

ASOCIACIÓN WIDECAST
Sea Turtle Conservation Program
of the South Eastern Caribbean, Costa Rica
2008 Nesting Season



WIDECAST

*Red para la Conservación de las Tortugas
Marinas en el Gran Caribe*

Working in Conservation and Sustainable Development

The Sea Turtle Conservation Program of the South Caribbean of Costa Rica is pleased to announce that will join WIDECAST Costa Rica in August 2007. After many great years working along Asociation ANAI, we will leave our friends at ANAI, and become part of the WIDECAST network. WIDECAST is a non-profit organization that supports local sea turtle conservation initiatives in most states and countries of the Caribbean region promoting cooperation between all nations. For over two decades WIDECAST has counted with the support from National Coordinators in more than 30 nations and territories in the Caribbean, and worked close with key stakeholders at a governmental and non-governmental level (including scientists, conservationists, resource managers, educators, etc.), to promote regional capacity and assist with the design and implementation of scientifically sound sea turtle management programs at local, national and regional (international) levels.

Our program will continue to support the sea turtle projects at Gandoca, Playa Negra/Cahuita, Tuba Creek, Peninsula de Osa and Ostional beaches.

Asociación WIDECAST was working as volunteer structure under WIDECAST Program since 1997 after the second Central America sea turtle conservation workshop in Tortuguero, now like independent organization is working for the conservation and sustainable development of the coastal regions of Costa Rica such north and south Pacific and south Caribbean is This last Region that represents around 5% of the national territory is one of the biologically richest areas of the planet with over 2% of the entire world's biodiversity. With Costa Rica's largest Native Indian population, English speaking Caribbean Blacks, and campesinos, its cultural heritage is equally rich.

Incorporated under the Costa Rican law, Asociación WIDECAST is an independent organization with its own board of Directors. WIDECAST formal membership includes an eleven Costaricans like scientists, representants of local communities, professionals and conservationists. WIDECAST has put into practice a strategy that links conservation and sustainable development through activities

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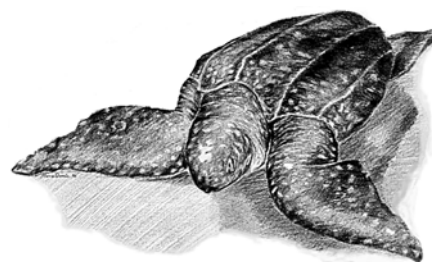
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that directly benefit both the people and the environment. The focus has been on establishing the conditions for a self-sustaining process involving work in the broad areas of conservation, economic development, training and education, organization, and advocacy.

Since 1986, the WIDECAST Marine Program has been working to protect the Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) nesting population at Gandoca beach in the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge. The main objective of the project is to protect the nests from human poachers and more recently from the erosion of the beach. Before the project began, the poaching rate was over 95%, but with the presence of our night patrols and the hatcheries on the beach the survival rate has increased to over 90% last season.

Leatherback Sea Turtle Conservation Project

Since 1986, the ANAI's Marine Program has been working to protect the Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) nesting population at Gandoca beach in the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge. The main objective of the project is to protect the nests from human poachers and more recently from the erosion of the beach. Before the project began, the poaching rate was over 95% but with the presence of our night patrols and the hatcheries on the beach, the survival rate has increased to over 90% last season.



The nesting season runs from the beginning of March through the end of July each year. The peak nesting period for the turtles is April/May with hatchling turtles emerging from mid May through the end of the season. The number of nesting adult female turtles arriving on the beach drops off from June until the end of July.

Each season, as part of the conservation effort, the project recruits volunteers, both national and international, to help in the research and conservation work. We also welcome schools to work on the project as part of the environmental education program.

Volunteer Work

Volunteers are encouraged to join us at any point during the season. For fourteen years, our project has welcomed students, travelers and professionals from countries around the world who have an interest in hands-on conservation and data collection work with an endangered species. Volunteers can commit from a week up to several months of their time participating in our program in Gandoca.

