



# WIDECAST Costa Rica

## NEWS BULLETIN

### Programs & Projects shortly

WIDECAST Costa Rica is currently working on both coasts of Costa Rica. On the Pacific coast, our work focuses on the Dulce Gulf area in the south. There, we are working on three different beaches. In Sombrero and Platanares Beaches the work mainly concentrates on Nesting Monitoring and Protection activities of Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and Eastern Pacific Green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*). Also, these two beaches are being included in our multinational project, in the monitoring of climate change impacts on sea turtle nesting beaches. In Blanca Beach we opened our Rescue Center, where we treat, rehabilitate and finally release injured or sick sea turtles. We are also working on an In-Water study, as well we work on a Mangrove reforestation program in Blanca Beach. ([Read more](#))

On the Caribbean coast we recently opened our second Rescue Center at Pacuare Beach, where we also do Nesting Monitoring and Protection activities, mainly of Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and Green Sea Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), and, sometimes, of the rare Hawksbill Sea Turtles. This project works hand in hand with La Tortuga Feliz, a local non profit organization. ([Read more](#))

Our Binational Project in 2011 involved two Costa Rican beaches (Moín and Cahuita) and one beach in Panama, San San. The work mainly consisted in Nesting Monitoring and Protection activities, as major beach Clean-Ups, and most important, sharing experiences and knowledge. ([Read more](#))

The Multinational Project with Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba and Costa Rica consists in sharing knowledge, monitoring of climate change impacts on nesting beaches and economic alternatives for community members. ([Read more](#))



#### OSA PROGRAM

- Sombrero and Platanares Beach
- Blanca Beach

#### PACUARE PROGRAM

- Pacuare Beach

#### BINATIONAL PROJECT

- Panama - Costa Rica

#### MULTINATIONAL PROJECT

- Venezuela - Colombia - Cuba - Costa Rica

#### STAFF NEWS & CONTACT



*“Help us to forge a new Generation. A conscious generation that includes conservation and protection activities in its daily live.”*

# OSA PROGRAM

## Platanares Beach & Sombrero Beach

This project started in 2010 and is located at the Dulce Gulf entrance. This area is considered to be the most important foraging area for Pacific Green Turtles in Costa Rica. It is surrounded by different kinds of beaches, mangroves & estuaries, representing also a very important Hawksbill nesting area.

The two beaches concentrate at least 70% of the nesting of the populations of the sea turtles aforementioned. During 2011 47 Hawksbill nests and 15 Pacific Green Sea Turtle nests were protected, with a success rate of 89.1 % for Hawksbill nests and 78.9% for Pacific Green Sea Turtle nests.

10 small workshops with local schools and 2 training workshops with members of local authorities, WIDECAST volunteers and staff, local conservation stakeholders and local hotels' employees, were done.

This project is also part of the multinational project, in which among other objectives, climate change impacts are being monitored.

## Blanca Beach

On Blanca Beach we are doing several projects. One of these is the Osa Rescue and Rehabilitation Center that opened its doors at the end of 2011. Since then we have received more than 50 sea turtles, which we rehabilitated and released. Most of them suffered of different traumas or epibionts.

The facilities follow international best practices. We have 9 tanks and plan to include a hospital area to improve veterinarian treatments.

It is to mention, that parallel to this activities, we do an in-water study, entering habitat used by sea turtles in different life stages to collect data about population structure, genetic origin and in-water habitat use. This will help us to assess the types of threats that sea turtles are exposed to in this area. We capture them, tag them, take biometric data and some samples.

Also, we have a mangrove reforestation project, in partnership with ASOMANGLE, a local grassroot organization.

## *Stephanolepas muricata* on Hawksbill Turtles

During the conservation and protection activities, investigators noticed that some Hawksbill turtles are affected by an epibiont that turned out to be the main cause of death in a couple of cases found. A more detailed analysis revealed that these turtles are infected by *Stephanolepas muricata*, an epibiont that can damage the skin and is even able to cause the death like in our cases, since it covered 85 % of the turtle's body.

Therefore, in 12 individuals, we removed the epibionts and found positive results after a 3 month recapture - these sea turtles were free of *Stephanolepas muricata*.

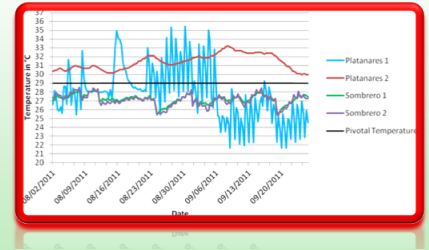
This issue continues to be researched.



