



BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

TURTLE TALK

SEA TURTLE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Vol. 12, No 3 - Fall 2008

<http://www.SeaTurtleSpacecoast.org>

From the Chair's Perspective

By Dan Beckett, chairman STPS



On August 11th, my wife Jessica and I were blessed with the arrival of a son and daughter. Grayson and Audrey were born on a Monday morning when most people were finishing that first cup of coffee and trying to decide if the week was going to get any better. For me, I knew the week was going to get better as I got to know our two newborns. But as I held them in my arms for the first time and the joy surged through my very core, I was hard pressed to figure out how it could get better than that.

Now, I consider myself to be pretty tough. Most guys do. After all, it is a guy thing. But for several days after our children arrived, I was an emotional wreck. Now it wasn't soap opera emotional wreck material, but by my standards, it was pretty bad. Every time I watched over them as they slept or held them in my arms or thought about their future, I was suddenly struck by that tell-tale tingling in the corners of my eyes and the tightening of the throat that signals an onslaught of tears. For the most part, I was able to hold them back as even the slightest bit of sappiness from me triggered a flood of tears from Jessica and she was getting tired of it. As I explained my feelings to family and friends, I summed it up as, "My cup runneth over," for indeed I had all that I would ever need.

After a few days, I was mentally stable enough to consider thoughts of our children without too much hysteria. I began to think about where they would fit into the world and what they might accomplish. Doctors? Scientists? Leaders? In this world, the options are endless. Despite having all the paths laid out before them however, I'd be a fool not to understand that it is the choices that I'll make, both cognizant and subconscious, over the next several years that will guide theirs. Children learn more by our actions than by our words and so it isn't enough to tell them how to behave; we must model the behavior as well. The lesson of "do unto others" rings hollow if we don't follow that example as well.

As a society, do we provide a good example for the next generation to follow? I suppose the answer to that question really lies in your individual beliefs, but in my opinion, I think we're doing pretty well. While people may argue that there are numerous instances that indicate just the opposite, I don't think it's the problems we have but rather our attitudes towards them that tell the story. As a globe, we have problems. There's no denying that. But the point is, we *know* we have problems and we *know* that we need to address them somehow. To me, this indicates an attitude of awareness and responsibility.

It would be nice if the mistakes we've made over the past few thousand years could be fixed overnight, but they can't. Even something like a bad haircut may take a few weeks to grow out, so I think it's unreasonable to expect the problems of the world to go away just as fast. All we can do is understand that for the big problems (and you can take your pick as we have plenty), the efforts we make today won't payoff for us. Future generations will reap those rewards and hopefully, that lesson will be enough to convince them to do as best they can to make their own contribution.

Audrey and Grayson may be born to a world with its fair share of problems, but I feel confident that as they observe the actions of Jessica and me, they'll understand that we're doing the best we can to improve what we were given. I'm sure that they'll take those lessons of civic responsibility and pass them onto their children and so on down the line. How they go about doing that is up to them, but to get them started, I plan on giving them the best tools I have to help them on their way. The

largest effort will come from trying not passing on my bad habits as well (which as Jessica can tell you, are numerous). But like our global problems, I *know* that they exist and I *know* that they need to be addressed. Perhaps by addressing those, I'll be able to make a bigger influence on the global problems through the hands and minds of my children.

Upcoming Elections for Board Members

The election for vacancies on the STPS Board of Directors will be held on December 13 at the Corporate Annual Meeting, which is held at the beginning of the Christmas Party.

In October, the STPS Board will appoint an Election Committee that is responsible for preparing a list of persons who are interested in a position on the board. In addition, nominations will be accepted from the floor prior to the voting on the December meeting.

According to the Organizational By Laws:

- There must be a minimum of nine and a maximum of 13 members on the board.
- The current Primary Permit Holders (for Stranding, Nest Surveys and Turtle Walks) must be board members.
- A representative of the Friends of the Carr Refuge must be a board member.
- The Treasurer and Secretary positions are appointed (not elected) by the board and perform their positions at the consent of the current board.
- Each January, the current board elects the Chairman of the Board to serve for the year.
- Each board position is elected for a two year term which are staggered so all positions are not up for election the same year.

Currently, there are 13 board members. The term of one board member expires in December. In addition, one board member has chosen to resign from their position. Therefore the Election Committee is seeking STPS volunteers that are interested in being nominated for two positions.

If you are currently an STPS volunteer and have an interest in becoming a board member, contact a board member and request that your name be submitted to the Election Committee. It is an excellent opportunity to be part of the governing

and decision-making body of the STPS. The board meets monthly on the second Tuesday evening of each month except during the summer months.