The main work of the volunteers involves night patrols and hatchery shifts. Other daytime work at the project in Gandoca may involve beach cleanup and small projects including initial construction of the hatcheries. There are two nightly patrols from 8pm to 12 midnight and 12 midnight to 4am when a shift of volunteers led by an experienced patrol leader walk a sector of the 11 km beach searching for nesting females.

Once a turtle is encountered on a night patrol, the volunteers work directly with the turtle taking carapace and nest dimension measurements, collecting eggs and tagging the rear flipper of the turtle. The collected eggs are then relocated on the beach or taken to the hatchery where the volunteers on shift will build a new nest to specification and transplant the eggs. The number of eggs, nest location and turtle identification information (*tag number*) is then recorded by the hatchery attendant for further data analysis including recording the hatchling survival rate.

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The approximate incubation time for Leatherback Turtle eggs is 60 days; therefore midway through the season the duties of the hatchery attendants increase as the hatchlings begin to emerge. At this time, all nests in the hatcheries must be checked every 30 minutes and if hatchlings are encountered, they must be counted and released in the evening to an appropriate location along the high tide line and watched until they reach the sea. Hatchlings are never released directly to the sea.

Sometimes volunteers are asked to work longer hours than normal.

Gandoca Community

Local community involvement is a priority for our project. There are five full-time local employees, including the on-site Project Director. Volunteers have the opportunity to stay with local families, paying US\$ 17 per day directly to the family for room and board. There is also the option of staying in tents set up at the base camp of the project, or for those that have their own camping equipment, a cheaper option is to camp at a farm, located adjacent to the project office.

With the diverse ecosystems concentrated within the area of the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge (*beach, mangrove swamp, coral reef and tropical rain forest*) along with the close involvement with the somewhat remote village of Gandoca, our Sea Turtle Conservation Project provides a unique opportunity for volunteers to experience a true community-based Costa Rican conservation project.

For more information about Asociación WIDECAST and its conservation and volunteer programs please write to:

Asociación WIDECAST

Apdo. 2164-3000

Heredia,

COSTA RICA

Tel.: (506) 261-3814

Fax: (506) 260-5789

E-mail:

volunteers@latinamericanseaturtles.org

Or visit our web site: www.latinaamericanseaturtles.org

As a nonprofit conservation organization, we are very grateful for donations which help us further our mission. Please consider including us in your charitable giving. Tax-exempt donations can be sent to the above addresses.

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Accommodation in Gandoca March 1- August 15, 2008	
▪ Inscription fee: \$35 ▪ Minimum stay: 6 nights	
Stay options in Gandoca:	Accommodation fee includes:
Option A: Accommodation with local families: Residencia Baulas: \$17 Cabinas Orquídeas: \$17 Chavelo: \$17 Maria Baltodano: \$17 Cabinas Navelly: \$17 Cabinas Rincocito: \$17 The money for your stay goes directly to the families, WIDECAST doesn't get anything. It's for the development of the local community so that they understand that they do not have to poach eggs to get money but can earn more by cooperating with WIDECAST. By staying with local families, you get an opportunity to get insight into the Caribbean culture and the normal life of a Costa Rican family, and you can practice your Spanish. You choose your accommodation upon arrival in Gandoca; the local coordinator will show you all available houses and then you decide where you want to stay.	1. Rooms are shared with other volunteers 2. All meals cooked by the families- food is included!!! 3. Volunteers get their own bed 4. An opportunity to speak Spanish 5. Sharing the facilities at the house, electricity, clean drinking water, washing and toilet facilities.
Option B: WIDECAST Sea Turtle Field Station: \$17 (\$13 if you stay longer than one month and you want to be emergent research assistant)	1. Rooms are shared with other volunteers 2. Food is included 3. Volunteers get their own bed 4. Toilet facilities, drinking water etc. Solar panels provide limited electricity, but we cannot ensure available electricity the whole day.
Option C: Campsite at local farm (Marias Farm). There are two options: 1: \$8 if you bring your own tent (food is not included) 2: \$8 if you rent a tent from the camping owner (food is not included)	1. Covered campsite 2. Cooking stove with basic dishes to cook 3. Covered cooking and eating area 4. Drinking water (from well) 5. Basic toilet and washing facilities
Option D: Locally run cabins. \$ 35 per day per person	1. Cabin with two or three beds. 2. Toilet facilities in each cabin 3. Electricity 4. Clean Drinking water 5. Food is included

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Inscription, accommodation, and transportation fees should all be paid at the Heredia office in cash, either in dollars or colones. We don't accept payment by credit card or travelers checks. If you need to go to the bank when you arrive, we will of course help you.

