

New year, new horizons

This is an exciting time for the Sea Turtle Preservation Society as we welcome new members to the board of directors, introduce new membership benefits, prepare for the 2021 nesting season, and continue to improve our organization and its conservation programs.

Before we look too far ahead, it's also important to take time to recognize the STPS 2020 Volunteer of the Year award winners and reflect on what STPS members and volunteers achieved during the past year despite unprecedented challenges.

Please take a few minutes to learn more about what STPS accomplished in 2020 and what lies ahead in 2021.

Welcome New Board of Directors Members

Three new members joined the STPS Board of Directors in January 2021. Lori Loftus, John Pechar, and Amy Shea were elected to the board in December, and Susan Skinner was re-elected to a second term on the board.

For the first time, the elections were held electronically. The elections take place

each year during the STPS annual member meeting in December. This year the meeting took place on Zoom due to continuing COVID-19 concerns.

Here's a quick introduction to the new directors:

Lori Loftus:

Lori's family moved to Satellite Beach in the 1970s, and she grew up with a keen appreciation for our unique beachside town, our turtle neighbors and ocean life. Business and school have taken her out of the area and out of the country from time to time, but she returns home frequently. She has been an IT manager for more than 15 years, with a parallel passion in public speaking, education, photography, and music. She has been a volunteer for multiple organizations for most of her life, including 20 years with the Red Cross as an instructor and instructor trainer. She's been an unofficial STPS volunteer for years – and officially for three, taking her first STERP training in 2018. She's thrilled to join the board and looking forward to helping create new ways to support the STPS mission and goals in 2021.

John Pechar:

John has been an STPS member for the past five years and has participated in numerous events and activities. John worked as an electrician and ran his own contracting business before retiring to Florida in 2015. He currently volunteers on the stranding team and is a hotline monitor. He has participated in transport, stranding, STERP, night walks, and Turtle Krawl. In 2018, John started a tourist education program at a Cocoa Beach resort and would like to expand the program. John says he's a hands-on person who can develop an action plan and get the job done, and he's dedicated to helping make the organization's mission a success.

Amy Shea:

Amy has lived on the Space Coast for the past four years and has been volunteering with STPS since she arrived. She's originally from Arkansas but has lived in Florida for the past 10 years. Amy has a B.A. in psychology and an M.Ed. in education and currently is in school studying nature resources with a focus on fisheries management. Her work has primarily focused on environmental education, and she currently works at a nature center. Her favorite parts of Florida are all the amazing SCUBA diving spots and, of course, the sea turtles.

2021 Board of Directors

Susan Skinner, Chair

Kathleen LeBresco, Treasurer

Lisa Littleton, Secretary

Amy Durham Shea

Craig Konkell

Dave Cheney

Diana Forman

Dori Hughes

Jax Maisto

John Pechar

Lori Loftus

Noelle Villanueva

Roger Pszonowsky



Exciting New Member Benefits

Starting this year, all new and renewing STPS members will receive an STPS logo magnet and membership card in the mail.

STPS is excited to add these benefits so members can show their support for the organization and its mission to help sea turtles survive. The membership card also will make it easy to take advantage of discounts available to STPS members. The list of discounts can be found on the [STPS website under member discounts on the](#)

[membership tab](#).

Here's what you need to know about these new benefits:

- New and renewal membership benefits will be processed once a month, at the beginning of each month for the previous month.
- Lifetime members will receive an email asking if they would like to receive a magnet and membership card and confirming their mailing information.
- Renewal notifications are sent automatically by email from the membership system one month before they are due. The notifications expire on the due date, and the membership will be archived.
- Please renew by the due date to avoid your membership being archived. If your membership is archived, or you need help renewing your membership, please contact the membership director at membership@seaturtlespacecoast.org for assistance.
- Memberships can be purchased and renewed online, by mail with an invoice printed from the email sent, or in person during business hours at either STPS location – the Turtle House in Indianalantic or the Turtle Nest kiosk at Port Canaveral.

Countdown to Sea Turtle Nesting Season



We are counting down to the start of sea turtle nesting season in Brevard County. It's hard to believe, but in less than two months, the first sea turtles will be arriving to nest.

With the continuing covid concerns, STPS programs, activities, and training may look different again this year. Currently, STPS has a policy in place that limits in-person activities to groups of no more than 10 participants through April 14,

2021. Program directors and permit holders will complete training and other activities following this policy as well as CDC guidelines for masking and social distancing.

Here are some program updates:

Nesting Surveys: Training for new volunteers will take place on Saturdays in March. Training for returning volunteers also will take place in March. Survey teams will begin to monitor the beach on April 15. As of now, FWC guidelines on volunteer participation remain unchanged. The training will take place in small groups following social distancing protocols and policies. For more information, please contact permit holder Dori Hughes at survey@seaturtlespacecoast.org

Night Walks: Plans are being made for public night walks to be held in June and July. Training will take place in May; details will be announced closer to the start of the season. For questions, please contact permit holder Craig Konkell at walks@seaturtlespacecoast.org

STERP: Training for the Sea Turtle Emergency Response Program, which is designed to rescue post-hatchlings from the beach in fall months, plans to do virtual training in May. Dates and times will be announced on the STPS website and placed on the calendar. An afternoon, evening, and Saturday morning options are planned for the two-hour training.