If you have any questions about the STPS nominating or voting process, contact a current board member.

STPS Stranding Network

By Ann Zscheile

The fall of 2007 was a busy season for the STPS stranding team. In October, a tropical storm in the mid-Atlantic caused over one thousand post hatchling sea turtles to be washed back to the beaches of Brevard County. This was followed by a red tide event in December. The height of the red algae bloom off shore in Brevard county that kept everyone coughing and eyes watering also had a major impact on the juvenile green sea turtles that forage on the near shore rock reef. STPS stranding team managed to rescue 21 of these over a 48-hour period and transport them as quickly as possible to the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet for treatment. All but 1 of these young sea turtles survived and was released back to the ocean in January.

As a result of these events a long anticipated rescue network, the Sea Turtle Emergency Response Program (STERP), was developed through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The purpose of this program is to provide a volunteer rescue team to search the beaches of central Brevard County from Cape Canaveral to Ocean Avenue in Melbourne Beach (not including PAFB). . A phone network has been established to "search for and rescue" washback sea turtles in an assigned 1 mile stretch of beach for each volunteer, during events in which large amounts of seaweed are being washed ashore. The team will be called when a major washback event is likely to occur. This should result in an increased number of washback post-hatchling sea turtles that are located, rescued and transported to a treatment center.

The STER Program also includes education of the beach going public encountered during these events. It is important to inform those on the beach about what they should and should not do in the event that they encounter a stranded or injured sea turtle on the beach. STERP will be using sea turtle

education cards created by Florida Beach Basics. These cards are a quick reference for species identification, ways to protect sea turtles and important phone numbers. They have a water resistant coating and fit into a pocket for people to carry with them when they are at the beach.

The Sea Turtle Emergency Response Program was approved for recruitment of volunteers at the end of July 2008. Notification of STPS volunteers and press releases went out on July 22. Responses to the announcements by volunteers began on July 23 and by August 6th all three of the scheduled workshops were filled. The total number of individuals/families showing interest in the program was 179 (not including 29 more who have been placed on the 2009 waiting list).

On Labor Day, September 1, a STERP drill was called. The volunteer's response to the drill was very encouraging. The drill also gave us the opportunity to work out communication problems and also fine tune some of the logistics of the program.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission issued 78 Letters of Authorization on Sept. 2 to those in the first 2 workshops. Following the Sept. 6 workshop the total number of all STERP volunteers is 151. Our volunteers include young children, students, families, couples, young and older, retirees and senior citizens. We have a geographically diverse group of volunteers, representing 15 different communities from Malabar to Titusville and beyond: Mims, Davenport and Miami. One couple will drive 78 miles to search for turtles and drove over 100 miles to attend the workshop, the couple from Miami spent the summer volunteering for our beach surveys and will be making the trip up when an emergency event arises, Davenport is in the Orlando area. The largest number of volunteers selected the south/Melbourne Beach area. Cocoa Beach from No. PAFB to the pier had the least responses and still needs volunteer coverage.

The incredible response to this program demonstrates the concern and caring the people of Brevard County have for our sea turtles. Thanks to all of you who wish to contribute your time to the Sea Turtle Emergency Response Program.

Sea turtles are all endangered or threatened. They face many obstacles and hazards during their lifetime in the ocean. It is our hope that this program will be a part of man's efforts to prevent the loss of this species.

STPS Turtle Walk Program

During the past June and July, the STPS conducted 38 turtle walks in addition to two practice walks to train new volunteers. A total of 1031 guests attended these walks with an average group size of 27. In addition, there were over 100 beach pickups, a practice meant to reduce the impact of beach walkers wondering on their own. As usual, we had a tremendous volunteer turnout, averaging 13 volunteers per walk.

A total of 123 turtles were observed during the walks with only 5 nights reporting no turtles seen. A success rate of 87%. Merchandise sold at the walks amounted to over \$1700. All in all, another successful year.

STPS Donations

STPS receives donations from a number of individuals, organizations and businesses and we always try to thank them for their generosity. This past summer we received donations from Ersel Willard, Marilyn Hallock, the Brevard County Bar Association, Jacob Dannenburg and A&B Graphics.

Jacob Dannenburg is a young boy who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico and has donated money from the sale of lemonade at his lemonade stand. He also got the Rio Grande Summer Camp, which he attends, involved in creating origami sea turtles that they subsequently donated to the STPS. His dedication and his work is a symbol of what is good in upcoming generations and leaves us with hope for the future.

