

# VELADOR

Using Science-based Conservation to Protect Sea Turtles and Their Habitats Since 1959

Issue 1, 2007



## Satellite Tracking of Leatherbacks Reveals Unexpected Foraging Ground

#000202 © Doug Perrine / SeaPic.com

A couple of years ago, a joint study by Caribbean Conservation Corporation and other groups monitoring leatherback nesting along the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica analyzed data from regular track surveys, night patrols and aerial surveys to estimate that the leatherback rookery of the Caribbean coast of Central America, between the Nicaragua – Costa Rica border to just south of Chiriquí Beach, Panama, represents the fourth largest leatherback nesting population in the world. Data also suggests this leatherback nesting population may be in decline since 1995.

In 2003, CCC began tracking adult female leatherbacks from nesting beaches at Tortuguero and Gandoca in Costa Rica and Chiriquí Beach in Panama to collect detailed information on leatherback movements and habitat use to identify locations where human threats may be causing leatherback mortality that is impacting the Caribbean Central American nesting population.

CCC tracked a total of 12 leatherback turtles over the past three years. Of the 12 migration tracks, nine showed the turtles migrating out of the Caribbean to possible

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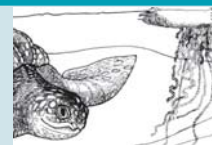
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**Special  
TURTLE TIDES  
Newsletter Inside!**

## Up Front - Frances Velay



At left: Miss Velay with leatherback turtle model at the International Sea Turtle Symposium In Philadelphia, PA.

## 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 CCC claims this title for its newsletter, and around the Caribbean, CCC's researchers and volunteers are replacing poachers as the new veladors.

**Velador** is published for members and supporters of the nonprofit **Caribbean Conservation Corporation (CCC)** and its **Sea Turtle Survival League (STSL)** program.

CCC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of sea turtles through research, training, advocacy, education and the protection of habitats. STSL is the US-based outreach, policy and education program of the CCC.

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Wildlife and the guardians of Earth's wild places lost a dear and wonderful friend with the passing of Frances Velay on January 20, 2007. She was an extraordinary philanthropist who cared passionately about the world and for the people working to make a difference. She was an amazing woman and an exceptional benefactor. Those who knew Miss Velay cherished her for her vision, her friendship and her support for our work.

Through the creation of her Panaphil Foundation, Miss Velay supported an amazing number of organizations, including CCC. While she appreciated biodiversity in all its wondrous forms, Miss Velay had a special affinity for turtles and their kin.

In the early 1990s she provided \$500,000 to strengthen and expand the work of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, choosing to keep her gift anonymous as the group's mysterious major donor, a role which she quite enjoyed. Through her support for turtle research, health, capacity building, advocacy, and education, Miss Velay has left an indelible mark on sea turtle conservation and our community.

Miss Velay was born in 1914 in France where she earned her Lic.S.C. at the University of Paris before moving to the United States at

the outbreak of World War II. In 1947 she received her M.S. in Chemistry from New York University and went on to work on her Ph.D.

Talented in science, Miss Velay was also a fine musician and artist. She played violin in various community orchestras and exhibited her pastels professionally. Once she established the Panaphil Foundation in the mid 1980s, she devoted herself almost entirely to reviewing and selecting proposals and overseeing her investments.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of grant recipients have accomplished great things as a result of Miss Velay's support. Her concern for the world extended beyond wildlife to include human conditions. Among other things, she was deeply committed to global population control and human rights. Although her foundation will continue to support the issues that she cared about, it is so hard to imagine a world without Miss Velay. She was loved by many and is sorely missed.

I have known Frances Velay since 1987 and served as the Program Officer of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group from 1994-2001. 🐢

*By Marydele Donnelly*

*Director of International Policy*

### **CCC HAS MOVED!**

Our new address is:  
4424 NW 13th St, Ste B-11  
Gainesville, FL 32609

Leatherback near an oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico.