This successful program allows small family groups to participate in an event together when needed. During October, November, and December certain weather events may wash post-hatchlings to shore along with the mats of sargassum that they live in. Trained *authorized volunteers* search for these turtles and get them to

the care they need.

The following are the criteria for training:

- STPS membership
- Adult participation in volunteer orientation
- Previous class of either Turtle 101, Turtle Talk, or similar
- Registration for training will be available through the STPS website calendar

Virtual training in 2020 was a new experience, and the 2021 training will have some updates.

Returning STERP volunteers are required to complete the training annually.

Stay tuned.

-- Roger Pszonowsky and Dave Cheney

This year, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will hold **the state Marine Turtle Permit Holders Meeting** as an online meeting Feb. 9-10. Anyone interested may find more information and register for free on myfwc.com.

What's happening in STPS

Join us in February

Jamie Aquino, founder of the Haiti Ocean Project, is scheduled to be the guest speaker at the next STPS monthly meeting via Zoom at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 4. She will update STPS on the conservation organization and its efforts to protect Haiti's marine life. Everyone is welcome to attend this free event, but registration is

required. To register, go to the [STPS website calendar](#).

In conjunction with Jamie's presentation, STPS will be collecting needed items for Haiti Ocean Project. Items may be dropped off during business hours at the Turtle House, 111 S. Miramar Ave. in Indialantic, through Feb. 12. New and gently used items needed: hats, sunglasses, fishing gear, flashlights, headlamps, and snorkel gear for all ages. For questions, please email Susan at stpschair@seaturtlespacecoast.org.

Staying connected

STPS continues to offer online and remote options for programs, trainings, and meetings. The February monthly meeting will be held on Zoom, as meetings have been since June 2020. Turtle Talk 101 and Volunteer Orientation also are available via Zoom.

2020 Annual Member Meeting Presentation

At the STPS annual member meeting in December, the board of directors shared a presentation that looked back at 2020. The presentation is available to STPS members [here](#) in the member only content section of the STPS website.

World Sea Turtle Day sponsors and donors needed

World Sea Turtle Day is June 16, and STPS celebrates in style. The Fundraising Committee is looking for donated items or experiences for a World Sea Turtle Day auction as well as any businesses or individuals that would be interested in sponsoring the online auction. Please contact Noelle Villanueva at fundraising@seaturtlespacecoast.org for more information or with any questions.

2021 Turtle Krawl 5K

The Turtle Krawl committee is looking for more volunteers to help plan and organize this year's event, which is planned for September. The committee already has started work, and if you're interested in helping with this huge fundraiser, please email turtlekrawl@seaturtlespacecoast.org or volunteer@seaturtlespacecoast.org

Turtle House and Turtle Nest hours

The Turtle House gift shop and education center in Indialantic is open from 11 am to 4 pm Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. The Turtle Nest kiosk at Port Canaveral is open 9:30 am to 3:30 pm Saturdays and Sundays. Both locations have educational displays as well as merchandise for sale.

Cleaning up the beaches



STPS has brought back its beach cleanup program, but the activity will be self-directed for those interested in participating.

STPS volunteers as well as community members may participate in the beach cleanup program by participating on their own at a time and location of their choice and then notifying STPS of the completed activity.

This is the safest and simplest way to get interested volunteers and community members back to cleaning up Brevard County beaches. For those who choose to participate, please follow current STPS and CDC guidelines for masking and social distancing. STPS guidelines limit in-person activities to groups of no more than 10. STPS participates with Keep Brevard Beautiful through the adoption of two sites, Coconut Point Park and Cherie Down Park. The monthly cleanups at these

locations have been canceled since April 2020. Participants in the self-directed cleanups may choose these locations or any other beach within Brevard County. By notifying the beach cleanup coordinator of participation, STPS can report the information to Keep Brevard Beautiful.

Please email the following information along with a photo of the cleanup participants and trash collected to beachcleanup@seaturtlespacecoast.org:

- Name of participant(s)
- Date and location of cleanup
- Hours of the cleanup
- Number of bags collected
- List of any large items not suitable to be bagged

A photo of the participants with the trash collected is required if participants would like to receive community service credit. Please include each student's name and school.

Active STPS volunteers also may record their activity in the VIC system.

For questions, please contact the STPS beach cleanup coordinator at beachcleanup@seaturtlespacecoast.org

2020 Volunteer of the Year awards

In December 2020, STPS celebrated the more than 375 volunteers who help the organization accomplish its mission.

At the virtual event, four volunteers were recognized as 2020 Volunteers of the Year by the STPS Board of Directors. STPS would like to congratulate **Helen Bachtell, Dan Schaller, Ken Smith, and Susan Smith** for their hard work and dedication to helping sea turtles survive.