Photograph: Natalia Corrales - PM

## Climate Change and Human Impacts

To record the nest chamber temperatures in both beaches, data-loggers have been installed in Platanares Beach and



Sombrero Beach, in representative sites, where Hawksbill and Pacific Green Sea Turtles use to nest. These data are being recorded for an evaluation of climate change impacts in a long-term research. However, first results showed very unstable temperatures in areas with human impacts as coconut plantations or grass areas (bright blue line) compared with natural vegetation (red line). Temperatures measured on Sombrero Beach let presume that the hatchlings were mainly males.

A major concern regarding these results, is the future survival of sea turtles, both facing climate change and human impacts together. Nowadays a lot of beaches are altered by humans, taking away the buffer capacity of the natural ecosystems and putting in danger sea turtle nests, as they are exposed to abrupt and extreme changes of the temperature. This will affect sea turtles' sex ratio and the success rate of hatchlings.

## Sea Turtle Health & Rehabilitation Workshop

Reserva Playa Tortuga, a non profit organization, organized a "Sea Turtle Health and Rehabilitation Workshop". The field practice of this workshop was done in our Rescue and Rehabilitation Center of Playa Blanca since we receive groups with educational purposes as well. Two WIDECAST members participated in this workshop. A total of 25 participants were recorded. The main purpose of it, was to provide important knowledge about sea turtle's anatomy and how to act in an emergency situation. Also, part of the workshop included how to take blood and tissue samples among other exams, and what to do to rehabilitate sea turtles.

During the practice, we provided 7 sea turtles for teaching purposes. Also, a demonstrative exploration in the water was done and for this, a Hawksbill was caught with a safe method and afterwards released.

## "Friendship" was released!

We are happy about the release of "Friendship", a Pacific Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas agassizi*), that has been tagged with a Satellite Transmitter. We released her in October 2011. During 3 months she was transmitting information about her location. She stayed in the Dulce Gulf during these 3 months, what shows us the importance of this critical habitat.

Adopt a turtle through our Adoption Program!

[http://www.latinamericaseaturtles.org/adoption\\_program\\_cr.php](http://www.latinamericaseaturtles.org/adoption_program_cr.php)





# PACUARE PROGRAM

## Protection and Conservation Activities on Pacuare Beach

Protection and Conservation Activities on Pacuare Beach started already in 2004 when this remote area was declared a biological reserve, created by Paul Lepoutre. Since then the Project has received support from several organizations all over the world (e.g WWF). La Tortuga Feliz has been founded, a local non profit organization that started to work with WIDECAST last year, in December 2011.

On this beach you will be able to work with Leatherback Sea Turtles mainly, but there are also Green Sea Turtles and sometimes Hawksbill Sea Turtles. Main threats for these turtles are human poachers and beach erosion. The first threat, we are helping to avoid through night patrols, with the construction of a hatchery and safe releases of the hatchlings. The second threat we are studying for a better understanding to find best practices against this. Meanwhile we do relocate the nests into the hatchery.

Through the close involvement with the very remote village of the area, the sea turtle conservation project provides not only a unique opportunity to volunteers to experience a true community-based Costa Rican conservation project, but also offers a legal and sustainable revenue to the community.

The first turtles already arrived and we are proud to communicate that already 20 nests are safe. However, we lost one nest to poachers. The hatchery is under construction and will be ready very soon.

All our Field Assistants just received a intensive training of 4 days, in which important and theoretical facts, considerations on the field, and field practices, as well as hatchery management, were taught. Our Veterinarian, also in charge of our Rescue Center there, did this training. We are developing this project in partnership with ASTOP in Parismina and Paradero Ecotours in Moín, since we all work with the same populations of sea turtles.

## Pacuare Rescue and Rehabilitation Center

We are excited to announce the opening of the Pacuare Rescue and Rehabilitation Center since the end of January 2012. Now, by this we are able to not only protect the nesting females and their babies, but also to help injured, sick or confiscated sea turtles by the police to regain their strengths. Thus, finally we can release them back into the ocean where they belong.

Our volunteers, our team, La Tortuga Feliz members, and 8 tanks, will make this rescue and rehabilitation center a success, filling a important gap for the survive of our Caribbean sea turtles.



## Did you know that...?

One of the reported abnormalities in hatchlings is albinism. This means that the organism lacks melanin and has therefore no pigmentation. Thus, 100% albino animals have pink-redish eyes because the blood vessels in the eyes are visible.

As it shows on the picture above, most of the white turtles lack only some pigments. The hatchling above, that by the way has been released in Pacuare Beach, has dark eyes. Turtles like this will develop darker colours as they get older and grow.

