

# VELADOR

Science-Based Sea Turtle Conservation Since 1959

Issue 4, 2012

## Does the Cayman Turtle Farm Have a Future?

In October, Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC) added its voice to those calling on the Cayman Turtle Farm (CTF) to cease producing sea turtles for human consumption and convert to an educational and conservation facility benefiting green turtles in the Caribbean. Although our founder, Dr. Archie Carr, originally supported CTF in the



Image credit: World Society for the Protection of Animals

1960s to reduce pressure on wild turtles, he eventually became an ardent opponent, recognizing that to save sea turtles they needed to be taken off the menu. In recent decades, STC has criticized the CTF for failing to meet appropriate humane, conservation and scientific standards, and we have worked with other organizations to keep CTF products (primarily meat) out of international markets. Because the Farm is one of the most successful tourist attractions in the Cayman Islands, however, the local government has resisted all calls to shut it down, choosing instead to subsidize the operation.

The latest campaign to end turtle farming at CTF is being spearheaded by the World

Society for the Protection of Animals. STC became a vocal backer of the campaign after 300 turtles perished this summer because they were left in a tank with no water. In fact, STC members who have visited the Farm regularly contact us to express concern about the poor appearance of turtles crowded into tanks filled with dirty water. British authorities, who have jurisdiction over the Cayman Islands, have agreed to undertake an in-depth review of CTF operations. This situation has generated a lot of press in the Cayman Islands and abroad, including comments from Sir Paul McCartney about the need to stop sea turtle farming at CTF. As a result of media coverage, conditions at CTF are improving, but resolution of STC's scientific and conservation concerns will be more complicated. In all situations involving the release of captive animals to the wild, the potential for spreading diseases to wild

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**Inside: New Tracking Technique May Aid Efforts to Save Loggerheads**



**Holiday Gift Guide: Sneak peek at STC's new sea turtle gear for the holidays**



In 2009, I joined STC as the Membership Coordinator. I personally think I have the best job in the organization because every day I get to interact with our loyal Members. I am able to experience first hand why people are passionate about saving sea turtles and making a difference.

What does a Membership Coordinator do? When people want to become Members of STC, I help them through the process. Whether adopting a turtle, making donations, or asking for information, my goal is to ensure that Members have a smooth, positive experience. I especially enjoy working with teachers and classrooms because they are always eager to learn and enthusiastic about helping.

Our Members are the backbone of the organization, so in each issue of the *Velador* we will begin featuring supporters that are going above and beyond for sea turtles. In this issue, check out our Member Profile on page 3, which interviews longtime monthly donors Ray and Helen Smith.

Monthly donations are a convenient, cost-effective way to help sustain and strengthen STC's work on behalf of sea turtles in the United States, Costa Rica, Panama, Bermuda, and the Caribbean. Our monthly donors, known as Turtle Guardians, are a group of dedicated supporters who make a difference for sea turtles every month.

Monthly contributions quickly add up and provide STC with a reliable source of income to support long-term projects. Because these donations are processed automatically, Turtle Guardians help reduce STC's expenses and allow us to devote the greatest percentage of your gift to saving sea turtles.

To learn more about becoming a Turtle Guardian this holiday season, visit [www.conserveturtles.org](http://www.conserveturtles.org), call me at 352-373-6441 or email me at [membership@conserveturtles.org](mailto:membership@conserveturtles.org). I look forward to hearing from you!

Happy Holidays!

Merna Wimsatt  
Membership Coordinator



## VELADOR {bel.a.dor}

In Caribbean cultures, **Velador** translates as "one who stands vigil" — originally referring to turtle and egg harvesters who waited at night for turtles to come ashore. Now STC claims this title for its newsletter, and around the Caribbean STC's researchers and volunteers are replacing poachers as the new veladors.

The **Velador** is published for members and supporters of the nonprofit **Sea Turtle Conservancy**. STC is dedicated to the conservation of sea turtles through research, advocacy, education and protection of the habitats upon which they depend.

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# Research Update

## New Tracking Technique May Aid Efforts to Save Loggerheads

STC recently co-authored a research study with the University of Central Florida that links the chemical signatures of loggerhead turtles' diets to their migratory routes.



Image credit: Celeste McWilliams

The study, led by University of Central Florida (UCF) graduate student Simona Ceriani, took small blood samples from loggerhead turtles at the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge and performed a chemical

analysis to measure distinct markers known as stable isotopes. These isotopes are determined by what a sea turtle eats. STC and UCF researchers then attached satellite transmitters to the turtles to determine their migration routes and feeding grounds. After analyzing the isotopes and migratory patterns, Ceriani found that blood isotopes can be very accurate in determining a sea turtle's foraging area.

Dan Evans, STC research specialist and co-author of the research paper said, "this research helps scientists and conservation managers identify key feeding areas for loggerhead turtles and helps direct policy and regulations that protect sea turtles in these specific areas."

This project was supported by several grants from Florida's Sea Turtle Grants Program, which is funded by sales of the Florida Sea Turtle Specialty License Plate.