STPS also would like to thank Marilyn Hallock for her donation which represents the proceeds from her yoga classes conducted at the Pelican Beach Clubhouse on Monday and Wednesday evenings and at the Satellite Beach Civic Center on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

STPS Truck Wrap

The STPS stranding truck will soon be much more visible on the street. A & B Graphics has donated and installed a sea turtle themed truck wrap for our stranding vehicle. All we need now is for the sea turtle wash-in season to slow down so we could make the truck available for the necessary work. Special thanks to Anthony Broad and Michael Standiford of A & B Graphics.



Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

By Cindy Doloway

Our annual Volunteer Picnic was held on August 10 at Paradise Park. Dozens of folks active in various ways from office help, beach clean-ups, survey and stranding teams and, of course, walk guides all met to “gnaw and jaw” through the hot afternoon. It’s always a good time to gather and share stories, data and pictures of the past season. It’s remarkable to see an organization with active members as young as 13 and, well, let’s just say, very senior, enjoying each other’s company, and all brought together by a common interest in sea turtle survival.

One of the event’s highlights is the announcement of this year’s “Volunteer of the Year” and “Rookie of the Year.” The 2008 honors go to Dave Castro and Katie Welsh, respectively. Both of them were very active with this year’s walk program. Dave Castro, a city mail carrier in Melbourne, walks miles a day and still managed to turn out for 27 walks this past June and July. It’s also worth noting that Dave is the first one in many years whose walk tally exceeded Dave Hochberg’s. Katie Welsh, a senior in Pre-Professional Biology at FIT is our “rookie.” Katie is now applying to graduate schools to study veterinary medicine, and we’re sure her award will make a stellar resume shine even more! Congratulations to both and we look forward to many more years of collaboration with them.



Katie Welsh

Dave Castro

STPS Rookie of the Year STPS Volunteer of the Year

A few people deserve thanks for their hard work in making such an event a success. Cindy Ullmer has put in many tireless hours, to make this picnic a success for several years now. Donna Braunlich’s computer expertise generated the invitations. Not to be overlooked: the culinary skills of Marty Penny (smoked fish dips) and Gina Hollywood (what are those incredible brownies with the coconut topping called anyway?) added to our feast. Thank you everyone.

Vanishing Ancient Mariners: new STPS Program

Many local pictures, film clips of tiny hatchlings taking their first swim and bright graphics full of the latest data help give “Vanishing Ancient Mariners”, our newest education program, its broad appeal. It will premier at the first STPS general meeting of the fall season.

This project is the brainchild of STPS member volunteers, Donna Braunlich, Ann Zscheile and Cindy Doloway (“with a lot of help from our friends”). It began as a Power Point to simply shorten and “jazz up” the current program that’s been used for many years now. We wanted to update and shorten a visual presentation to be used when we are asked to share our knowledge about sea turtles with school groups and the general public who usually ask for programs less than an hour long. (Please note, we do over 50 programs a year and reach several thousand potential sea turtle conservationists.) After months of hard work and Donna’s expert computer knowledge we succeeded in a program of which we are quite proud. Matt MacQueen of Still Nature contributed a very professional voice over narrative for the program and it is now in a very user-friendly DVD format. One of the convenient features of this project is that it can be quickly customized for various age levels

or purposes. It can run on its own, movie-style, or be used as a slide show to illustrate a confident presenter's program. In its initial testing, we have gotten overwhelmingly enthusiastic responses from our audiences who have especially liked the embedded video clips of nesting turtles and hatchlings. The future? We'd like to develop some lesson plans to go with VAM and distribute it to all middle school teachers in the county.

The Perfect Birthday Present

By Cindy Doloway

Sometimes things fall so perfectly into place that you know it was just meant to happen. As someone who subscribes to the "3 negatives and it's not supposed to happen" philosophy of life (AKA "don't push the river ; it flows by itself") even I was surprised by the fortuitous series of events that made for one woman's dream come true this past summer.

Last May, I got an unusual call from a man in Rhode Island looking to arrange a surprise for his wife's birthday. She has always wanted to see a sea turtle, but all his endeavors to arrange anything for her of that nature involved third world countries, and visions of scorpions and pirates and other potential disasters made him wary. So he found STPS and we talked one afternoon. Yes, I suppose if she were to come down in June or July, book a hotel room, I could arrange for her to attend an evening nesting walk and could probably even get her out for a morning nest survey. Ideal, he thought. So it was arranged and at 5:30 am on a Sunday morning in late June, I met Donna Gilman Hoyle. She was eager to go have her first "turtle experience", waiting out front of the Holiday Inn with a big smile and her coffee cup! We met with the Sunday morning survey team up in Cocoa Beach and Donna was able to see turtle tracks and even "excavate" her own nest. When I saw her, on her hands and knees, up to her armpit in a sandy loggerhead nest, I silently prayed that all this time and expense was all worth it for her. And things only got better! Dori Hughes, the survey team permit holder, chatted amicably with her, teaching along the way. She even let Donna put her own initials on a staked nest, labeling it "her own."

