



WIDECAST Costa Rica



NEWS BULLETIN



As you all know, WIDECAST in Costa Rica is working towards a better future for the conservation of the Sea Turtles. This year is no different!

Pacuare, Moín and Cahuita sea turtle nesting beaches have been monitored and protected on the Caribbean coast. We are also continuing our work in the Osa Peninsula, Playa Blanca at the Pacific coast, where 2010 we found a foraging area of Green Pacific turtles and Hawksbills in the Dulce Gulf.

This Leatherback season on the Caribbean coast was quite a remarkable year with a lot of happenings, ups and downs and a lot of volunteers! Find out how many nests were protected! Read more about our Pacuare Project and our Moín Partner-Project!

Our Rescue and Rehabilitation centers in Pacuare and Osa have been ready for use, and not in vain! Find out more about our patients and work that is related with it!

We haven't just been working with the sea turtles directly. One of our interests is also environmental education, public awareness, improvement of the marine ecosystems and alliances with other stakeholders, since nature is everybody's responsibility! Read more about our Binational Project and San San Beach in Panamá.

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THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!

Don't use plastic bags - Next time bring your own Cloth Bags to the supermarket!

*Recycle - This simple action can avoid pollution of more ecosystems!
Keep your environment clean!*

All together, we can do it - Be Part of the Difference!

OSA PROGRAM

Our Osa Program focuses not only on the foraging area of Black and Hawksbill sea turtles and Rescue Center, but also in improving these marine ecosystems in this area.



With our In-Water study we have been able to tag and study more than 200 Sea Turtles! Most of them are East Pacific Green Sea Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), but also Hawksbills (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) have been caught! We are analyzing blood samples in cooperation of the UNA (National University of Costa Rica) to find out more about the blood composition in relations with the health and the environmental conditions. Also, the tissue samples are used to find out to which population the sea turtles are corresponding. We have found individuals coming from different places like for example from the Galapagos Islands, which makes this foraging area even more interesting!



We have had more than 60 patients of three species in our Rescue and Rehabilitation Center! Most of them had to be treated against epibionts. Remarkable is, that all Hawksbill Sea Turtles that have been captured suffer from *Stephanolepas muricata* in a wide range of their body. All of them have been treated and released into the sea again in a maximum period of three days.

We also had a special patient, Billy, a juvenile Hawksbill, that had been found floating. Billy was 1.5 month in our care because of digestive problems (obstructions) and floating issues, but unfortunately he didn't make it! In the necropsy our veterinarian found several injuries that without a complicated surgery never would have healed. However, Billy's presence was not in vain! He helped us to improve public awareness and showed us the importance of improving our center!

"Help us to make that possible!"



To improve the natural habitat in the Dulce Gulf we have also a mangrove reforestation program. We have now more than 4000 seedlings in our nursery! Our volunteers, research assistants and staff made it possible! We collected seeds, planted them in the nursery which had to be established and took care of it! 2000 of the seedlings are already planted in their final destination in the Dulce Gulf coast, and other seedlings are nearly ready to be planted. Our goal is to recover at least 25% of affected Mangrove areas per year that have been destroyed by humans.

WIDECAST in Costa Rica is coordinating this work together with ASOMANGLE, a local Association dedicated to the recovery of Mangroves.



One of WIDECAST's Core Values is to establish partnerships with other local stakeholder and NGO's. We are convinced that like this, our efforts are more effective and cause a bigger impact.

With Osa Conservancy, a local NGO, we are working together, giving technical advise for the work with Sea Turtles on nesting beaches. OC runs a conservation project located at the Piró River on the Osa península.

Together with ISV (International Student Volunteers) that runs a Marine Mammals Monitoring in the Dulce Gulf, we are joining efforts to design a Conservation Program for Marine Macrovertabrates.



PACUARE PROGRAM

Our Pacuare Program focuses mainly in nesting activities of the Leatherback Sea Turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*). But there are also Green (*Chelonia mydas*) and Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) Sea Turtles.



For this Leatherback season we have registered more than 800 nesting activities resulting in more than 500 nests! The still ongoing Green and Hawksbill seasons showed until now around 80 Green and 5 Hawksbill turtle nests.

We estimate that we rescued thousands of baby turtles and made possible for them to reach the ocean, and there are many more Green baby turtles left to release!

As all of you know, Green Sea Turtles face a very real threat to be eaten by humans, as Hawksbill sea turtles do too, also because of their beautiful carapace. Fortunately, we have been able to rescue three Green nesting females from the death! Together with the Coast Guards and our dedicated local team we were more than happy to release them from captivity. Poachers usually take them and put them upside down to keep them alive, so they kill them shortly before they want to transport the meat. Because Sea Turtles have their lungs adjacent to the carapace, this is a very cruel way for them to be, since they have to carry like this all their weight on the lungs! They suffer a lot and can even asphyxiate slowly from this position! Sadly, this is what happened to a Hawksbill female brought by our friends from Parismina. This turtle had been kept in captivity like this for four or more days! She was rescued from our friends in Parismina and Police. Unfortunately, on their way to our rescue center she died. We buried her eggs and guess what:

81 Hawksbill baby turtles hatched!



Our first alive patient arrived in Pacuare in the beginning of August! A Hawksbill juvenile that was kept as a pet was handed over by the local authorities to us. We noticed that it had eaten plastic parts, which definitely proves, that besides being kept as a pet, the owner didn't care about the turtles wellbeing. Now we are rehabilitating it, which means feeding it with its natural food on different times so it doesn't get used to regular meals. After coming to Pacuare, the turtle fast stopped to show plastic particles in its dregs and is now behaving normal regarding this issue.



Also, we have to change the water on a daily base, which means carrying water buckets from the beach to the tank manually. This work is necessary to keep the water clean and on a constant temperature, so the turtle can be in best conditions. We are requesting help from all of you to raise the resources to install a pump and filtration system to improve the conditions.

We thank all hardworking Volunteers and Assistants that are helping us with this work!



Enhance public awareness through Environmental Education is another Core Value we have. We were happy to receive kids from Siquirres, Heredia, Grecia and San José.

Two local schools have been visited to show the kids how important it is to care about our environment and the Sea Turtles with illustrative presentations and a short theatre together with research assistants (local and international).

Also, in September together with the support of Global Vision, we received several schools from the area around Pacuare for a day - more than 90 kids helped us cleaning the beach, releasing baby turtles and received information about Sea Turtles that nest in Pacuare!

Our alliance with the local NGO, Asociación para el Ambiente de Nuevo Pacuare, allowed us to work with 13 local research assistants for the conservation of Sea Turtles in Pacuare, most of them former poachers.



BINATIONAL PROJECT

Panamá - Costa Rica Sea Turtle Conservation



Our Binational Project continued 2012 and is still running thanks to USAID-MAREA. From North to South: Moín and Cahuita Beaches are the Costa Rican nesting sites and San San Nesting Beach the Panamanian member. We are happy that we could expand our activities compared to last year and do some workshops!

We did five workshops thanks to USAID related to economic alternatives, meaning that people coming from coastal communities from Panama and Costa Rica were given the chance to learn more about creating handcrafts made out of bone, coconut, plastic bags among other materials, and eco-tour guiding. Around 90 people were trained like this! The objectives are to provide alternative revenues, increase public awareness and with these support conservation efforts on sea turtle nesting beaches.



Also, we organized a workshop thanks to USAID to create an alliance between different governmental institutions, NGO's and other stakeholder coming from Panama and Costa Rica for the conservation of sea turtles – a shared natural resource. In addition WIDECAST Costa Rica participated in the first Binational Sea Turtle Symposium in Panama where 2012 results were presented and challenges of the present and the future were shared.

The main objective of these activities is to join efforts and work together improving the conservation of the Sea Turtles.

MOÍN BEACH

Moín Beach is one of the very few beaches that are visited by a high amount of Leatherback Sea Turtles. Around 1400 Leatherback and approximately 40 Green nests have been recorded along the 18 km long beach! Unfortunately there is still a very high presence of poachers. Against this difficult situation we were still able to save a lot of nests! Coast Guards and the Police have been a real support on this beach.

We estimate that about 18.000 Leatherback and more than 1800 Green baby turtles have been saved thanks to the volunteers, Paradero Ecotours and local staff and authorities!



CAHUITA BEACH

Cahuita National Park recorded this season around 50 Hawksbill, 260 Leatherback and a few Green nests. This beach is suffering a high impact caused by erosion – a threat related also with the climate change, causing that the sea level goes up and climate events become more intense.

Nevertheless, more than 13.000 baby turtle were saved, which of more than 40% were Hawksbills.

For the international day of National Parks, August 24th, the local staff did a presentation about sea turtles in the local school Escuela Comadre by Puerto Vargas. 55 school kids participated!

SAN SAN BEACH

San San Nesting Beach in Panama recorded around 540 Leatherback nests this season! Finally more than 11.000 baby turtles were released!

Only on this beach more than 700 kg of garbage has been recollected, thanks to the many volunteers that participated in the Beach cleaning-ups!





STAFF NEWS

Welcome!

We are happy to introduce you to our two new Volunteers Coordinator that will be helping us out for the next year!

We hope you enjoy your stay with us and the Sea Turtles. Welcome Jurek Bauer and Felix Pekárek!

Research Assistants, Students and Longterm-Volunteers 2013

We would like to thank all RA's, Students and Longterm-Volunteers we have received this year for their great work, dedication and commitment. We know that it is not always easy, however, we hope you enjoyed your stay and learned a lot!

Together we can be better and help even more Sea Turtles!

Special Thanks for your hard work!



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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 and do some hands-on work,

YOU made the difference!

Without the help of people and organizations like you, 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,
FECOP, National Aquarium Baltimore.