Unfortunately, only a small porcentaje of albino sea turtles survives, since it seems to be associated with cranial abnormalities like malformations of the eyes and jaws, among others. Not to mention the high sensitivity to the sun and the higher possibility to be discovered by a predator.

## Suggestion for Others with similar Projects

*“ALWAYS establish Alliances and Partnerships. This will help you strengthening your efforts, give you project more stability and sustainability, and they will open the doors to accomplish even more than you ever imagined.”*



# BINATIONAL PROJECT - Panama & Costa Rica

**This project's objective was to develop conservation activities, which were reached through several training workshops for local and international volunteers, thorough Beach Clean-ups, and night patrols, hatchery constructions and turtle tagging.**

**The project recorded between about 400 volunteers, more than 1000 turtle nests of Leatherback, Hawksbill and Green Sea Turtles, and we estimate that close to 46.000 turtle hatchlings have been released. We estimate that more than 200 work days were done by volunteers during the 2011 season.**

## Moín, Costa Rica

The Moín Beach project is being developed together with Paradero Ecotours, located nearby Port of Moín. Three years ago, Vanessa Lizano, Head of Paradero Ecotour, decided to include sea turtles to her conservation program, besides her rescue center for all kinds of terrestrial animals. The research department of the Paradero Ecotour is focuses in safing the biological corridors from Moín to Tortuguero, through the sea and the Tortuguero canal.

Now WIDECAST started to send volunteers and give technical advice since last year and with the continuing joint work we want to reduce drastically the nest poaching and protect the nests (mainly from Leatherback Turtles but also from Hawksbill and Green Sea Turtles) from erosion.

Last year, more than 500 nests were recorded, mainly from Leatherbacks, and approximately 20.000 Leatherback hatchlings were released.

For this season, the hatchery is under construction. Soon it will be ready for the first nests.

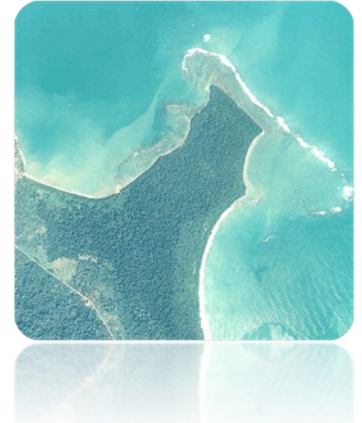


## Cahuita, Costa Rica

Three species of sea turtle (Leatherback, Hawksbill and Green Sea Turtles) nest here, and the forest is home to monkeys, sloths, crocodiles, caimans, anteaters, and approximately 400 bird species. Cahuita is a Nationalpark and the last place in the Costa Rican Caribbean coast where you can find healthy coral reefs. This is why we developed not only conservation and protection activities on the beach, but we also did a In-Water Study.

This study focused on the coral reefs of Cahuita Nationalpark, where the most important population of Hawksbill in Costa Rica can be found.

Around 150 nests were from Leatherback, nearly 50 from Hawksbill, and close to 10 from Green Sea Turtle.



## San San Beach, Panama

San San started its volunteering program to protect the sea turtles back in 2007. However, they do not only concentrate their work in sea turtle protection.

The project is one of WIDECAST's project, where economic alternatives were introduced like for example the production of bags made of recycled plastic bags collected on the beach. It is remarkable that in 2010 the volunteer program generated an income of nearly US\$ 50.000 for local community members.

Last year they ended the season recording a little bit more than 250 nests. The majority from Leatherback, around 10 from Hawksbill and a little less from Green Sea Turtles.

WIDECAST Costa Rica remains in contact with this project and is planning to receive this year, with the support of other partners, their help to develop a workshop about the production of the bags aforementioned, for Cuban, Venezuelan and Colombian partners.



## BEACH CLEAN-Ups

Around 30 km of Beach were cleaned

More than 300 Garbage Bags were filled

We collected approximately 1 TON of Garbage

Most of the Garbage consisted in **PLASTIC**

Nearly 400 Volunteers participated

About US\$ 6.000 were generated with recycled materials



# MULTINATIONAL PROJECT

## VENEZUELA - COLOMBIA - CUBA - COSTA RICA

Expanding our Efforts, Sharing Knowledge  
and

Improving Conservation & Protection Activities for Sea Turtles in the Caribbean Sea

### Goals

This multinational project has the main purpose to join conservation, protection and research efforts in the region. This is being reached through several objectives. One is the introduction of an innovative, economic

development on beaches of Venezuela, Cuba and Colombia, where the economic activities of the local communities are usually based on harming sea turtles. Train local communities in economic alternatives, based on non-consumptive uses of sea turtles is therefore essential, and the training of local community members is mandatory.

