



BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

# TURTLE TALK

## SEA TURTLE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Vol. 12, No 1 - Winter 2008

<http://www.SeaTurtleSpacecoast.org>

### From the Chair's Perspective

By Dan Beckett, chairman STPS



After being a general all-around slacker for the past several years, I decided that I really need to buckle down and finish up that college degree I started over a decade ago. Sure, I've taken a course here and there but I never really laid out a plan or even a destination. With a solid kick to my posterior, I forced myself to start taking some of those core classes that I would need to finally get that engineering degree I've been talking about for years.

One of the courses I'm attending this spring is a humanities course. The humanities can be thought of as those subjects of knowledge that are concerned with human thought and culture. Studying the methods in which we have expressed ourselves over the years, whether it be art, music, or even religion, gives us great insight into those who came before us. Even laws can be a form of our humanistic expression. How better to see what a society cares about than to see what they desired to formally protect through legislature? In the United States, the Bill of Rights may be considered the laws from which all others are derived. If someone were to look over that document ten-thousand years from now, they would easily be able to see that great care was

taken to try and protect the individual freedoms of our citizens.

But it isn't the peoples of ten-thousand years from now that I'm terribly concerned about. The way I see it, if the Earth is still around, they're probably in a pretty good position to take care of themselves. It's the peoples of the next few generations that concern me. When they look back over our actions, will they be able to see what was important to us based upon the culture we leave? Will they see that we were a society that had concern for our actions? Or will they instead see that we were the type that only lived for the moment and didn't put much thought into what happened next?

The United States recycles more material than any other country in the world. Sounds great, right? Unfortunately, we lag most of the world in the percentage being recycled. We may recycle more, but we're also throwing away more than anyone. On Friday mornings, when I carry my recycles down to the curb, I look up and down the block and notice who else is doing their part. I typically see the same four or five houses but not much more. Not too long after that, I see the large truck drive by and empty my part back into the system, where it will become another milk jug or newspaper. Statistically however, after it makes its way through the next consumer, it will be dumped in a landfill versus being recycled again. I just hope that the few of us who are recycling are at least making up for the additional resources being consumed by the trash truck. I can't imagine that they get very good gas mileage after all.

As a society, we continue to waste. A very visible reflection of this waste is the rising cost of gas, but many people fail to see it for what it is. It isn't the just the cost of gas that's rising; it's the cost of energy. Energy that is continuously wasted producing plastics and papers to replace those that are being thrown away. Energy that is being wasted by ensuring our houses are kept at a cool 68\* all day while

we're at work. Energy that is wasted when we drive our SUVs a block and a half down to the convenience store for a loaf of bread.

As a matter of fact, it seems like the only energy that we aren't spendthrift with is that which fuels our bodies. Obesity is at an all time high which could possibly be due to driving that SUV a block and a half instead of walking. When I see a large adult, I don't think much of it as it's a choice that they've made. But when I see obese parents with obese children, I get a pretty annoyed. Those children were taught a lesson that they didn't want or need, even if they don't know it yet. Now, it may sound as if I'm picking on a certain demographic, but I'm not. Can anyone argue that obesity is a healthy lifestyle to teach children? If so, I'd love to hear it.

Children learn through the actions of adults. If we show a desire in creating a better world, so too will they. But until that happens, I anticipate seeing the same four or five recycle bins in my neighborhood, and continue to think about what the college students of 12008 will think when they take a humanities course. Often I just hope that our children will ignore certain lessons we seem hell-bent on teaching and make a solid difference in ensuring that the Freshman Class of 12008 actually comes to fruition.

### **Changes in the STPS Board of Directors**

At the December General Meeting, two new Board members were elected. STPS welcomed Cindy Doloway and Mike Splitt to the STPS Board of Directors. They filled a previously vacant position, in addition to the position vacated by Richard Winn. Both Cindy and Mike had previously been very active volunteers with STPS. We look forward to their future contributions to the organization. Dan Beckett has agreed to continue as Chairman of the Board of Directors for another year.

### **STPS Announces New Training Dates**

STPS will provide sea turtle training for new volunteers who wish to help with the Sea Turtle Walk program. New volunteers must attend one of each of the two training classes. They do not have to attend both dates of each class. To sign up for the classes, please contact the STPS office. All classes are held at the STPS office. *Sea Turtle 101-* 4/3 at 7pm & 4/5 at 9am  
*Walk Training-* 5/1 at 7pm & 5/3 at 9am.

