

Acting Globally

SWOT Small Grants 2011



Visit www.SeaTurtleStatus.org to apply for a 2012 SWOT small grant!

Since 2006, SWOT small grants have helped field-based partners around the world realize their research and conservation goals. To date, we have given 37 grants to partners in 23 countries. SWOT grants are awarded annually to projects in each of SWOT's three areas of focus: networking and capacity building, science, and education and outreach. The following are updates from each of our six grantees in 2011.

COSTA RICA

Ecology Project International

A 2011 SWOT grant will be used by Ecology Project International (EPI) to implement an Alumni Leadership Program for Costa Rican youth who have participated in EPI's field program. Up to 10 youths will be selected to participate in a two-day leadership workshop facilitated by EPI. A subset of those teens will return to the nesting beach as volunteer researchers for a full week. Small grant awards (US\$50–100) will be made to participants who propose viable plans for conservation, education, or awareness projects in their communities. From this newly minted group of conservation leaders, EPI will nominate one individual to serve as a sea turtle research assistant in 2013.



Participants in Ecology Project International's field training program excavate a sea turtle nest. © ECOLOGY PROJECT INTERNATIONAL

GHANA

Wildlife Division (Forestry Commission)



Local community members in coastal Ghana practice measuring a turtle carapace during a community workshop. © ANDREWS AGYEKUMHENE

Sea turtles in Ghana face many threats, both on the beaches and in their coastal habitats, and the threats are increasing because of inadequate community participation. To build local support for sea turtle conservation, the Wildlife Division of Ghana's Forestry Commission has developed a community-based education and outreach program. With the help of a 2011 SWOT grant, an education program was conducted in 30 schools and 15 communities in coastal Ghana. As part of the program, wildlife clubs were

formed in schools to encourage students to protect sea turtles, and 20 local community members were trained to become turtle protection volunteers. Sea turtle informational booklets, brochures, and T-shirts were also developed, and five education billboards were designed to educate the communities and visitors about turtle laws.



Children from the fishing community of El Niño, Peru, line up along the town dock to "meet" and learn about sea turtles. © ECOCEANICA

PERU

ecOceanica

Since 2010, ecOceanica has been developing a marine conservation program in the north of Peru. In close collaboration with the fishing community of El Niño, the program has been studying the local foraging population of green turtles, as well as conducting an outreach program with local children. During November 2011, ecOceanica gave several talks in the community and brought nearly 50 kids to the local pier to meet the turtles. The program also developed a poster to highlight the positive relationship between the people and turtles of El Niño. That poster has been used to raise awareness about the community for residents of Lima, the country's capital and largest city. With support from a 2011 SWOT grant, ecOceanica will commission a mural in El Niño to celebrate the area's marine life and to further encourage community engagement in conservation.

KENYA

Local Ocean Trust: Watamu Turtle Watch

Local Ocean Trust: Watamu Turtle Watch (LOT-WTW) has been actively protecting Kenya's sea turtles and nesting beaches since 1997, as well as collecting data that form the basis of an extensive database on Kenya's sea turtles. A 2011 SWOT grant helped LOT-WTW continue to advance its research program by supporting its efforts to study the effects of (mostly human made) changes to the coastline on nesting turtles, the behaviors and habitat use patterns of bycaught turtles in the Mida Creek area, and the potential causes of fibropapillomatosis. Support from SWOT is also helping cover satellite tag-related costs as part of LOT-WTW's studies on the behavioral effects of long-term sea turtle rehabilitation.



Watamu Turtle Watch program coordinator, Fikiri, records data on one of the 7,000 turtles rescued through the project's bycatch net release program.
© LOCAL OCEAN TRUST: WATAMU TURTLE WATCH



Staff from Akazul pose with children during the first Sea Turtle Festival in the town of La Barrona, Guatemala. © AKAZUL

GUATEMALA Akazul

A 2011 SWOT grant is helping nonprofit organization Akazul develop its education and outreach programs in the area of La Barrona in Guatemala. Akazul staff members have been busy developing the new Akazul Sea Turtle Center, which will be used to raise awareness of local and global conservation issues. They have also been leading a group of 22 local children through an extensive sea turtle education curriculum, as well as training a group of local egg harvesters in a sea turtle stewardship program. In December, the first La Barrona Sea Turtle Festival was held for local egg-harvesting communities, which included educational talks and materials, games, art activities, films, and a youth football tournament.

NEW ZEALAND

Coastal Marine Research Group of Massey University

The Chatham Islands region east of New Zealand may constitute an important seasonal temperate foraging ground for Pacific leatherback turtles. Despite only one documented record of a leatherback, recent interviews with local fishermen and community members have turned up at least 30 records over the past 30 years. To further investigate the significance of this potential foraging habitat, a community-based research initiative was established with the support of a 2011 SWOT grant. The project aims to raise awareness about the plight of Pacific leatherbacks while engaging the local community to report sightings. The grant was used to produce information packs for distribution to local fishermen and the community.



Boats anchored off the coast of Chatham Islands, New Zealand. © DAN GODOY