Our idea of workshops about guiding at sea turtle nesting beaches and about handcraft with waste material to produce jewellery and other utensils, has attracted other projects - we just finished workshops in which we participated as trainers, in a project that was financed by USAID.

To assure the sustainability of economic alternatives, it is necessary to create a strategy. For that reason, the promotion of these economic alternatives, the education about human impacts on sea turtles and building support for sea turtle protection, will guarantee the trained community members a certain independence at the end of the project.

Sharing best conservation actions to reduce sea turtle mortality, increasing protection measures and to promote local participation in sea turtle conservation, will contribute in the improvement of regional conservation efforts and enable innovative data collection. Applying standardized and new techniques will generate a scientifically important outcome, especially regarding climate change impacts on sea turtle nesting beaches.

Improving international conservation of sea turtles in the Wider Caribbean represents an important step forward to support the sea turtle conservationists in each country, providing a solid basis for the ongoing conservation efforts.

A diagnosis of threats to sea turtle and critical habitat, and trends in these, for Cuba, Venezuela and Columbia, is still in process, since we decided to do this along 2 years.

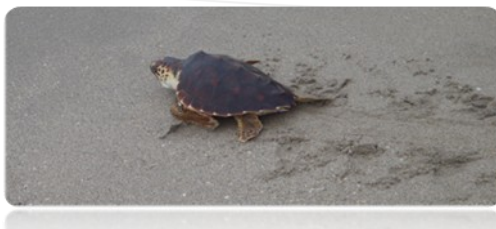
### The II International Symposium of Caribbean Sea Turtles, in Colombia, October 2011

During 5 days, workshops, speeches, presentations and practices were done.

Dr. Marianne Fish, specialist in Global Warming of WWF participated as a special guest and held a very informative and important workshop about Global Warming and its impacts on sea turtles.

All partners of the project were there, other NGO's, students, local authorities and others participated. Totally we registered in average a daily participation of nearly 300 people.

Also, during the symposium we held the coordination meeting, where we shared best practices, and we standardized the techniques, which are in the Technical Report Nr. 9 "Manual of Best Practices for Safeguarding Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches" of Choi & Eckert, 2009.



### Climate Change Research

We began the collection of a significant scientific database applying innovative techniques to monitor the climate change impacts on sea turtle nesting beaches. We trained and equipped all Country Directors to apply properly the Global Warming Monitoring Kit, clinometers (for Beach profiling) and Data-Loggers (Temperature measurements).

### Nesting Monitoring & Protection Activities Results 2011

Venezuela: Nearly 70 leatherback turtle females were tagged and around 40 re-migrant females from previous years were recorded. More than 5.000 hatchlings were released.

Colombia: Protected around 20 nests (from Hawksbill, Leatherback and Loggerhead).

Cuba: Nearly 800 nests were protected here. Mainly Green Turtle nests and Loggerhead nests, but also a very significant amount of Hawksbill nests.

### Workshops about economic alternatives will be done soon!



*"WELCOME CUBA! For the first time, we were able to integrate Cuba colleagues into the international sea turtle conservation activities and investigations."*

## STAFF NEWS

We are happy to introduce you to our new Volunteers Coordinator:  
**SUVI KAKSONEN**  
 Welcome! We hope you enjoy your work and hopefully you stay with us for a while!



## VOLUNTEER CONTACT INFORMATION

### Tibás Office Address:

If arriving by Taxi, show this address to the Taxi Driver:

*“Tibás, 200 metros norte y 25 oeste de la Municipalidad de Tibás, casa a mano izquierda, con rotulos de tortugas”*

If you have any questions, please contact our Volunteers Coordinator Suvi. She will be glad to answer all your questions.

### Contact us:

Tel.: (00506) 2241-7431

E-mail: [volunteers@latinamericaseaturtles.org](mailto:volunteers@latinamericaseaturtles.org)

Skype: volcowidecastcostarica

Facebook: Widecast VolunteerCoordinator

### Support us otherwise and check out our Wish List:

<http://www.latinamericaseaturtles.org/wishlist.php>



## THANK YOU!

The idea of working to help save the endangered Sea Turtles is very romantic. As we all know, the reality is very different.

When you decided to help us, volunteering in one or more of our projects, or donating, **YOU** made the difference!

Without the help of people and organizations like you, from all over the world, conservation would not be possible.

The Sea Turtles and Local Communities thank you for that and hope to welcome you again!

### Special Thanks to our Donors

USAID, NEAQ, Allemaal Foundation  
 Whitley Fund for Nature, Ecoteach  
 Foundation, The Humane Society International, The People's Trust for Endangered Species, The Body Shop Foundation, FECOPT.