Another serendipitous event: the next morning just happened to coincide with the release of 40 sub-adult loggerheads into the Indian River. These beautiful turtles, tank raised and used to test turtle-

excluder devices on shrimp trawlers, were ready to begin their ocean journeys. Donna got to help carry them into the water and watch them take their first swims in open water. This is a very uplifting experience for anyone lucky enough to see it.

That evening, despite the relentless rain, Donna and her husband and 9 year old daughter attended a nesting walk. Luckily the rain didn't keep a lone loggerhead from making her arduous way up the beach and nesting in front of the die-hard attendees who waited patiently.

Donna's last day at the beach didn't disappoint either. We received a call on the stranding pager about a juvenile green turtle with fish hook entanglement. Where? The very same Holiday Inn where Donna was staying, so she was able to see this part of our work with sea turtles too. Unfortunately, after a brief stay at the rehab hospital at the Marine Science Center at Ponce Inlet, our turtle succumbed to internal injuries. Donna, however, got a first hand look at some of the hazards effecting sea turtles off our shores.

Back to the good news. Now, this just keeps getting better: a couple weeks ago, Ann Zscheile was out doing her morning survey on Cocoa Beach and just happened to be on the spot when "Donna's nest" of hatchlings made its frenzied dash to the open water. She took pictures and when we sent them to Donna, her reply was, "OMG ! I've named everyone!"

You just can't plan things like that; they just happen. And I'm not making any of this up! Make things happen for yourself. Our organization is full of people willing to share knowledge and experiences with folks who truly want to learn. I think the Hoyle family can attest to that.

Something Exciting Happened Today

Editor: If space permits we sometimes publish an article sent in to us. I thought this exhibited the wonderful elation that people feel when they are able to rescue a baby sea turtle.

I got a present this morning, a surprise gift. I walk in my neighborhood regularly for exercise but live near the beach and haven't been taking advantage of the opportunity to enjoy the ocean air and gorgeous view right down the street. It has been my goal to walk the beach on Saturday mornings, for

the last month or so. I almost didn't go this morning, it was getting late and I had things to do, but my husband Jay agreed to join me for a quick walk. The weather had been rough for several weeks here in Indialantic, high winds and waves. We weren't sure we would have much beach to walk but found the tide just coming in. I discovered a few sea beans early on, and that always entices me to scour the sand for treasures. We were making our way through all kinds of flotsam, natural and manmade, when a shape caught my eye. A little turtle shape way up near the dune. Lots of sea turtle nests had been disturbed, but this was not an eggshell, it was a turtle. I picked it up and immediately thought it was dead, but its' tiny eye was open and the light caught a faint reflection. We rushed the turtle to the surf to wash away the dried and caked sand and Jay thought the turtle moved. The surf was too rough to consider returning the turtle to the sea. We rushed down the beach, back to our truck and drove down 3 or 4 miles to the Sea Turtle Preservation Society. I cupped the turtle in my hands protecting him from the sun. He never moved, but I could see his tiny eye, and it felt like he was alive. I carried the turtle inside and met a volunteer and explained our find. She peeked into my hands and picked up the turtle and he started to immediately move his flippers and his head. The little loggerhead was not a hatchling, but had washed back to shore due to offshore winds. He would have died, too exhausted to protect himself from sun or seabirds. What a great present this morning, a wonderful surprise.

Thanks, Renee Decator

STPS Guest Speakers

STPS began its regularly scheduled membership meetings on September 4, 2008. All of the meetings will be held at the Melbourne Beach Community Center except for the October 8 meeting which will be held at the Barrier Island Center. The overall theme of this years' meetings is: Think Globally; Act Locally". The speakers at the monthly meetings will address one aspect of the five global hazards as identified by the members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG) which are: Coastal Development, Direct Take, Fisheries, Global Warming and, Pollution & Pathogens. The MTSG Group is considered to be the world-wide experts on sea turtle conservation. STPS will provide conservation tips for the audience to use in their daily routines that are related to the global topics.

Refreshments will be served and door prizes will be given at each meeting. Doors will open at 7:00pm.

Date: Oct. 2 at 7:30pm

Location: Barrier Island Center

Speaker: Leslie Sprague - Caribbean Conservation Corporation

Topic: Coastal development and Sea Turtles: Can they survive.