### **STPS was the Recipient of Donations**

The STPS recently received several significant donations from the Southwest Stockham Foundation located in Tucson, Arizona and Indialantic; from the Roth family of Melbourne Beach; and through the Employees Community Fund of the Boeing Company. The STPS plans to use this money to help with the purchase of the sea turtle rescue replacement vehicle. The existing vehicle is fast approaching the end of its useful life. In the past several years it has made numerous trips to rehab facilities throughout the state, carrying sick and/or injured sea turtles.

We wish to thank all who contribute to the STPS to help in our efforts to "Save Sea Turtles".

### **STPS Donation Reminder**

As a reminder to our members, if you or your friends or neighbors work for large companies, donations through their companies Community Fund plans, can be specifically earmarked to recipient organizations such as STPS if desired.

### **STPS Office Wish List**

The STPS Office encourages donations of the following items: Wooden collapsible clothes dryer (for drying towels);  
Anti bacterial hand cleaner;  
Diet scale (in grams, to weigh hatchlings and wash backs);  
Gasoline gift cards (to offset expense of transporting stranded sea turtles to rehab facilities);  
Paper shopping/gift bags (used)  
Paper masks, rubber gloves;  
Cleaning and paper products.

## **STPS Volunteer Wins Prestigious Disney Award**

The STPS congratulates Cindy Dolaway for being named one of nine “Conservation Heroes” this year, from a worldwide group of candidates, by the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund. Cindy is only one of 27 people worldwide to receive this prestigious award which has been presented over a four year period. Of the 27 awards, only one other person besides Cindy, was from the USA.

Cindy was honored for her work with the Marine Resource Council in their Whale watch Program. Cindy was chosen based on her dedication as a volunteer and for “her charisma as an ambassador” educating the public about the conservation of right whales and sea turtles, said Tiffany Shaheen, a spokesman for Disney.

Cindy has also recently been honored as Volunteer of the Year by the STPS and has just been elected to the STPS Board of Directors. STPS is looking forward to an expanded and fruitful relationship with this truly dedicated volunteer.

## **STPS Needs to Update Members E-Mail Addresses**

By Roger Psonowsky

We need to update member e-mail addresses as many have changed. Please send an e-mail to [spacecoastseaturtle@gmail.com](mailto:spacecoastseaturtle@gmail.com) with the members name in the subject line. If you do not want the e-mail announcements of turtle happenings, please put in the subject OPT OUT. We will then update the member info but keep you off the general e-mail. This e-mail account is for updates only at this time. We hope you enjoy getting the announcements.

## **STPS Christmas Party**

The annual Christmas party was held on December 8<sup>th</sup> at the Melbourne Beach Community Center. About 30 members gathered to celebrate the holiday and enjoy the company of friends not seen since the summer flurry of nesting walks and surveys.

Gina Hollywood and Jennifer Smith are to be congratulated for the excellent job they did planning, cooking and decorating for the event. Everyone commented on the superb spread at the buffet table which included many homemade dishes from Jennifer and Gina. Now, if you’re a regular at STPS events, you already know about Gina’s fantastic cookie concoctions, and that in itself would have been enough to draw a crowd; now add to that Sue Gidding’s Chocolate Fountain and you have an idea of the extent to which we were treated!



After a brief summary of the activities of the past year from Chairman Dan, we were on to the silly part of the evening: the gift auction. This always brings out the best in us as we take turns choosing gifts or stealing them from someone else. Anything “turtle” was greatly coveted and passed hands repeatedly. Looming over everyone’s head was the prospect of the annual “Anthony gift” which never did materialize. Hey, Anthony: Bah Humbug!

## **Sea Turtles in the News Red Tide Killing Turtles**

In the month of December, 71 sea turtles washed ashore, 61 of them in Brevard, 9 in Volusia and one in Indian River County. Most of these turtles stranded in the Melbourne Beach area, many as a result of a prolonged red tide event in the area. Of the total turtles, 43 were dead and 28 were successfully rescued and delivered to rehab facilities at the Volusia Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet, Seaworld in Orlando and the Marine Life Center in Juno Beach. The stranded sea turtles were primarily juvenile green turtles averaging

28 to 35cm in shell length. Green turtles are more susceptible to red tide because they eat algae off of rocks.

Red tide is caused by a single cell algae called *Kerania brevis*. The algae releases a powerful neurotoxin that at even low concentrations can cause reparatory irritation, watery eyes, dizziness and shellfish poisoning in humans. One sample taken at Paradise Beach Park measured almost 1.7 million red tide cells per liter, about 30 times the concentration in which fish begin to die and twice the concentration to turn the ocean a dark red color.

Red tides are common on Florida's Gulf Coast, but are only occasionally seen on Florida's Central Atlantic coast. The last reported red tide in Brevard County was 2002. As a result, December has been a very busy month for the STPS stranding group.