At the main office you will also be shown a presentation about the project, given a manual and some papers about Sea Turtles and of course an explanation of how to get to Gandoca.

Other services

- **Airport pick up:**

If you need an **airport pick up** we can arrange that for you, just get back to us after you have your plane ticket and send us the airline, flight number and arrival time. The pick-up is **\$20 before 10 PM and \$25 after** and the airport is about 20 minutes away from Heredia. As well from the office to the caribbean bus station next morning is \$20. This is a service provided by WIDECAST and can be slightly more expensive than taking normal taxis, but at the same time it's much easier and faster because in Costa Rica, addresses and street names are not really existing.

- **Stay in Heredia:**

We can offer you the option to stay the first night(s) in Heredia at our volunteer's room called "**New Leatherbackpacker's**" for **\$12 per night**. The room is part of the office, which gives you an excellent opportunity to meet and communicate with the people from WIDECAST before going to the project. There are several cheap possibilities to eat close to "New Leatherbackpacker's". Naturally, you are also free to stay at any other place in Heredia or San José.

Conditions at the site

Gandoca is a southeast beach on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. It is located in a relatively inaccessible area of the country. Gandoca has a humid tropical climate with periods of heavy rain. The driest period is February through May. The electricity just came, water is from wells and toilets are outhouse style. Available services are minimal. One or another kind of biting insects are usually present (mosquitoes and/or sand flies).

General Requirements

1. Be in good physical condition to walk 10 to 15kms per night.
2. No severe eyesight problems (most work is at night, without artificial lights).
3. No use of illegal drugs; no consumption of alcohol during working hours or abuse of alcohol at any time.
4. Preferably non-smoking. Those who do smoke should do so only in open areas and never on nightly patrols.
5. Be willing to work under difficult and uncomfortable conditions.
6. Know if you are allergic to mosquito bites.
7. Have a personal insurance policy.

What to bring?

- Sleeping bag, sheets or blankets

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- Lightweight dark colored cotton clothing for patrolling
- Dark colored raincoat or poncho
- Lightweight shoes for patrolling (they will get wet), preferably dark color
- Flashlight and spare batteries
- Alarm clock
- Garden or working gloves
- Mosquito net (only if you have one) and repellent
- Basic First Aid Kit, especially for mosquito bites (something like anti histamines)
- Photo Camera, Books to read, and swim suit
- ...

How to register?

1. Contact the Volunteer Coordinator by postal mail, electronic mail, phone or fax.
2. Send back the Registration Form with the chosen accommodation option and the dates you would like to participate. This is also your opportunity to ask any general questions.
3. Make your reservation for the dates you plan to participate and an appointment to visit the office in San Jose.
4. Make a personal visit to WIDECAST's office in Heredia at least 24 hours before leaving for Gandoca. This visit enables you to pay any outstanding fees, confirms your reservation and allows us to give you final information about the project and directions on how to get there.

The law in Costa Rica (Decreto Ejecutivo 32443-MINAE) demands that every volunteer working in Protected Areas (all places where we have conservation projects are Protected Areas) have a health insurance. If MINAE (the costarican ministry for environment and energy) finds out that there are volunteers working without an insurance they will close down the project.

Since we don't provide an insurance volunteers that want to work in our projects have to get one for themselves (or one through your organization). We have a registration form (kept at the project place) where every volunteer needs to give there insurance company and policy number. If volunteers can not give these details we will have to refuse them the access to our project.

