



BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

# TURTLE TALK

## SEA TURTLE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Vol. 13, No 3 - Fall 2009

<http://www.SeaTurtleSpacecoast.org>

### From the Chair's Perspective

by Mike Splitt, Board Chair



Several rounds of congratulations are in order. This year's *STPS Volunteer of the Year* was awarded to two outstanding members, especially for their efforts towards strandings and STERP: **Ann Zscheile** and **Adrienne Kessler**. *STPS Rookie of the Year* was also awarded to two great newbies: **Arlyn Deblauw** and **Cheryl Ennis**. In recognition of exceptional long term service to STSP, three volunteers were awarded special status as *STPS Sentinels*: **Roger Pszonowsky**, **Iris Reinhold**, and **Everett Tindall**. Of course, STPS has many great volunteers and you are all thanked for helping protect our sea turtles. Next time you see Cindy Ullmer give her a special thank your for coordinating the Volunteer Picnic – the only think she couldn't do was to bring on an early Fall for the event!

**2009 Nesting Numbers:** It looks like STPS has its work cut out. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservations Commission – Fish and Wildlife Research Institute 2009 annual nesting survey numbers for core index beaches continue to show a downward trend in Loggerhead nesting. While 2008 had an uptick in Loggerhead nesting numbers, 2009 has not sustained the 2008 numbers (see Figure 1).

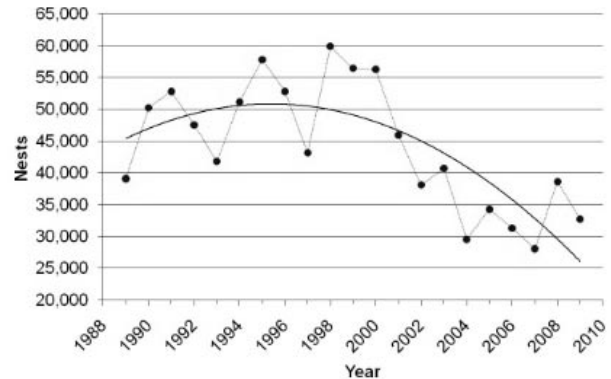


Figure 1: Loggerhead turtle nests at core index beaches. Source: Florida Wildlife Research Institute

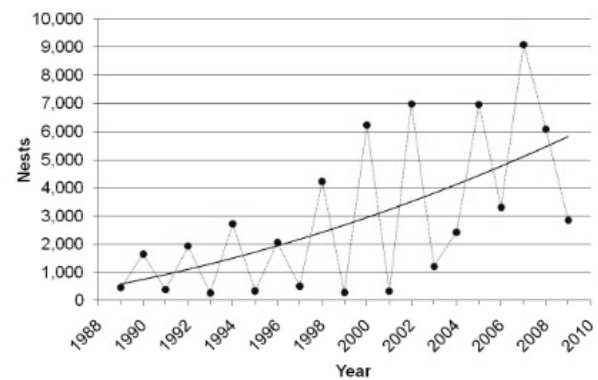


Figure 2: Green turtle nests at core index beaches. Source: Florida Wildlife Research Institute.

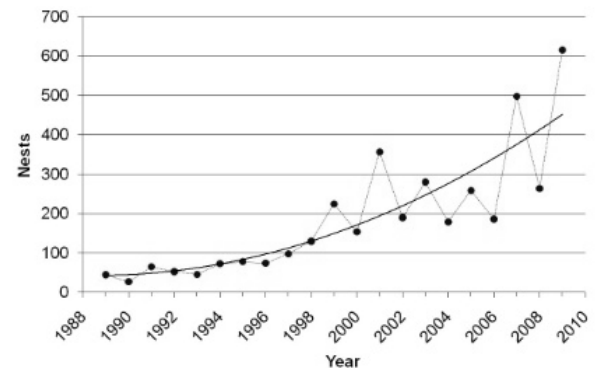


Figure 3: Leatherback turtle nests at core index beaches. Source: Florida Wildlife Research Institute.

Green turtle nesting numbers which have been rebounding appear to have leveled off with the lowest numbers reported in 5 years. Leatherbacks, on the other hand, continue to show a strong increase in Florida nesting numbers. Let's work to get all these numbers on the upswing!

**Board Elections:** Annual elections for STPS board members will be occurring in December. Three positions are up for renewal. Members of good standing that have a strong interest in participating on the Board should contact a Board member as the nominating committee is currently assembling a slate of candidates.

***Turtle Krawl 2010:*** STPS is looking for a volunteer with the experience and energy to help STPS organize Turtle Krawl during Spring 2010. The Turtle Krawl, which is a “fun run”, has been an annual event for years and we would like to get the event back on track. If you think you can help revive Turtle Krawl for this spring please contact me at [stpschair@seaturtlespacecoast.org](mailto:stpschair@seaturtlespacecoast.org).

## **The Sea Turtle Emergency Response Program (STERP)**

By Ann Zscheile

The Sea Turtle Emergency Response Program currently has 194 volunteers who have completed one of the 4 training workshops offered in May, June and July. We have 55 returning volunteers from 2008 and 139 new volunteers.

Many of the STERP volunteers have branched out into other areas of the Sea Turtle Preservation Society this year. Some have trained for Sea Turtle Walks, Strandings and Nest Survey. Also, many of our volunteers have attended the monthly STPS meetings, helped with educational events and in the office as well as assisting with the transport and release of sick or injured sea turtles.

We have a very dedicated and diverse group of volunteers representing a broad spectrum of age groups as well as talents to contribute to our sea turtle programs. Many of our volunteers are now assisting in the STERP program, offering help to improve and streamline communication during events, helping with the power point presentation and also progressing to being on the stranding permit and becoming a team captain in the STERP program.

The One Call Now automated phone call system was made possible from a donation by STPS member, Ersell Willard. This system, initiated and set up by volunteer, Dave Cheney has worked very

well to contact our 197 volunteers and 11 zone captains with just one call or e-mail.

So far this fall has been a calm tropical storm/hurricane season, but if we do have storms and washbacks come back to our beaches in the seaweed, we have an excellent group of volunteers ready to go out and rescue them.

## **New Video – *Turtle Friends: Best Friends Forever***

By Donna Braunlich

Soon, the STPS will release a new educational video designed for grades 3-6. The video is entitled “Turtle Friends: Best Friends Forever.” The 45 minute video is a combination of video clips, still photos, charts and voiceovers that makes the subject matter more interesting and relevant enhancing its appeal to elementary students.

“Turtle Friends” features a cast including a Moderator and four Narrators. The Moderator is the only person filmed in “Turtle Friends” and is portrayed by Pamela Winn, an STPS volunteer. Her scenes were filmed by Matt MacQueen and Florida Beach Basics at the home of Jerry and Linda Heyes and at Coconut Point Park in Melbourne Beach. Pamela introduces each Narrator who provides a voiceover as a turtle friend who talks about different aspects of a sea turtle’s life. Each Narrator has a distinctive voice and persona:

- Flip, whose voice is provided by STPS volunteer Roger Pszonowsky, is a Green juvenile male.
- Shelly, whose voice is provided by STPS volunteer Sue Giddings, is a nesting Loggerhead.
- Sandy, whose voice is provided by Brenna McWha, an Indialantic resident and currently in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of Indialantic Elementary School, is a Green hatchling.
- And last but certainly not least, is Leo, whose voice is provided by STPS volunteer Jerry Heyes, a mature Leatherback.

“Turtle Friends” is based on the vocabulary and concepts from the 3rd grade science textbook that is approved by the Brevard County Public Schools (Scott Foresman, Florida). It is also compliant with Florida Sunshine Standards for grade 3.

Topics the Narrators discuss include:

- Description of Sea Turtle Species nesting in Brevard County (Loggerhead, Green and Leatherback)
- Scientific Grouping of Sea Turtles (Animal, Vertebrate, Reptile)
- Difference between Sea Turtle and Tortoise
- Sea Turtle Anatomy
- Lifecycle of Sea Turtles
- Laws for Endangered and Threatened Animals
- Natural and Man-made Threats
- Conservation Tips to Help the Species

Turtle Friends: Best Friends Forever, was written, directed and edited by Buddy and Donna Braunlich, STPS volunteers. The video will be given to local schools by the end of the year.

## New Turtle Signs for Indialantic

By Donna Braunlich

There are some new additions to the local parks that you need to check out! This year, the Sea Turtle Preservation Society (STPS) received a donation from the Indialantic Witch Way 5K Run (2008). In an effort to show its appreciation to the city of Indialantic and further its mission to educate the public about sea turtles, the STPS Board of Directors approved a recommendation that the donation be used to create educational signs to be erected in Indialantic. This summer, Karen Campbell and Donna Braunlich, STPS Volunteers, designed the series of signs.



Each sign includes full color photographs from local photographers (Jim Angy, Carol Hansen, Ann Zscheile, Buddy Braunlich and Sigi Northcutt) and seaturtle.org members with the accompanying narration.

There are 7 signs in all, 3 at Nance Park (front and back), 3 at Sunrise Park (front only) and one at Crossover #16 on Wavecrest. A partial list of topics include: Sea Turtles in Brevard County, Nesting, Hatchlings, Beach Threats and Helping Sea Turtles Survive.

Chris Chinault, Indialantic Town Manager, coordinated the installation of the signs through the Indialantic Department of Public Works.

## STPS is #1 in Beach Cleanup

By Dan Beckett

Way to go STPS! STPS volunteers attended the Keep Brevard Beautiful Annual Volunteer and Adoption Awards Breakfast on Saturday, September 26 at the Brevard Zoo.

STPS was recognized for its clean up efforts as the #1 team this year. Not only do STPS volunteers meet once a month to clean the beach but they also participate in the Great Coastal Clean Up and Trash Bash every year. STPS receives points for clean ups, number of volunteers, bags collected and extra points for taking the recycle products home to their own recycle bins. The STPS' grand total this year was 79,600 points and the closest competitor was 38,025 points!! Wow!

Thanks for everyone's hard work, and a special thanks to the survey team who reports all the trash they collect while counting turtles. The STPS has an awfully high standard to meet this year, so lets get out on the beach and get cleaning. The monthly clean ups are at Coconut Point Park in the Archie Carr Refuge at 8am the Saturday after the general meeting. Check website or newsletter for dates. If you can't join us on the beach, you can still contribute to the grand total. Send your clean up date, number of people, bags, if you recycled any of the trash, and which beach you picked up, to Jessica Beckett at [dbeckett@cfl.rr.com](mailto:dbeckett@cfl.rr.com).

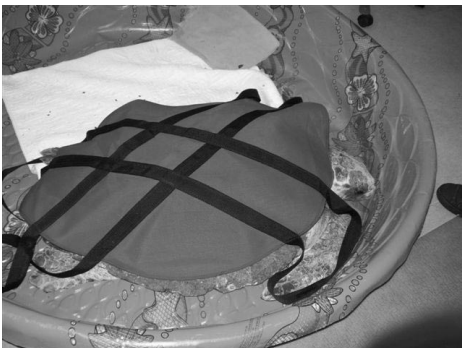
## Turtle Carrying Device

By Ann Zscheile

Thanks to Quest Program students in Robin Robb's Science class at Indialantic Public School for their donation to the Sea Turtle Preservation Society last spring. The donation was made following a fund raising auction at the school's first Living Lagoon Festival at the Radisson Hotel. The funds were earmarked for a new sea turtle carrying device to be used in moving large sea turtles during a stranding event.

This new device, developed by Bill Snay at Mays Marine Canvas was made using a model of a sea turtle for the design. The first carrying device was made for a smaller sea turtle approx 80-100 pounds. It is made of heavy duty marine grade mesh that allows water to flow through it. Care was taken to note location of flippers and to create a carrier that could either secure the flippers or allow the flippers to extend out. The safety and the comfort of the turtle as well as the ease for handling and transferring an injured turtle were strong influences in the design of the device

The device was completed and picked up on Friday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>. On Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup> the Stranding Team was notified of a live loggerhead sea turtle that was to be picked up from a FFWCC boat in Port Canaveral. The turtle was reported to be between 80 and 100 pounds. This was the perfect opportunity to try out the new carrying device. The device worked well, it supported the turtle well and made the transfer easier. It was also used to take the turtle up the steps at the MSC in Ponce Inlet. The only drawback was that the device was obviously too small for this turtle. No one was surprised when Athena weighed in at 127#. As a result, we will go ahead with the purchase of the larger sea turtle carrying device for 100-200 pound turtles



## Loggerhead Sea Turtle Listing

By Jerry Heyes

The loggerhead turtle was listed as threatened on July 28, 1978. The threatened listing was applied to wherever the species occurred. In 2007, a five year review by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommended that no change in listing status was warranted.

On July 16, 2007, NMFS and U.S. F&WS received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity and Turtle Island Restoration Network requesting that loggerhead turtles in the North Pacific be reclassified as a distinct population segment (DPS) with endangered status and that critical habitat be designated. On November 16, 2007, a similar petition was received from the Center for Biological Diversity and Oceana requesting that loggerhead turtles in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean be reclassified as a DPS with endangered status and that critical habitat be designated. NMFS and USF&WS convened a biological review team in February 2008 to review the best available scientific information, determine whether DPSs exist, and assess the extinction risk for each DPS. As the result of this review, the biological review team identified the following nine loggerhead DPSs distributed globally: (1) North Pacific Ocean DPS, (2) South Pacific Ocean DPS, (3) North Indian Ocean DPS, (4) Southeast Indo-Pacific Ocean DPS, (5) Southwest Indian Ocean DPS, (6) Northwest Atlantic Ocean DPS, (7) Northeast Atlantic Ocean DPS, (8) Mediterranean Sea DPS, and (9) South Atlantic Ocean DPS.

The biological review team next conducted two independent analyses to assess extinction risks of the identified DPSs. For three of the five DPSs with sufficient data to conduct the analysis (Northwest Atlantic Ocean, South Pacific Ocean and North Pacific Ocean), the threshold was reached indicating a high likelihood of quasi-extinction over a wide range of analytical values. According to the analysis using experts' opinions in the matrix model framework, all loggerhead turtle DPSs have the potential to decline in the future. Although some DPSs are indicating increasing trends at nesting beaches (Southwest Indian Ocean and South Atlantic Ocean), available information about anthropogenic threats to juveniles and adults in neritic and oceanic environments indicate possible unsustainable additional mortalities. According to

the threat matrix analysis, the potential for decline is greatest for the North Indian Ocean, Northwest Atlantic Ocean, Northeast Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and South Atlantic Ocean DPSs.

Based on a possible future reclassification of loggerhead turtles to a status of endangered, guidance was requested from the USF&WS and FF&WCC as to what the effect of reclassification would have on current educational programs. According to both USF&WS and FF&WCC, public turtle walks would most likely continue, but display turtles would be restricted to lifers (unreleasable turtles).

## **STPS Annual Holiday Party/ General Meeting**

The annual STPS Holiday Party and General Meeting will be held on December 12, 2009 at the Melbourne Beach Community Center from 6pm till 9:30pm. All STPS members are invited. There will be food and beverages available, and you are requested to bring a covered dish, or an appetizer or a desert. Our traditional gift exchange will be conducted and if you wish to participate, please bring a wrapped gift costing \$10 or less. For those who haven't attended before, the gift exchange is a lot of fun, as gifts previously chosen and opened can then be re-chosen by others when their time comes to choose. So if you've gotten something good you may not get to keep it.

## **STPS Board of Director Quorum Change**

At the October meeting of the Board of Directors, a change to the By-Laws was approved to reduce the quorum requirements for the board to conduct business, from a two-thirds majority to a simple majority of the board members present.

## **Let's Go to the Beach**

By Cindy Dolaway

For most of the country fall vacations often center around fall foliage, football and hunting. But where we live in Brevard County, fall is one of the best times of the year for beachcombing. Let's face it: most of us are long past viewing the beaches as just a place to work on our tans. We know it's a great

place to walk, collect interesting objects and see many of the things going on now.

It's not just a coincidence that coastal clean-ups are scheduled for fall. Strong off-shore currents carry debris along our beaches. Very often the frequent northeast winds we see at this time of year blow all that plastic trash on to our sand. If you carry along a bag or two, and pick up that plastic, I can promise you will be rewarded many times over. Our turtles, oftentimes opportunistic eaters, and plastic are not a good mix. So, get it off our beaches!

So what are some of the rewards for walking the beach and bending over to pick up things? For one, you may come across a "washback" turtle. A "washback" is a post-hatchling, meaning it has already been out in the ocean swimming around, and for one reason or another, has been "washed back" in along with plastic and weed (aka "sargassum"). These baby turtles do not have the strength to swim back out to the Sargasso Sea and need to be brought in to the STPS office for evaluation. And, *voila*, you're a hero!

Many times I am on the beach greedily searching for sea beans this time of year. I can walk along for what seems like miles, and not see anything, but when I start picking up garbage, that's when I find sea beans. They are hiding in the same weed that camouflages the small turtles. Successful "beaning" often means that one must be prepared to give, as in, give your back a workout, in order to receive. Did you know that much of what we know about ocean currents today was learned from studying where these driftpods originate and how they came to be washed up on our shores? A sea bean is one of the best gifts from the ocean. They are beautiful just piled in bowls in their natural state, or polished in a rock tumbler to a satiny finish and strung on necklaces.

Other things you'll see on the beach now are many long green, bean-like pods. These are the propagules of the red mangrove. Collect the healthy looking ones to take home and root. Upend the pod (dark end down) in a few inches of water and in a short while you'll see prop roots form and attractive, shiny leaves will appear. These can be propped up with stones in a glass bowl and will provide some interesting foliage for many months. When they get to be "leggy" and less attractive, take your plants to the Lagoon House of the Marine Resources Council (US 1 in Palm Bay). Here they'll be potted up and used for shoreline

restoration. If you haven't heard Jim Egan, of the MRC, speak on how effective these dune plants are in lessening the devastation of heavy storms (notably documented in the Indonesian tsunami), you don't know what you're missing. Need I spell out this reward?? Instead of waiting to re-act to the next disaster, you can be pro-active now!

Don't forget to look up now and again. You may be rewarded with a glimpse of a humpback whale passing through on its way to warmer waters. I'm still surprised to hear how many people don't know we get whales in Florida. If you're not sure whether you are seeing a whale blow or the splash from a diving bird, remember that a "blow" hangs in the air much longer than a splash. So, put on your hat and get out there and enjoy the rewards of the beach!

## **STPS Upcoming Events & Presentations Calendar**

Nov. 5: General Meeting  
 Nov. 7: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park  
 Nov. 7: Suntree Fall Festival  
 Nov. 18: Retired Teachers of Brevard luncheon  
 Dec. 5: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park  
 Dec. 12: General Meeting/ Holliday Party  
 Jan. 7: General Meeting  
 Jan. 9: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park  
 Feb. 4: General Meeting  
 Feb. 6: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park  
 Mar. 4: General Meeting  
 Mar. 6: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park  
 Apr. 1: General Meeting  
 Apr. 3: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park

## **General Meeting Speakers**

The STPS always strives to have meaningful and interesting guest speakers at the General Meetings. Previous speakers so far this season were Terry O'Toole representing Sebastian Inlet State Park in September, and Jim Egan representing the Marine Resource Council of East Florida in October. The following speakers will appear at our continuing general meetings:

Nov. 5 - Dean Bagley representing the University of Central Florida and speaking on Nest Surveys and Research.

Jan. 7 - Virginia Barker and Mike McGarry representing the Brevard County Dept. of Natural Resources Management and speaking on Beach Erosion/ "Artificial Nourishment".

Feb. 4 - Michelle Bauer representing MSC Turtle Rehabilitation, Volusia County Marine Science Center and speaking on Rehabilitation.

Mar. 4 - Pamela Shoemaker representing Brevard County Solid Waste Management and speaking on Plastics and other Trash.

Apr. 1 - Paula Berntson representing Brevard County Natural Resources, Environmental programs, and speaking on Beach Lighting, Beach renourishment, Code Enforcement.

May 6 - Martha Wolf representing the Florida Institute of Technology and speaking on Water Quality and Runoff, Ocean Pollutants.

## **STPS Donations Received**

Once again we wish to thank Marilyn Hallock for her generous contribution of funds raised through her yoga classes. For those interested in taking yoga classes, Marilyn teaches on Monday and Wednesday evenings at the Pelican Beach Clubhouse, and on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the Satellite Beach Civic Center. We would also like to thank Thomas and Georgianna Constantino for their donation in memory of Raymond McClure.

## **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](mailto: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](mailto: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, with the exception of June, July and August. Visitors are always welcome.

## **Board of Directors**

Buddy Braunlich, Jerry Heyes,  
David Hochberg, Dori Hughes,  
Brandon Smith, Christin Stewart,  
Cindy Ullmer, Cindy Dolaway,  
Nancy Yates, Mark Petrillo  
Mike Splitt, Beth Stuckey,  
and Donna Braunlich

Newsletter Editor: Jerry Heyes

**Sea Turtle Preservation Society**  
**P.O. Box 510988**  
**Melbourne Beach, Florida 32951-0988**  
**USA**

**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*

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

My interests and talents are: -----