January 16<sup>th</sup> saw the release of 15 of the sickened sea turtles at Howard E. Futch Memorial Park in Indialantic. The event drew a crowd of 120 onlookers. The turtles were carried to the sea by rehab and rescue workers including a number of STPS volunteers. The heavy surf posed no problem for the eager,



rejuvenated, juvenile green sea turtles. These release events provide important feedback, not only to the public, but also to our stranding volunteers, showing the successful results of their very important efforts.

## The Plight of the Loggerhead Turtle

Editorial in the New York Times

For a while during the 1990's, it looked like the loggerhead sea turtle might really be making a comeback. But a new federal report – a 5 year review that was mandated by the Endangered Species Act, suggests that loggerheads, which are listed as threatened, have begun to decline again. Their life pattern makes them doubly vulnerable to humans. They lay their eggs on beaches, habitat vulnerable to development and disturbance, in places like South Florida and Oman on the Arabian Peninsula, and they spend their long lives at sea, where they are often fouled in fishing nets.

It is partly the longevity of these creatures that makes their deaths as bystanders among the global fishing fleets so tragic, a truly colossal waste of life. A loggerhead reaches sexual maturity at around 35 years. Some kinds of fishing, like shrimp trawl fishing, lend themselves to the use of turtle excluder devices, which help sea turtles escape from nets. But it takes regular enforcement to ensure that those devices are used, and enforcement is always in short supply when it comes to the environment. Much of the global fleet, which grows larger and larger, is beyond such enforcement in any case. For an oceanic species such as the loggerhead, these are incredibly dangerous times.

Like almost any threatened or endangered species, the loggerhead sea turtle raises a fundamental question about human will. The loggerhead has benefited from recovery plans, special legal status, the dedication of scientists and environmentalists and the general good will of the public. And yet all of this concerted human effort is required simply to restrain human economic activity – fishing especially – enough to allow this extraordinary species to share the planet with us. As always, in matters of species preservation, our efforts look as though they're directed at nature, when in fact they're really directed at ourselves.

## Man Arrested on Sea Turtle Charge

Reprinted from the Florida Today Newspaper

The endangered green sea turtle tucked under a life jacket in Eric Daniel Burritt's fishing boat could have him facing years in prison and thousands of dollars in fines. The 44 year old commercial fisherman from Melbourne was arrested at a Port Canaveral boat ramp Thursday night after a state marine patrol officer found the turtle stuffed behind a basket in the bow of Burritt's boat.

Burritt of 484 Poinciana Drive, faces a maximum of five years in prison and \$5,000 in fines, if convicted of illegally possessing an endangered sea turtle, a third degree felony. As of late Friday, Burritt remained in Brevard County jail in Sharpes on a \$2,000 bond.

Officer Dave Wigley of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission found the 5 to 10 pound turtle about 8:45p.m. while conducting a random check of Burritt's boat at the Sunrise Boat Ramp in Port Canaveral. The turtle was behind a basket that contained a fishing net. Officers said Burritt has a state commercial fishing license and had been out cast netting mullet. "His excuse was that it was dark and he didn't know what he was pulling on his boat," said Wigley. "It was totally separated from his fish."

"There's a black market trade for sea turtle eggs and meat," Wigley said. Conservation groups say illegal trade is especially a problem throughout coastal Latin America, the Philippines, India and Indonesia. Some researchers estimate 50,000 sea turtles are killed annually in Mexico and a similar number in Nicaragua, where armed guards at the beach watch over eggs during nesting season.

After Thursday's arrest, officers set the sea turtle free at the boat ramp. It swam in a few circles, then out of site, officers said.

## The Green Barrier Reef

QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA – Green sea turtles have made an amazing comeback on the Great Barrier Reef. Greens were designated endangered species in Australia since 1982. In 1998 only 38,000 turtles were estimated living on the reef. Diligent protection of the turtles from poaching and preservation of their nesting areas is believed to be the main contribution to the recent boom of sea turtles on the Great Barrier Reef. University of Queensland researcher Dr Milani Chaloupka estimates current populations to have risen to several million. Though researchers no longer foresee possible extinction of greens on the Great Barrier Reef, they do warn that we still need to be diligent in their protection as they still face threats from marine traffic, fisheries, and pollution.