Contact information

Asociación WIDECAST

Apdo. 2164-3000
Heredia,
COSTA RICA

Tel.: (506) 261-3814

Fax: (506) 260-5789

E-mail:

volunteers@latinamericanseaturtles.org

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Or visit our web site: www.latinamericanseaturtles.org

Heredia Office address:

If arriving by Taxi, show this address to the Cab driver:

“Heredia, Mercedes Norte, 50 Oeste metros y 150 Sur del Bar España, casa con rotulo de tortugas marinas”, casa N° 193
(Heredia, Mercedes Norte, 50 meter west and 150 South form the España’s Bar, House with a Sea Turtle Sign), house N° 193

Or

Take the “Mercedes Norte” bus 2 bloocks west from the south-west corner of the Heredia Central Park. Get off at Bar España and walk 50 meter west and 150 South form the España’s Bar, House with a Sea Turtle Sign

NOTE: If you do not visit the office in Heredia to confirm your reservation, you may lose your reservation or scholarship. Money will not be refunded for missed days.

Permits

The project will organize all necessary permits so volunteers can work alongside WIDECAST staff and members of the Costa Rican Wildlife Authorities collecting information on nesting behavior of the turtles and removing eggs to safe locations for protection until hatched.

For more information, please contact the Volunteer Program Coordinator at the address below:

Asociación WIDECAST

Apdo. 2164-3000
Heredia,
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Tel.: (506) 261-3814

Fax: (506) 2605789

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Please Read!

The idea of working to help save the endangered Sea Turtles is a very romantic one. The reality is a very different experience. When deciding if this is the type of work you would like to be involved in, please remember:

Most of the work is at night, working between the hours of 8PM and 4AM. While on night patrol you will walk on average 5 - 10 km in the dark on soft wet sand.

There may be times when volunteers will be asked to work both during the day and at night. Work could include both a night patrol and daytime hatchery monitoring.

Night patrols will still take place during the rain. There will be some nights when there are few or no turtles nesting - (especially early or late in the season) - patrols will still take place. We cannot be sure when or if turtles will nest.

Gandoca/Manzanillo is on the Caribbean coast. This means it is hot with 100% humidity, it rains frequently and sometimes heavily. There are mosquitoes and sand flies in the area but no Malaria or Dengue fever.

Gandoca village should be considered an isolated location, being in the middle of a wildlife refuge. Accommodation is basic local accommodation, as is the food.

Past comments include "The work was too hard"; "There was nothing to do during the day"; "Too many mosquitoes"; "Didn't realize how hard it is to walk on the beach"; and "Too hot and couldn't sleep".

Working with the turtles is a brilliant unforgettable experience and we really need your help. However, this experience is not for everyone. It is estimated that if the current rate of decline is not stopped, the Leatherback Sea Turtles will be extinct within 20 years.

Please think about these points before volunteering!

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Gandoca Volunteer Inscription Form

This information helps us to get a better idea of your interests and background. Thank you for your interest in ANAI. Please respond to the questions in both Part I and II of this information sheet and return to us at:

E-mail: volunteers@latinamericaseaturtles.org
(506) 261-3814

Fax: (506) 260-5789

Phone:

Part I: Personal Information

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Home Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Languages: _____

Person to contact in case of emergency:

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Part II: Project Interests and Background

Which of the following options would you prefer for lodging?

- ☐ Option A: Stay at the local houses
- ☐ Option B: ANAI Sea Turtle Field Station
- ☐ Option C: Campsite at Local Farm
- ☐ Option D: Locally run cabins.

What are the dates that you want to come (the days you will actually spend in the project and not your travel dates)? The project runs from March the 1st until July the 31st.

Do you want to stay at "New Leatherbackpacker's", and if yes how many nights?

Do you want airport pick up? You can include your flight details now or send them later.

How did you hear about WIDECAST and this Project?

South Eastern Caribbean, Costa Rica.

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Do you have any knowledge about Sea Turtles and their problems?

Please give us an idea of what you have been doing for the last 2 years. In addition to this summary, please be sure to mention any other experience that you think might be relevant to the project. Please do not attach a resume instead of this summary.