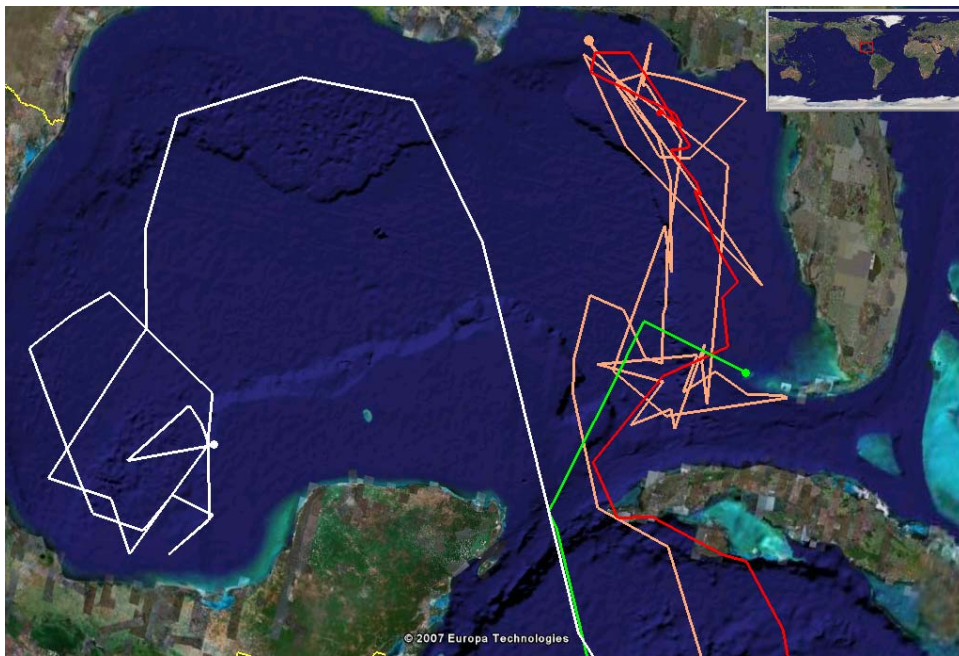


**...from cover**

foraging areas. Of these, five turtles migrated into the northern Atlantic Ocean, and four were tracked into the Gulf of Mexico.

The five leatherbacks that migrated into the North Atlantic Ocean swam to the waters southeast of Nova Scotia, Canada, a known foraging area for leatherbacks. One traveled straight across the Atlantic toward Europe, reaching an area north of the Azores Islands, also identified as a foraging area, in the eastern Atlantic Ocean. This data is consistent with other studies that have tracked leatherbacks into the North Atlantic from nesting beaches in Florida and the Caribbean.

Of the four leatherbacks that migrated to the Gulf of Mexico, three stayed within the eastern part of the Gulf off of the coasts of Florida and Alabama, while the fourth currently is transmitting from the western Gulf of Mexico. There have been many sightings of leatherbacks in the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, flipper tag recoveries from stranded females in the Gulf can be traced back to nesting beaches in Caribbean Central America. However, this data and past sea turtle surveys have provided an incomplete picture of how leatherbacks are utilizing the Gulf of



Satellite tracking indicates the Gulf of Mexico may be an important year-round leatherback foraging area rather than just a pass-through area during migration.

Mexico.

CCC's satellite tracking has provided new information about the seasonal movements of leatherbacks within the Gulf of Mexico. Our tracking indicates that leatherback turtles may be foraging in the Gulf of Mexico year-round. The data also suggest that leatherbacks may move south during winter months. This could explain the low number of leatherback observations during previous winter surveys in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

During the past two decades, jellyfish populations in the Gulf of Mexico have been increasing. There has been a population explosion of native species, such as moon jellies and sea nettles, both eaten by leatherbacks. Although the exact reasons for the increase are not known, long-term changes in jellyfish abundance may be related to the effects of intense fishing that has reduced predator species, increased water temperature, nutrient enrichment, or a combination of factors. The relationship between jellyfish abundance and leatherback occurrence in the Gulf is unclear. It is possible that year-round

foraging by leatherbacks has increased as a response to increased jellyfish.