The virtual party included volunteer recognition, special awards, a sea turtle trivia game, and door prizes. Volunteers also were given special 2020 STPS ornaments.

Girl Scout project focuses on sea turtles

Sea Turtle Trek Geocache Series

LEARN ABOUT HAZARDS TO SEA TURTLES

Brought to you by

2020 Girl Scout Gold Award Project

**GET OUTDOORS
EXPLORE YOUR COMMUNITY**

Start your Turtle Trek Today

STEP 1

Download the free geocaching app

STEP 2

Locate the Sea Turtle Trek Series caches

STEP 3

Learn about the geocache by reading the cache description

STEP 4

Go find the geocache

STEP 5

Log your first ten finds in the geocaching app

What is Geocaching?

- Geocaching is a real life treasure hunt that encourages people to get outdoors and explore their community.
- Geocaches come in all different shapes and size. Some are large containers and others are as small as your thumbnail.

Geocaching Guidelines

- Geocaches are never buried
- Respect your surroundings
- Bring your own pen or pencil to add the date to the cache log
- If you take an item from a cache, leave an item in the cache

Girl Scout Senior Rebecca Devoid recently partnered with the Sea Turtle Preservation Society on her Gold Award project, a geocache learning series about sea turtles and conservation.

The goal of a Gold Award project is to bring awareness to an issue in a community and help solve it. For Rebecca's Gold Award, she worked with the Sea Turtle Preservation Society to place a 10-part interactive learning Geocache series in Brevard County, FL, to help raise awareness about sea turtles and the issues they face. Each geocache is unique and features a different issue such as climate

change, oil spills, artificial lighting, and much more. She hopes this will encourage people to get outside, explore their community, and learn about sea turtles.

“I wanted to work with the sea turtles because I wanted to help endangered species close to home,” says Rebecca, who is a member of Girl Scout Troop 1978 in Melbourne, FL.

She worked on the project for eight months, and a volunteer from the STPS education program worked with Rebecca during that time.

If you're unfamiliar with geocaching, it's basically a real-world outdoor treasure hunt that uses GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to specific coordinates and then use clues to search for the geocache, or hidden container, at the location.

If you are interested, you can download the free Geocaching app to your smart device to get started and search Sea Turtle Trek Series to find these caches. If you're new to geocaching, the app is user friendly and will guide you through what you need to do. The Sea Turtle Trek Series caches are located along the coast in Brevard County on the beachheads from the Eau Gallie Causeway north to the Pineda Causeway.

An informational card on the geocaching project is available at the STPS Turtle House, 111 S. Miramar Ave., in Indialantic. For questions about the geocaching project, please contact the STPS education program at education@seaturtlespacecoast.org.

[Learn More](#)



For the first time ever, the Sea Turtle Preservation Society served as a drop-off location for the Toys for Tots program in December. Thanks to the generous donors who overflowed the drop-off bins at both the Turtle House and the Turtle Nest.

Have you smiled today?

By Ashley Anderson, Communications Volunteer

Have you been looking for a way to directly help sea turtle conservation but just do not know where to start? We have a solution for you! Through this trying time, one thing has remained a constant for us all, and that is the wonderful ability to shop online, but why stop there? When you decide to shop with Amazon, did you know that you could also be donating to a charitable cause with no extra charge? With every purchase through AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate 0.5 percent of your payment to the Sea Turtle Preservation Society.

To date, STPS has received more than \$2,240 from AmazonSmile donations that have directly helped us continue to give back to the turtles we all love and adore. You can set up your own AmazonSmile account in just five simple steps:

1. Go to <https://smile.amazon.com/gp/chpf/homepage?orig=%2F>
2. Select the “get started” button.
3. In the search bar type in “Sea Turtle Preservation Society” and select the Indialantic, Florida location.

4. Enjoy your shopping.
5. Be happy that you just got some new items and supported the sea turtles

If you shop on Amazon using your smartphone, be sure to enable AmazonSmile on the app. Simply go to your app settings and click on the “AmazonSmile” button. You will then be led to enable your selected charity, the Sea Turtle Preservation Society, and enjoy shopping as usual.

Thank you for your support of the Sea Turtle Preservation Society and local sea turtle conservation efforts.



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The Turtle Times is a quarterly newsletter for members of the Sea Turtle Preservation Society, a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization based in Brevard County, FL.

For more information about the organization, please visit the STPS website, seaturtlespacecoast.org.

Stay connected with STPS

Website: seaturtlespacecoast.org

Here you'll find our Loggerhead Lowdown blog, calendar of events and other information for members and volunteers.

On social media, you can keep up with STPS, the Turtle House Gift Shop, and the Turtle Krawl 5K on Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook: Sea Turtle Preservation Society.

You can also keep up with what's happening at the gift shop by liking STPS Turtle House Gift Shop on Facebook.

Instagram: [seaturtleps](#).

For questions, contact news@seaturtlespacecoast.org

Our mailing address is:

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