Date: November 6 at 7:30pm

Location: Melbourne Beach Community Ctr.

Speaker: Karen Holloway-Adkins, Wildlife Biologist – Aquatics Group, Dynamac Corp., and East Coast Biologists, Inc.

Topic: Coastal Waters & Reefs: Sea Turtle Foraging Habitat.

Date: January 8 at 7:30pm

Location: Melbourne Beach Community Ctr.

Speaker: Duane E. DeFreese, PhD, Visiting Associate Scientist & Interim Director, Department of Biology & College of Sciences, University of Central Florida

Topic: The Effects of Climate Change on Sea Turtles in Florida

Date: February 5 at 7:30pm

Location: Melbourne Beach Community Ctr.

Speaker: Barbara Venuto, Environmental Programs Coordinator, Keep Brevard Beautiful

Topic: Litter, the Good, Bad and Ugly.

Date: March 5 at 7:30pm

Location: Melbourne Beach Community Ctr.

Speaker: Blair Witherington, PhD, Research Scientist, Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission

Topic: Sea Turtles, Sargasso and Serendipity.

Date: April 2, at 7:30pm

Location: Melbourne Beach Community Ctr.

Speaker: Karrie Singel Minch, Turtle Biologist, Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission

Topic: Effects of Ocean Hazards on Strandings.

Date: May 7 at 7:30pm

Location: Melbourne Beach Community Ctr.

Speaker: Allan Foley, PhD, Wildlife Biologist, Stranding Coordinator, Wildlife Conservation Commission, Fish & Wildlife Research Inst.

Topic: The Incidental Mortality of Sea Turtles in Florida Fisheries.

STPS Upcoming Events & Presentations Calendar

- Oct. 2: General Meeting
- Oct. 4: Beach clean-up at Coconut Point Park
- Oct. 4: Florida Fest @ Erna Nixon Park
- Oct. 9: Kwannis Club @ Cocoa Bch.
- Oct. 14: Brown Bag Lunch @ Lagoon House
- Oct. 18: 25th Anniversary @ Marine Resources Council
- Oct. 18: Witch Way 5K - Indialantic
- Nov. 6: General Meeting
- Nov. 8: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park
- Dec. 6: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park
- Jan. 8: General Meeting
- Jan. 10: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park

Turtle Talk Welcomes Your Calls and Letters

This newsletter relies upon the generous contributions of STPS volunteers and members. If you have an article you would like included in this quarterly newsletter, please submit it for consideration in the next publication.* Drop your article off at the Turtle Office or submit your article with your name, telephone number and mailing address (or internet address) to the following:

Sea Turtle Preservation Society
 Attn: Newsletter Editor
 P.O. Box 510988
 Melbourne Beach, FL 32951-0988
 E-mail: stps@bellsouth.net

Turtle Talk

The Sea Turtle Preservation Society (STPS) is a not-for-profit organization incorporated in the State of Florida, whose dedicated members are permitted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to work with endangered and threatened marine turtles. STPS relies solely on donations from the public, its members and the efforts of volunteers.

The purpose of STPS is to educate the public about marine turtles and the environmental niche that they occupy. STPS reaches thousands of people each year through lecture presentations and exhibits at area events and through guided walks during the sea turtle nesting season.

Turtle Talk is published quarterly for members and supporters of the Sea Turtle Preservation Society.

To contact STPS, call (321-676-1701).

To write, P.O. Box 510988, Melbourne Beach, Florida, 32951-0988. E-mail: stps@bellsouth.net

The Turtle Office is located at 111 South Miramar, Indialantic, Florida. Office hours are 11am to 5pm Monday through Saturday. Monthly meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 7:30pm at the Melbourne Beach Town Hall. Visitors are always welcome.

Board of Directors

Jessica Beckett,
 Buddy Braunlich, Jerry Heyes,
 David Hochberg, Dori Hughes,
 Brandon Smith, Christin Stewart,
 Cindy Ullmer, Cindy Dolaway,
 Nancy Yates, Dan Beckett,
 Mike Splitt, & Beth Stuckey

Newsletter Editor: Jerry Heyes

Membership Form

- Student \$10. Annual Contributor \$50. Annual Benefactor \$50. Annual
- Individual \$15. Annual Lifetime \$200. Donation \$-----
- Family \$25. Annual Endowment \$300.

- New Member* *Renewal*

 Name: _____ Phone: _____

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Please make your tax deductible check to: **Sea Turtle Preservation Society**

I am interested in volunteering: **Yes** **No**

My interests and talents are: -----

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