CCC's research suggests that the Gulf of Mexico may represent a significant year-round foraging ground for leatherbacks from the Caribbean coast of Central America and

not just a seasonal feeding area or pass-through region for migrating leatherbacks.

The implications for the conservation and recovery of leatherbacks are significant. More research is needed to determine if there are impacts from commercial fishing activities in the Gulf, particularly from the long-line fishery, which is known to cause incidental bycatch of thousands of marine turtles worldwide. (See Fisheries Update on page 5). Another concern is the impact of current and future oil and natural gas exploration on

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leatherback habitat, food availability and overall health of the ecosystem. There currently are over 6,500 oil and gas platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. Many of them are located in areas where leatherback turtles occur.

CCC's tracking has just scratched the surface of what needs to be known about leatherbacks in the Gulf. More study is needed to conserve leatherbacks that nest on beaches in Caribbean Central America during their migration and on foraging grounds. CCC will continue its satellite tracking and also plans to conduct aerial surveys in the Gulf focusing on areas of nutrient enrichment, which may have high jellyfish abundance, and seasonal "hot spots" based on satellite tracking. CCC also is developing a project to post informational signs on piers and at boat ramps asking people to report sightings of leatherbacks. We also hope to expand a "turtle spotter" program on oil and natural gas platforms to collect data on leatherback observations.

Funding for this research was provided by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund, the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, the Firedoll Foundation, the British Embassy - San José, Costa Rica, Shark Reef at Mandalay Bay, The



NOAA/NMFS File Photo

Bycatch of leatherbacks in longline fisheries is one factor that has caused a decline in leatherback nesting numbers worldwide.

Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, CT, PADI Project Aware, the World Wildlife Fund, the National Aquarium in Baltimore and the USFWS Gulf Coast Coastal Program. Additional support was provided by Asociación ANAI, the Ministry of

Environment and Energy, Costa Rica, the National Environment Authority, Panama and the communities of Tortuguero and Gandoca in Costa Rica, and Río Caña in Panama.

Detailed maps of sea turtle migrations can be found on CCC's website at [www.seaturtletracking.org](http://www.seaturtletracking.org)

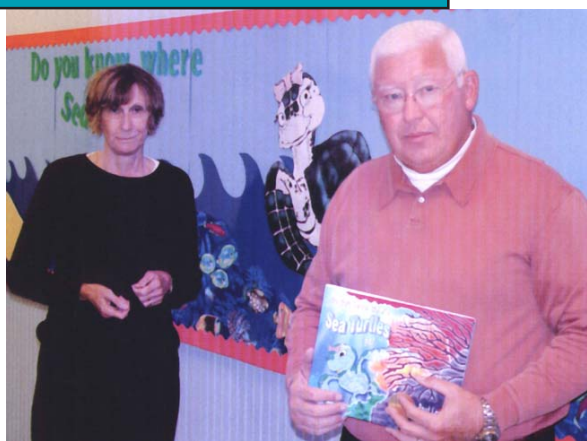
**By Daniel Evans**  
Outreach Coordinator



## Focus on Turtle Heroes

### Lets Go Turtling!

The above headline is how Paul Lowery autographs his book, *Do you Know Where Sea Turtles Go?* Paul and Betty Lowery (pictured) are a retired couple committed to helping endangered sea turtles. At Betty's suggestion, Paul has written an award winning environmental children's book that uses simple rhyming verse and is beautifully illustrated. They travel throughout Florida reading their book in schools and teaching children about different species and threats to sea turtles using posters prepared by the CCC. Paul and Betty have inspired hundreds of school children and individuals to adopt sea



turtles through the CCC.

Since it takes 20-30 years for a sea turtle to become mature, today's children will be adults when this season's hatchlings come back to nest for the first time. And now, because of their efforts, hundreds of four and five year old boys and girls know what the word "endangered" means and that their actions hold the future for sea turtles. Make sure to check out the kid's

newsletter, *Turtle Tides*, included in this *Velador*. Paul and Betty will be contributing their own stories and educational activities in the next *Turtle Tides* issue. Paul's book is available from CCC through our online gift shop at <http://giftshop.cccturtle.org>

## State Trawl Fisheries in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico

In June 2001 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released an outline and implementation schedule for its strategic plan to reduce the accidental capture of sea turtles (known as bycatch) in numerous state and federal fisheries in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. NMFS addresses sea turtle capture in federal fisheries through consultation mandated by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, but until now, state-managed fisheries and fisheries without a Management Plan have not been regulated. Because certain types of gear are more likely to capture sea turtles than others, the plan will address sea turtle bycatch by gear type rather than addressing specific fisheries. CCC endorses this approach and has urged NMFS to move expeditiously to develop and implement new regulations for trawl fisheries. This is a multi-step process with several opportunities for public input, including an advanced notice of rulemaking, proposed regulations, and final regulations.

For more than a year, states in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico have been compiling data to characterize trawl fisheries in their local waters (trawls are wide-mouthed nets that taper to a narrow end). Released in late 2006, the report summarizes activity by thousands of trawlers from New England to Texas. While the shrimp fishery is the best known trawl fishery in the world, U.S. fishermen also use trawls to capture many species of fish, such as butterfish and croaker. In the United States, shrimp fishermen in state and federal waters have been required to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in their nets since 1992 so that turtles trapped underwater can get out of the nets before they drown. Through new regulations, NMFS will require other trawl fisheries that interact with sea turtles to use TEDs as well.

Among the issues identified by the characterization of state trawl fisheries is the absence of state fishery observer programs. This shortcoming demonstrates that federal participation is clearly needed to regulate the numerous trawl

fisheries that operate in state waters, such as increasingly popular skimmer trawls in Louisiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama (3,653 commercial skimmer trawl licenses were granted in Louisiana in 2004). CCC is also particularly concerned about the refusal of the State of Louisiana to implement and enforce federal TED requirements in state waters, mandated since December 4, 1992.

It has been more than five years since NMFS proposed its comprehensive strategy to reduce sea turtle bycatch in state fisheries in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, despite the repeated concern expressed by federal and state biologists and the staff of CCC and other conservation organizations. In the interim, fisheries of all kinds have taken a significant toll on sea turtles in the



Proposed NMFS regulations would expand the use of Turtle Excluder Devices to many trawl fisheries.

NOAA/NMFS File Photo

Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, and especially on loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*). As reported in our last issue of the *Velador*, years of cumulative fishing interactions have put Western Atlantic loggerheads at risk. In Florida the long-term index nesting beach data demonstrate nesting declines of more than 22.3% from 1989 through 2005 and a 39.5% decline since 1998. The subpopulation nesting in Georgia and the Carolinas also is in decline.

CCC has urged NMFS to dedicate the resources necessary to support the comprehensive strategy and work with the states to reduce sea turtle bycatch. We will closely monitor the development of new trawl regulations and provide comments as needed. With regard to the comprehensive strategy, we have asked NMFS to move forward on the characterization of other potentially disabling and fatal gear for sea turtles, such as gill nets and pot fisheries, so that it will not take another five years to begin to address problems in these fisheries.

By **Marydele Donnelly**

Director of International Policy



# Adopted Turtles Seen in 2006

From July to September each year, Caribbean Conservation Corporation researchers and program participants tag and collect data on the green turtles that nest on the beaches of Tortuguero, Costa Rica. To help fund this important research, each tagged turtle is available for adoption with a \$25 contribution (\$35 outside of the U.S.). One of the goals of the Adopt-A-Turtle program is to keep adoptive "parents" informed when their adopted turtles turn up in Tortuguero.