## Member Profile: Ray & Helen Smith, Chattanooga, Tennessee STC Members since 1990; Turtle Guardians since Jan. 2005

### Q1: Can you tell us a little about your interest in sea turtles?

A1: We have been interested in sea turtles since the late 1980s when, during a vacation at a private beach near Charleston, SC, we came upon a nest of hatchlings struggling to make their way to the ocean for their first swim. It was an amazing and awe-inspiring event for us when we realized the tremendous obstacles those turtles faced –and how few of them actually reach adulthood.

When we learned that most of the decline in sea turtles is due to human intervention and disruption, we decided to do what we could to help them.

### Q2: How did you first learn about Sea Turtle Conservancy?

A2: At the time the organization was called Caribbean Conservation Corporation, and we became aware of their efforts, especially at the Archie Carr Refuge, as we read up on sea turtles.

### Q3: Why is supporting sea turtle conservation important to you?

A3: We believe a world without these magnificent creatures would be a tragic loss. They have been here much longer than we have, and we as humans are obligated to respect and protect their place in nature. Our calling is to be good stewards of the earth in every way.

### Q4: What is your favorite sea turtle fact or characteristic?

A: Where to start? They are beautiful, graceful and in a sense, helpless. It is amazing that they can travel so far from their nesting beach and then years later return to that same beach to start the cycle all over.

### Q5: What made you decide to become Turtle Guardians (monthly donors)?

A5: Monthly donations make it easier for us to budget and plan our giving – and we can make sure that Sea Turtle Conservancy is never left out!



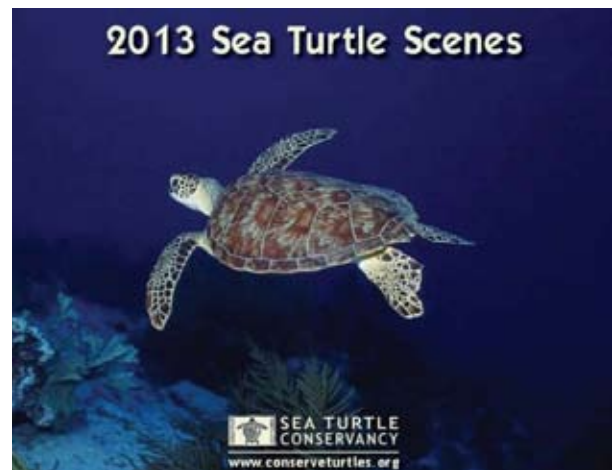
G.W. Pridgeon

# Holiday Gift Guide

**A.**



**B.**



**C.**



**D.**



**A. 2012 Ornament** - featuring a loggerhead turtle based on a drawing by wildlife artist, Dawn Witherington. Approx. 4". **\$9.95**

**B. 2013 Sea Turtle Scenes Calendar** - 11" x 17" (open) wall calendar features some of STC's favorite sea turtles in action. **\$12.95**

**C. Sea Turtle Note Cards** - five different designs printed on recycled paper. Approx. 4 1/4" x 5 1/2". Available in a box of 10 with white envelopes. **\$16.95**

**D. Sea Turtle 4GB USB Flash Drive** - plug-and-play, compatible with most Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems. **\$14.95**

Visit [conserveturtles.org/store](http://conserveturtles.org/store) for shop for these items and other great turtle gear!

**E.**



**F.**



**G.**



**H.**



**I.**



**J.**



**E. STC Logo Medallion** - bronze medallion with STC logo created by Reller Gold. Includes leather cord. **\$24.95**

**F. STC Hatchling Bead** - sea turtle bead in sterling silver created by Reller Gold. Fits all popular bead bracelets. **\$44.95**

**G. Tagua Nut Necklace** - carved Tagua Nut and leather cord. Handmade in Ecuador from sustainably-harvested tagua palm nut, *Phytelephas Equatorialis*. **\$18.95**

**H. STC Logo Pendant** - sterling silver pendant with STC Logo created by Reller Gold. Available in 5/8" or 7/8" **\$19.95 /\$34.95**

**I. Baseball Cap** - soft baseball cap with adjustable cloth strap. Adult size. Colors: white, sand & pink. **\$19.95**

**J. Sea Turtle Shirt** - cotton t-shirt with artwork donated by artist Damien Share. Available in adult sizes SM, MD, LG & XL. Color Pistachio. **\$19.95**

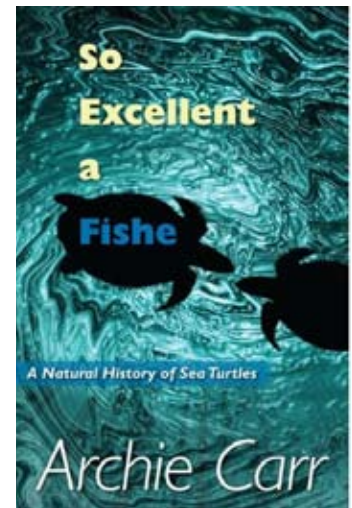
**K.**



**L.**



**N.**



**M.**



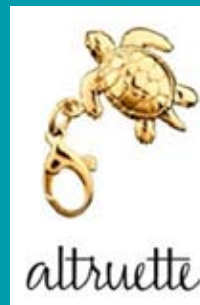
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**K. Fishing Shirt** - short sleeve fishing shirt is light and airy, 60% cotton/40% polyester soft finish poplin. Adult sizes: SM, MD, LG, XL. **\$49.95**

**L. Sea Turtle Plush** - plush green sea turtle in terry cloth. 9" in length. **\$6.95**

**M. Into the Sea** - children's book, by Brenda Guiberson, takes readers on an adventure following the life cycle of a sea turtle from hatching to adulthood. **\$18.95**

**N. So Excellent a Fische** - first published in 1967, this book combines everything Dr. Archie Carr had learned about sea turtles in two decades of fieldwork. **\$21.95**

Visit [conserveturtles.org/store](http://conserveturtles.org/store) for shop for these items and other great turtle gear!

