

Acting Globally SWOT Small Grants 2015

Since 2006, SWOT small grants have helped partners around the world to realize their sea turtle research and conservation goals. To date, we have given 58 grants to 49 partners in more than 40 countries. SWOT grants are awarded annually to projects in each of SWOT's three areas of focus: (a) networking and capacity building, (b) science, and (c) education and outreach. The following are updates from each of our seven grantees in 2015. Visit www.SeaTurtleStatus.org to apply for a 2016 SWOT small grant!

BANGLADESH Marinelife Alliance

Bangladesh is home to one of the world's most threatened olive ridley sea turtle populations. Marinelife Alliance (MLA) has been working to protect marine and coastal resources in Bangladesh since 1996. Despite MLA's successful sea turtle monitoring and conservation programs, the country's education and awareness of sea turtle biology, conservation, and management remain low. Using a 2015 SWOT grant, MLA will collaborate with local schools and communities to heighten awareness. The group's outreach and education programs will focus on the role sea turtles play in the marine ecosystem, on the threats they face, and on what people can do to conserve them. MLA will host a sea turtle festival in which local high school and college students will serve as guides and community outreach representatives. The SWOT grant will also fund ongoing educational efforts such as documentary screenings and exhibits in the local community.



BRAZIL Marcos Daniel Institute

Located in Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil, the Marcos Daniel Institute's (IMD) main objective is to empower people to conserve nature. The Chelonia Mydas Project is an initiative of IMD to monitor and evaluate the health of sea turtles in Brazil. The project analyzes blood samples from turtles to evaluate clinical parameters and to measure pollutants that occur in sea turtles in different locations throughout Brazil. Previously, the project's researchers have found that Brazilian green turtles have detectable levels of oil pollutants. A 2015 SWOT grant is helping IMD to expand its work to understand how plasma oil hydrocarbon concentrations affect the health of sea turtles and how those concentrations vary by region and by species. This information will help to evaluate the risk that the oil industry poses to sea turtles in Brazil (including within marine-protected areas) and ultimately will help to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are in place.



GHANA Wildlife Division, Forestry Commission

Ghana is home to important nesting and foraging areas for five sea turtle species. Fisheries bycatch is a major source of sea turtle mortality in Ghana, and it has contributed to declines in Ghana's sea turtle populations. The current rate of incidental capture in fishing nets indicates an immediate need for solutions that actively involve fishing communities in efforts to mitigate the effects of bycatch on sea turtle populations. A 2015 SWOT grant will be used to train community leaders and fishermen in 10 communities throughout the Muni-Pomadze Ramsar site about safe handling and release practices for accidentally captured turtles. In addition, fishermen will receive materials to mend broken nets caused by sea turtle entanglement.

INDIAN OCEAN The Olive Ridley Project

The Olive Ridley Project (ORP) will use its 2015 SWOT grant to tackle the problem of sea turtle entanglement in ghost nets (lost, discarded, or abandoned fishing gear) in the Indian Ocean. ORP will continue to train volunteers to remove ghost gear and to record important information about the gear and the animals entangled in it. By promoting the recycling of end-of-life fishing equipment, the SWOT grant will also help ORP to continue its efforts to reduce the amount of derelict fishing gear that ends up in the ocean. In the past two years, ORP volunteers have rescued 174 sea turtles and removed 350 ghost nets.



INTERNATIONAL ProTECTOR Inc.

A 2015 SWOT grant will be used to cover a portion of a photo identification (PID) workshop at the 36th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation in Lima, Peru, in February 2016. The workshop will examine computer-assisted PID software and practices to advance PID techniques throughout the sea turtle research and conservation community. The day-long workshop will give sea turtle researchers and computer programmers the opportunity to connect and discuss needs, opportunities, and goals of PID methods and technologies. The long-term goal of the PID workshop is to create a freely available global PID sea turtle database to advance sea turtle conservation.

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE Programa Tatô, ATM/MARAPA

São Tomé is home to important nesting and foraging areas of the critically endangered eastern Atlantic subpopulation of hawksbill turtles. Although monitoring has been conducted for more than a decade, recent interviews with local communities suggest that the previous studies may have missed important nesting sites. Moreover, foraging habitats for this population have not yet been identified. Programa Tatô, ATM/MARAPA, will use a 2015 SWOT grant to identify unknown nesting and foraging areas for this species. A group of researchers and local fishermen will survey nesting beaches and conduct in-water monitoring along 140 kilometers (87 miles) of coastline. The results from the project will be used to prioritize areas for future monitoring and protection and ultimately will contribute to the creation of the first sea turtle management plan for São Tomé and Príncipe islands.



PERU ecOceánica

Recent studies have confirmed the presence of nesting green and olive ridley turtles along Peru's highly developed northern coastline. The findings make Peru's coast the southernmost sea turtle nesting habitat in the eastern Pacific. Because this discovery is relatively recent, minimal government protection programs or regulations exist in the region. Using a 2015 SWOT grant, staff members from ecOceánica will work to raise awareness of the presence of nesting sea turtles in the Tumbes and Piura regions of northern Peru. ecOceánica will conduct outreach and capacity-building activities among beachfront hotels, tourists, and residents. The group's goal is to create a citizen science network that will contribute to improving management and protection strategies for sea turtles in Peru.