During the 2006 tagging season, 337 of the thousands of green turtles that came ashore to nest had been adopted by our members. The "parents" of the turtles are listed below:

- |                              |                          |                            |                              |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Carolyn Abercrombie          | Jackson Brang            | Susan Dowhie               | Girl Scout Troop 311 Juniors |
| Sofia Flores Aguilar         | Brass Castle Preschool   | Perry Dubin                | Girl Scout Troop 311         |
| Catherine Ake                | Jill Breedon             | Ted & Jeanie Dubinsky      | Brownies                     |
| & Margaret Keener            | Elizabeth Breimyer       | Charlie Duffy              | Lew & Sylvia Gollub          |
| Ami Allen                    | Lane Brettschneider      | Andrea Dunlop              | Anne Gouiller-Moore          |
| Georgia Alvarez              | Sam Brierley             | Marilyn Dusek              | Grabczynski's                |
| Merrilee Anderson            | Randy Brogna             | East School                | Suzanne Graham               |
| Sue Anderson                 | Kate Brown               | Antwan Ebben               | The Graham Family            |
| Brenda Anderson              | John C. D. Bruno         | Catherine Edwards          | Rita Greenlee                |
| Louise Araujo                | Kay Buck                 | Jo Beth Elliott            | Steve Griffith               |
| Evan & Ana Flo Arcas         | Ted Buettner             | Stephanie Ellis            | Sonia Groves                 |
| George Artnak                | Peter Burge              | Ms. Erato's Class          | Sheriff Don Gudmundson       |
| David Austin                 | Nicole & Abbey Cahalan   | David Erickson             | Margaret Guild               |
| Kristen Ness Ayers           | Stephanie Caldwell       | Mary Jean, Charlie, & Kris | Karen Guinness               |
| Joan Bagley                  | Donna Cannon             | Erler                      | Valerie Hammel               |
| Mrs. Bailey's Class          | Dillon Carney            | Freya Evans                | Tyler Harp                   |
| Maureen Bakes                | Breana Chappell          | Derek Exell                | Mrs. Harrington's Class      |
| Dan Bakker                   | Wioleta Chatzichristidis | Edward Eyton               | Brucie Harry                 |
| Irene Balagot                | Kristin Child            | Maria Fabbrini             | Kirsten Hausman              |
| Sally Ballentine             | Whitney Christianson     | Linda Lee Family           | Catherine Hawkins            |
| The Barnharts                | Melanie Clarey           | Cindi Feldman              | Kim Hearn                    |
| Chris Bartlett               | Harper Clark             | Go Go Ferguson             | Kendra Heimlicher            |
| Brenda & William Bartnick    | Will Conrad              | The Fergusons              | Katja Heinimann              |
| Zack Bates                   | Abigail Cook             | WeeJ Fernan                | Jennifer Henderson           |
| Michael Bayer                | The Cook Family          | Joe Ferrara                | Linda Hennan                 |
| Debbie Bear                  | Anthony Cordova          | Paul Feyerabend            | Tomas Hernando Kofman        |
| Gail Bennett                 | Karen Coughlin Tully     | Carolyn Fichtel            | Tracy Hibbard                |
| Sebastian Bergman            | Hayley Crouch            | Charlie Firtion            | Kevin Hildebrand             |
| Joy Indra Bernier            | Paige Crowhurst          | Jared & Chandani Flinn     | Susan Hirshman               |
| Claudia Bevacqua             | Terry & Velda Cuclis     | Nick Forge                 | Michael Holyoak              |
| Michelle Bigelow             | Regis Curtin             | Marianne Forrest           | David & Marci Horowitz       |
| Mr. Blake's Period 1         | Rebecca Dafflon          | Ariel Forsklein            | Caitlin Inderwick            |
| Biology Class 04-05          | Maureen Daniels          | Lee Fowler                 | Meghan Inderwick             |
| Mr. Blake's Period 2         | Samuel Darby             | Camille Fredericks         | Amanda Lee Ivory             |
| Biology Class 04-05          | Austin Davidson          | Tina Frohne                | Annmarie Jaime               |
| Gabriela Blanco              | Jan Davis-Shelley        | Lori Fughum                | Rafael Jaime                 |
| Joe Blaszak                  | Sarah Deano              | Ed & Mary Gallagher        | Marugg Jakob                 |
| Blessed Trinity School Fifth | Tom Delehey              | Stacie Jeanene Gallegly    | Christina Jarvis             |
| Grade Class of 06-07         | Margot Deltour           | Mrs. Garcia's Class        | Larry Jensen                 |
| Blessed Trinity School       | Robert DeMarco           | Ryan Gardiner              | Jana Johanssen               |
| Second Grade Class           | Ms. Denobile's Class     | Corinne Gardner            | John Ball Zoo School         |
| of 06-07                     | Samuel DePrimo           | Kelsey Gardner             | Rainforest 1999              |
| Marsha & Jack Bliven         | Ada Dina                 | Giselle Garmendia          | Donna Johnson                |
| Gordon & Gail Boardway       | The Diplomats            | Jason R. Gilbreth          | Kellie Johnson               |
| Mrs. Boehm's Class           | Raymond & Stephanie      | Joan Gilbreth              | Deindre Jones                |
| The Boonbotics Team          | Dommanschet              | Brian Gilman               |                              |

## Certificate of Adoption

Suzy Snowflake

has adopted a sea turtle named:

**Myrtle**

Scientific Name  
*Chelonia mydas*  
Release Date  
08/05/01  
Location Tagged  
Tortuguero, Costa Rica



Shell Length  
88.5 cm  
Approximate Weight  
350-450 lbs  
Status of Species  
Endangered

Together we can ensure a future for our friends of the sea.



*continued on next page...*

# Marina Returns!

**D**uring the 2006 leatherback nesting season in Tortuguero, Costa Rica, CCC researchers came across a nesting leatherback that had been satellite tagged in 2004, named Marina. She was originally flipper tagged by CCC in 1996 and was observed nesting again in 1998, 2002 and then in 2004. After laying her third nest in 2004, CCC attached a harness with a satellite transmitter and followed her migration until loosing her signal south of Cape Cod, Mass, USA. During the 2006 season, she was observed three times. Welcome home Marina, glad to see you again!

Photo courtesy of Jeff Rotman



Vickie Kane	David Moore	Denise Quintana	St. Michael's Catholic
Bruce Kaupanger	Mrs. Moretz's 4th Grade	Marybeth Quirk	School First Grade Class
Sandy Kawamoto	Class (02-03)	Justy & Bob Ragan	Marco Star
L. Luann Kaylor	Beth Morgano	Laurel Raines	Mike Starkweather
Kiddy Kersden	Chance Morrison	Maile Raventos	Christopher Stefanacci
Robin Kilbane	Kathy Morrow	Chris Reardon	Inge Steinemann
James Kilbane	Jennifer Mulcahy	Brian Reece	Lindsey Stone
Danielle Knights	Kerstin Müüller	Joyce Rhode	Monica Stoney
Katie Kohn	Mary Murphy	David Richtei	Judy Sturgis
Ross Kremsdorf	Scott Murray	Matt & Margaret Rightmire	John Sutherland
Melanie Laasch	Sonia Nadal	Kate Robertson	Elias Svensson
Teagan Lamon	& Fernando Martinez	Stephan Rochford	William Taylor
Richard Larson	Calvin Nania	& Jessica Peterson	Holly Timerson
& Jacqui Wengert	Nature Nuts Environmental	Linda Roesma	Markus Ullrich
Joshua Hansen Lashley	Club	Zachary Root	Natasja Van Kessel
Bill Laurel	Judy Nelson	Holly Rua-Doorman	Liselotte Van Wickeren
William Lawrence	Louise Nepomuceno	Bret Rycroft	Jourdan Kayla Vanderlip
Le Grele	Julie Kijan Ngimat	Ryland Heights Elementary	Tara Vandertoorn
Cheryl Lechtanski	Justin Nies	Bree Saffell	Emmy Vaughn
Anita Levin	Rachel Northcutt	Andre Salz	Abrielle Vintigan
Myra Lewontin	Katy Norwood	Mrs. Sammons' 6th	Christine Virtue
Terry Little	Eva Nsereko	Grade Rescuers	Roberta & Mimmo Volta
Robbie Lofland	Steve Oaks	Marilee Sarlitto	Miss Warren's Earth/Space
Katherine Long	Sara Obeiter	Eva Scarano	Science Class
Laura Longacre	Mike Olinger	Marilyn Schlosser	Theodore Weber
Shelley Low	Jim & Kim Orris	Ruth Schmidig	Kimberly Weidman
Shelby Lowery	The Parks At Chehaw	Barbara & Phil Schneider	Mrs. Weinstein's Third
Lauren Maggiore	Parole/SOCN	Koshin Schomberg	Grade Class
Kelvin Magoon	Austin & Jeremy Patsy	Paula Schoolcraft	Anita Weissberg
Olivia Marcenko	Michelle Pesce	Tara Scott	Debra Wekstein
Colleen Markham	Kari Peterson	Stefano Sestili	Kim Whitney
Kristy Marti	Susan Petitti	Raji Sethi	Bette Williams
Joelyn Martinez	Jennifer & Steve Petracek	Megan Shearer	Sarah Williams
Eli Mason	Cheryl Petyo	Rich Shegogue	John & Sanne Williamson
Curt Matlin	Clay Pfeifler	Mrs. Siegriest's MWF	Anne Wilson
Kim McGowan	Kimberly Phillips	AM Class	Andy & Betsy Witthohn
Tom Miley	Alex & Haley Pirio	Mrs. Siegriest's MWF	Richard Wolfheim
Helen Milkovich	James Plimmer	PM Class	World Educational
Josephine Miller	Anne Pollok	Lauren & Mark Sherwood	Resource
Rachel Minch	Beth B. Pollock	Jennifer Simkin	Howard Wu
Dennis Minty	& Shelly Appel	Emily Slade	The Younger Family
& Antje Springmann	Charlotte Powell	Kate Smith	
Terri Mitchell	Josh & Susan Powers	Paul Smyser	Beth Ann & Scott
Sophie Moll	Adriana Puig	Margaret Souby	
Elaine Montgomery	Guny Quentim-Clééa	Jamie L. Spencer	





# No Deposit...

# ...No Return

Neil Osborne

**Now is your chance to make a failsafe investment toward the future of sea turtles.**

Caribbean Conservation Corporation announces the launch of an endowment challenge campaign that allows you to double your investment! CCC's Board of Directors has generously pledged to match, dollar for dollar, every endowment contribution made by CCC's members and supporters. This is an unprecedented opportunity for you to help CCC build a sustaining source of funding to support sea turtle research and conservation well into the future.

Our goal is to raise at least \$5 million over the next three years. We're asking CCC members to make a contribution this year toward the endowment, or phase your gift over the next three years. Either way, your entire gift or pledge will be matched by CCC's Board.

It is estimated that sea turtle populations have diminished to less than ten percent of their levels one hundred years ago. CCC's mission is to protect and restore sea turtle populations so these magnificent creatures remain a wild and thriving part of the marine world. To do that, CCC needs the long-term resources of an endowment to sustain scientific discovery and conservation programs. At Tortuguero, Costa Rica, CCC's long-term conservation program helped increase green turtle nesting by over 400% since the 1970s. The same sort of success can be achieved with other turtle populations, if we have the necessary resources. If you've been thinking about making a lasting gift in support of sea turtle conservation, now is the time!

To discuss this exciting opportunity, please contact David Godfrey, CCC Executive Director, at (352) 373-6441 or by email at [david@cccturtle.org](mailto:david@cccturtle.org).

**CARIBBEAN**



**CONSERVATION**  
CORPORATION

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