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populations is a serious concern. The stress of captivity is conducive to disease under the best of circumstances, and poor sanitation has been an ongoing issue at CTF. The Farm claims that its strict release protocols ensure the health of wild populations, but evidence does not support this claim.



A significant scientific issue is the effect of CTF turtle releases on the Caribbean green turtle gene pool because the Farm releases turtles of mixed genetic stock. At the time that these releases began, sea turtle scientists did not know that sea turtles from different nesting areas have distinct DNA that allow us to identify their nesting beaches of origin. Turtles hatched at CTF are of mixed lineage because the breeding stock of the Farm originated from six distinct areas in the Western Atlantic, specifically Suriname, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guyana, Ascension Island, and Mexico. Once genetics were understood, many in

the sea turtle conservation community appealed to CTF to stop releasing turtles. Turtle releases are popular with tourists, and CTF continues this practice.

In December, an independent reviewer hired by the British government will evaluate conditions at the Farm so that a decision about its future can be made. For obvious reasons, STC recommends that

footage of CTF operations obtained by WSPA before the scandal broke be included in this evaluation. We also expect that the reviewer will have access to all Farm facilities and believe a representative of WSPA or STC should be invited to participate in touring the facility with the reviewer. In addition to calls for accountability from the Farm, STC is publicly asking the Cayman Turtle Farm to permanently end sea turtle farming, and we encourage our members to take action by signing a petition at [www.stopseaturtlefarm.org](http://www.stopseaturtlefarm.org). 🌊

**By Marydele Donnelly**  
*Director of International Policy*



Calypso Blue, a leatherback from Panama, took top honors in this year's Tour de Turtle, winning first place in both the marathon and the Causes Challenge. Sponsored by Atlantis, Paradise, Island, Calypso Blue traveled 3,268 miles in only 97 days. She is now off the Northeast Coast of the United States and will likely travel toward Europe to continue her migration. In the Causes Challenge, she raised \$6,539 in support of her cause: Commercial Trawl Fisheries. Karma, another leatherback from Panama sponsored by RFQ-hub, came in second place with 2,688 miles. And Lady Marmalade, a loggerhead turtle from Florida sponsored by The Body Shop Foundation, won third place in the marathon.

Visit [tourdeturtles.org](http://tourdeturtles.org) to see final placing for all the turtle competitors!



In the Bermuda edition of Tour de Turtles, five juvenile green turtles competed in a regional marathon. Tucker won first place after traveling 1,193 miles from Bermuda to South Florida.

Catherine came in second place with 912 miles in 94 days. She also left Bermuda toward the Bahamas. Coming in third place, Chubby traveled only 19 miles around Bermuda's nearshore water. In the Causes Challenge, Fripper came in first place raising more than \$800 to increase awareness about the impacts of coastal armoring to sea turtles. Sponsored by RenaissanceRe, Fripper was the first Tour de Turtles competitor released in Bermuda.

Visit [tourdeturtles.org/Bermuda](http://tourdeturtles.org/Bermuda) to see final placing for all the green turtle competitors!



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# Membership

Sea turtle adoptions make a great, green holiday gift idea for the people in your life that want to make a positive impact on the natural world.

For a tax-deductible donation of \$30 or more, Sea Turtle Conservancy will send gift recipients a personalized adoption certificate, a Sea Turtle Conservation Guide, a membership window cling, a sea turtle sticker and bookmark, a magnet, and a one-year subscription to Sea Turtle Conservancy's membership publication, all in a keepsake sea turtle folder. Order by Friday, Dec. 7 for free, guaranteed delivery by Christmas.

For a limited time, upgrade any sea turtle adoption to the \$50 level or above, and STC will include a free 2013 Sea Turtle Scenes Calendar in addition to the adoption premium (we have plenty in stock now, but this offer is valid only while supplies last).



To adopt a sea turtles, please visit [conserveturtles.org/adoptaturtle](http://conserveturtles.org/adoptaturtle) today!



Sea Turtle Conservancy is proud to be consistently recognized by charity watchdogs GuideStar and Charity Navigator for our commitment to transparency, good governance and fiscal responsibility. STC has received Charity Navigator's coveted 4-Star ranking for seven years in a row. STC uses your donations wisely and efficiently to conduct sea turtle research and conservation. To learn more visit [www.guidestar.com](http://www.guidestar.com) and [www.charitynavigator.com](http://www.charitynavigator.com).