## Feeling the Sting

NORTHERN IRELAND – A swarm of sea jellies suddenly appeared in the Irish Sea and quickly ballooned in number covering 10 square miles. The mauve stinger, a species typically found in the subtropical waters of the Mediterranean, indiscriminately killed salmon of all sizes causing an estimated \$3 million loss to the fisheries in the area. A week later large numbers of mauve stingers and native compass jellies appeared off the coast of Scotland. Though sea jelly swarms seem to be a natural occurrence in the ocean, the frequency and size of these swarms seems to be on an increase worldwide. Some attribute the swarms to increased nutrients in the oceans, while others believe it is caused by the depletion of sea jelly predators like sea turtles and tuna. Some scientists attribute rising ocean temperature and the subsequent altering of ocean currents to the swarms appearing in areas not normally seen. Many, however, believe it is a combination of all of these factors pushing an increase in sea jelly swarms. Sea jellies are not the only organisms to have exhibited increased frequency as Florida has recently seen with the large red tide outbreaks. The ocean seems to be warning of imbalance but will we listen?

## Rocky Mountain Turtles?

COLORADO – Wang Hong, a Chinese national, recently plead guilty to smuggling hawksbill sea turtle shells and violin bows decorated with hawksbill shell into the United States. Hong and 7 others were arrested in September, after sending four shipments, valued at \$5,000, to undercover U.S. Fish and Wildlife agents in Colorado. Sentencing is set for February. with Hong facing 6-12 months in prison and fines of \$2,000-\$20,000.

## Ban the Bag

By Brandon Smith

Greenpeace canvassed 20 Spanish cities and over 175 businesses at the end of 2007, in order to promote a worthy New Year's resolution, ban the bag. In order to reduce plastic bag waste and encourage reusable bag use, many European countries have started charging consumers an extra fee per plastic bag. Spain has yet to jump on the bandwagon, but Greenpeace is trying to change that with its 'Day without plastic bags' campaign.

Many other areas have tried to do their part to reduce the 1 trillion bags used worldwide every year. Ireland implemented a 'Plastax' law in 2000, that has reduced plastic bag use by 90% and raised millions of Euros in revenue. Some cities and countries have banned plastic bags outright. Modbury, England, was the first city in Europe to ban plastic bags after viewing a documentary showing the more than 100,000 birds, whales, seals, and sea turtles that die annually from ingesting plastic bags. South Africa implemented its own ban on thin mil bags after they were dubbed the 'national flower' because of their frequency on bushes and fences throughout the country. In 2002, Bangladesh banned polyethylene bags after plastic bags clogged their sewers and caused extensive flooding. In the Kingdom of Bhutan business caught distributing plastic bags can lose their license.

Some companies have also worked to reduce plastic bag consumption. In 2007, IKEA

implemented a nickel per bag charge to encourage consumers to bring their own bags. The campaign raised \$1.75 million that was put into programs to plant trees, restore forests, and offset CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Publix Supermarkets and Wal-Mart offer plastic bag recycling outside of most all their stores. Once the bags are recycled they are turned into other plastic items such as patio furniture. Whole Foods Market, who owns Wild Oats Natural Marketplace in Melbourne, has stopped the use of plastic bags in their Austin, TX, stores and plans a company wide ban in 2008. For years they have had a wooden nickel program where consumers who bring their own bags, can take 5 cents off of their bill per bag or donate the money to local charities.

So, will you make a new year's resolution to reduce your plastic bag consumption? It isn't as hard as you may think. Many grocery stores now have reusable bags at the register that you can purchase for around \$1 or \$2. There are also many online companies offering a wide variety of reusable bags for all different purposes. I've been using the A.C.M.E. Workhorse bag from Reusablebags.com for several years now and love them. Although they cost a little more than some of the bags found at your local grocery store I like them for their convenient size. They are around the same size as the average plastic bag but collapse into a built in pouch about the size of your palm. This makes it easy to store many bags, for a big shopping trip, all in your glove compartment. So, please help to protect sea turtles and reduce petroleum consumption by adding reusable bags into your shopping habits.

## Carr Companion

Due to the rescheduling of the Archie Carr Working Group meeting to a later date, the Carr Companion will not appear in this edition of the STPS Newsletter

## STPS Upcoming Events & Presentations Calendar

- February 1: Southwest Middle School
- February 7: General Membership Meeting
- February 9: Beach clean-up at Coconut Point Park
- February 23: Sykes Creek Adventures, Kiwanis Park
- February 23: Turtle Krawl, Melbourne Beach
- March 5: First friends Pre-School
- March 6: General Membership Meeting
- March 8: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park
- March 8: Pelican Island Wildlife Festival
- April 1: Lagoon Quest, Brevard Zoo
- April 3: General Membership Meeting
- April 5: Beach Clean-up at Coconut Point Park
- April 14: Suntree United Methodist pre-School
- May 1: General Membership Meeting
- May 3: 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](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. 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*

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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: -----

***Sea Turtle Preservation Society***  
**PO Box 510988**  
**Melbourne Beach, FL 32951-0988**  
**USA**



BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA