16 miles of beach. The work continues in the panhandle with recent news that retrofitted properties on St. George Island have had in a 50% decrease in the number of nest disorientations in 2015.

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 2015: two leatherbacks from Panama; four loggerheads from the Archie Carr Refuge in Florida; one loggerhead from Anna Maria Island in Florida; two hawksbills from Nevis in the Caribbean; one green turtle and one hawksill turtle from Tortuguero in Costa Rica; and two juvenile green turtles from Bermuda. A rehabilitated loggerhead was also released from The Florida Keys in partnership with The Turtle Hospital and another released on Florida's Gulf Coast in partnerhsip with Clearwater Marine Aquarium. 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.



## Board of Directors

Landon T. Clay – Board  
Chairman

Laura Forte – President

Nicholas A. Shufro – Treasurer

F. Peter Rose – Secretary

Michael P. Bruyere, Esq.

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Jordan Urstadt, Esq.

## *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 2015, nearly 5,000 people attended sea turtle releases in Florida, Costa Rica, Panama and Nevis. In addition, more than 21,000 people from 229 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, USA Today, Yahoo News and countless local news outlets.



STC continued to be involved with the Bermuda Turtle Project in 2015, the world's longest running in-water study of Bermuda's turtles, conducted in partnership between STC and the Bermuda Aquarium. This year's program was led by STC's Scientific Director Emma Harrison. 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*

STC has been an active supporter and advocate for the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge since the idea was first conceived over 25 years ago. Without question, STC's long-term commitment to the Archie Carr Refuge and all sea turtle nesting sites in Florida contributed to the recovery of the green turtles we saw this past year. In 2015, green turtles shattered nesting records in the Archie Carr Refuge (and all across Florida). Four decades ago, biologists thought green sea turtles might go extinct. But this year they laid a record number of nests in the Archie Carr Refuge-- 14,152 to be exact. This is the first time that green turtle nesting numbers have topped 12,000 in the Refuge.

The refuge's 20.5 miles of beach is home to 25-30 percent of the nation's endangered green sea turtle nests. The extraordinary nesting success could mean that more than 760,000 green sea turtle hatchlings will emerge this year. The trend for green turtle nesting in the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge on Florida's central east coast is evidence of an inspiring conservation success story brought about by over 30 years of support and collaboration among public agencies, nonprofit groups like Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC), researchers from the University of Central Florida and local citizens with a strong sense of stewardship for this globally important turtle rookery.



2015 also marked 20 years since STC led the successful campaign to create a sea turtle license plate in Florida.

After meeting the requirements to create a new speciality tag and crafting legislation delineating how funds would be used, STC worked with the Florida legislature to gain near-unanimous approval for the turtle tag during the 1997 legislative session. Now, two decades later, the Helping Sea Turtles Survive license plate is the second highest selling speciality plate in the state of Florida (behind just the University of Florida tag) and the top selling environmental plate. Today, revenue generated by the tag stretches a long way. Seventy percent of the plate's proceeds serve as the primary source of funding for FWC's Marine Turtle Protection Program. The remaining funds are routed through STC, which distributes funding annually through the Sea Turtle Grants Program (STGP). Since its establishment, the STGP has been able to award more than \$4 million in grants to over 230 sea turtle research, conservation and education projects.

## Membership

- Total Members - 4860
- New Members - 1975
- Renewals - 635
- Monthly Givers- 217
- Other Donors - 2033

## Tortuguero Research Station

- Museum Visitations - 17,120
- Research Assistants Trained - 24
- Eco-Volunteers - 164

## Barrier Island Center

- Visitors - 24,958
- Turtle Walk Participants - 1,005
- Volunteer Hours - 4,457
- Outreach - 9,875 (persons)

## Website

- Page Views - 1,809,000
- Visits - 780,000
- Visitors - 573,200
- Avg. Daily Visitors - 1,639

## E-Communications

- E-mail Subscribers - 18,000
- Facebook Fans - 285,000
- Twitter Followers - 17,400
- Instagram Followers - 13,000

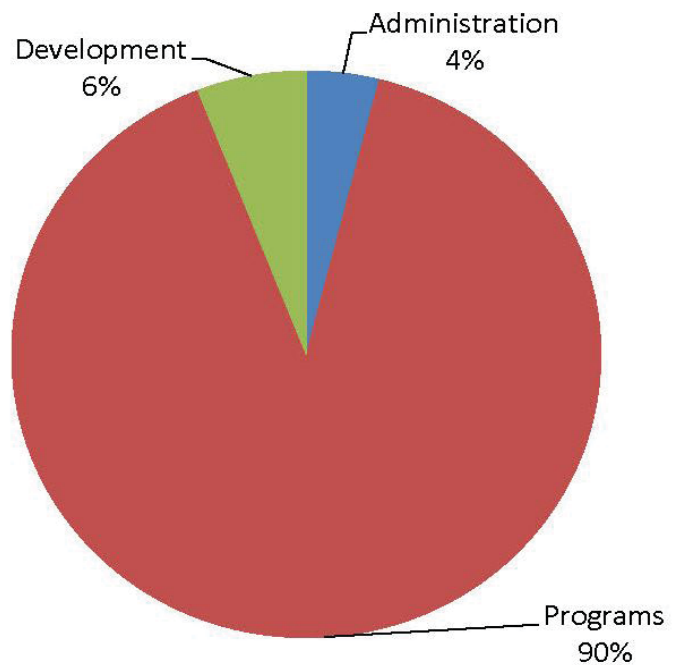
## Tour de Turtles Program

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

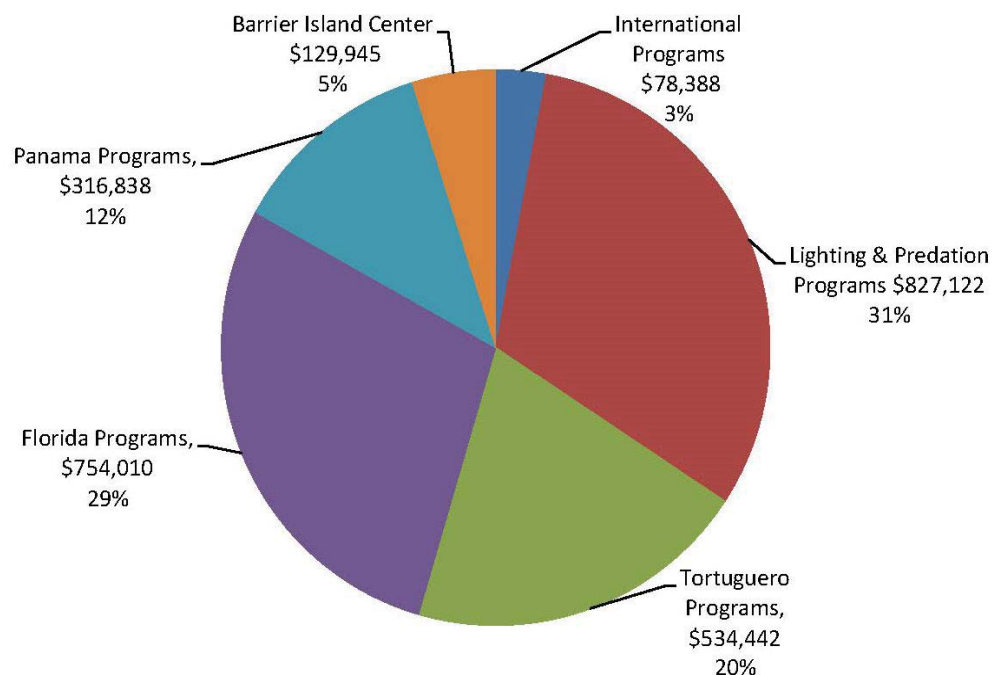
## Sea Turtle Grants Program

- Total Awarded - \$296,838
- Education Grants - 5
- Research Grants - 7
- Conservation Grants - 10

## Total Expenses



## Program Expenses Breakdown



# Foundation and Corporate Support

AmazonSmile	Hewlett-Packard Company	Salt Life Food Shack
Andrew Sabin Family Foundation	Jelks Family Foundation	Sea Glass Boutique
ARIA Foundation	Kezner International	SeaWorld & Busch Gardens
AWC Family Foundation	LED Source	Conservation Fund
B Ocean Ft. Lauderdale	Lemmon Foundation	Shark Reef at Mandalay Bay
Berri Patch Preschool	Loggerhead Apparel	Sun Hill Foundation
Chemonics	MAH Foundation	Suzanne T. & Frank W. Millard Foundation
Community Foundation for Brevard	Michele & Agnese Cestone Foundation	Tampa Bay Green Consortium
Community Foundation of North Central Florida	Microsoft Corporation	The Bay and Paul Foundations
Diageo	Minera Panama	The Boeing Company
Disney's Animal Kingdom	Morgan Stanley	The Dreamcater Fund
Disney's Vero Beach Resort	National Fish & Wildlife Foundation	The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.
Disney Conservation Fund	Norcross Wildlife Foundation	The Margaret Heins Foundation
Edward John Noble Foundation	Omidyar Network Fund	The Moore Charitable Foundation
Elinor Patterson Baker Trust Fund	Panaphil Foundation	The Ocean Foundation
Firedoll Foundation	Park Foundation	The Turtle Hospital
FLOAT Apparel	Patagonia	The Virginia B. Rogers Charitable Fund
For The Environment, Inc.	PayPal Giving Fund	Theophilus Foundation
Four Seasons Resort Nevis	Pura Vida Bracelets	Treadright Foundation
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation	Ress Family Foundation	Turtle & Hughes, Inc.
Helen Clay Frick Foundation	Ripley Entertainment	Youth Development Foundation
	Rockwell Collins	

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

Laura J. Forte	Jenny & Jerry Randgaard	Pearl Seidman
Henry Clay Frick, III	F. Peter Rose	Nancy Taylor

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

Patricia Barry	Wesley & Margaret Forte	Susan Place
Ruby Blondell	Scott Karl	Deborah Poppel
Robert Braddock & Joan French	Tom Kubit	Richard Ratliff
Sing Chan	Nancy Lawton	Tom Randgaard
Landon T. Clay	Aubrey McClendon	David Saperstein
Frank & Pam Deavours	Amy & Joseph Morel	William F. Truscott
Becky Elkins	David O'Connor	Sebastian Urbina
David Ehrenfeld, Ph.D., M.D.	Jeffrey S. Phipps	J. Jordan Urstadt

## Hawksbill Level (\$500 - \$999)

Liz Abel	C. William Kauffman	Diane Randgaard
Deborah Aguirre	Mark & Nancy Kimble	Barbara Rinaldi
Anonymous	Kathleen Kress Hanson	Alice Samy
Linda & Kenny Antonioli	Jeffrey Kromrey	Patrick Santini
Beverly Baker	Chris LeSuer	Nicholas Shufro
Catherine Bettcher & Praveen Dayalu	Judith A. Lindquist	Ray & Helen Smith
Nicole Bouchard	Charles Magal & Helen Stamatacos	South Milwaukee Middle School
Michael L. Brown	M J Mason	Tim & Brenda Sralla
Pablo Burbridge	Wayne Mathews	Nancy Stegens
Susan Carey	Carmel McGill	Tom Stevens
Alice Cave & Rick Fletcher	Diana & Mark McNabb	Martha Thompson
William Conway	Tasha Mehne	Stephen Tillinghast
Tim Criswell	Steven Meyer	Sebastian & Gretel Troeng
Daytona Beach News Journal	Brian Mitchell	Laurel Turner
Curt & Diane Fuhrmann	Bonnie Mollen	Bob Walker
Bryan George	Michele & Jonathan Naugle	Kennard Watson
Kenneth A. Hale	Marc Navre	Marlaine White
Bill Hartel	Paul G. Nelson	Ann Wiley
Laurie Henson	Larry Ogren	David Wypij
Joseph Holmes	Matthew Payne	Matt Yardley
Jeff Kalinowski	Scott Pieluszczak	