

Reaching Out around the World

2007 SWOT Outreach Grants

One of the most successful aspects of the SWOT initiative has been the implementation of a small fund for grants to organizations wishing to incorporate *SWOT Report* into outreach efforts in communities around the world. For the second consecutive year, these grant recipients have sparked inspiration not only in their target audiences, but also in the editorial team of *SWOT Report*, which oversees the grants. We thank you for your efforts.



A ranger for the Nicaraguan Ministry of Environment holds eggs from the turtle nests damaged by poachers. © KIM WILLIAMS-GUILLEN / PASO PACIFICO

Paso Pacífico — Nicaragua

Paso Pacífico's sea turtle outreach and education campaign in San Juan del Sur, Rivas, Nicaragua, is aimed at communities surrounding the La Flor Wildlife Refuge, an important olive ridley and leatherback nesting ground. Paso Pacifico strives to increase local appreciation for sea turtles and their environment and to enhance cooperation among La Flor reserve managers for the benefit of the sea turtles and sustainable tourism. With SWOT Outreach Grant funds, workshops were held in the communities of La Tortuga, Ostional, and Escaemequita, sharing lessons from volumes I and II of *SWOT Report*, to emphasize the importance of community involvement. Sixty-five participants, including fishers and youth from the community, were introduced to the sea turtle species of the region and the conservation challenges they face. Individual meetings to explain the campaign were held with community leaders, members of the municipal government, and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Environment. Paso Pacifico plans to continue efforts to promote coastal and marine conservation through various ecotourism, educational, and community-led turtle monitoring programs.

Sea Turtle Conservation Project — Lebanon

In a country where recent war has complicated daily life, Mona Khalil has been successful in creating the Sea Turtle Conservation Project in south Lebanon. The program raises awareness and helps to protect the sea turtle nesting beach of El Mansouri-El Koliala. Mona's SWOT Outreach project was targeted at volunteers on the beach. Initially, students from other regions of the country were enlisted to help protect the nesting beaches, but because of the recent war, they were unable to take part. Tourists on seaside holidays and soldiers stationed on the beach, however, were available and willing to lend a hand in monitoring and cleaning up the beach. Local teachers began to disseminate conservation information from sources



Soldiers stationed at El Mansouri-El Koliala beach engage in conservation efforts. © MONA KHALIL

such as *SWOT Report, Vol. II*—which featured an article by Khalil about El Mansouri-El Koliala—to their students and communities, raising awareness about the importance of protecting the nesting beach. Several groups of special needs children were also given the opportunity to assist in the release of sea turtle hatchlings. Despite rigorous challenges, Khalil's relentless effort has increased the conservation consciousness of nearby communities, government authorities, and foreign visitors, mitigating the hazards to turtles in their nesting habitat.



The sea turtle tagging crew on Gielop Island, Ulithi Atoll, finds an entertaining way to demonstrate how to measure a turtle's carapace. © OCEANIC SOCIETY

Oceanic Society — Micronesia

The Ulithi Sea Turtle Conservation Project, conducted through the Oceanic Society, is located on Falalop Island, Ulithi Atoll, Yap, Micronesia. With SWOT Outreach Grant funds, sea turtle education programs for the local community and visiting ecotourists were enhanced by educational materials from *SWOT Report*. Educational outreach focused on regional sea turtle conservation activities that were created for teachers, students, and community leaders on Falalop Island. As a means of expanding outreach efforts, a Sea Turtle Information Workshop was held for educators from the whole of Yap state, attracting more than 30 participants, who received copies of *SWOT Report* and educational supplies to add to their schools' libraries. Funds from SWOT supported educational exchanges between ecotourists and community members employed by the sea turtle project. The SWOT grant, in combination with ecotourist donations, also facilitated a Sea Turtle Scholarship awarded to an outstanding Ulithi student to cover high school tuition fees. These programs have generated a greater commitment to the efforts of the local population involved in sea turtle conservation.

ProTECTOR — Honduras

Using the SWOT Outreach Grant, Protective Turtle Ecology Center for Training, Outreach and Research (ProTECTOR) conducted two workshops at the Reef House Resort on the island of Roatan in Honduras. The workshops were designed to facilitate positive change among indigenous fishers of the Bay Islands. Workshop attendees, who varied in age from schoolchildren to retired fishers, learned to understand the critical links between tourism and marine conservation. Group discussions and open forums were held to discuss alternatives to harvesting turtles and their eggs as a source of income. The workshops resulted in the development of a plan for a conservation-based craft market that will combine community development, tourism interest, and conservation of sea turtles and the sea. Furthermore, a grassroots movement was launched among the attendees to facilitate a change from "poachers to ProTECTORs" within many communities.



Longtime fisher Gustav Bodden reads through *SWOT Report* for advice on sea turtle conservation at the first Fishermen's Conservation Workshop held in Oak Ridge on the island of Roatan in Honduras. © ProTECTOR



Puppets such as this Chennai fisherman and sea turtle are used to educate children about marine conservation issues. © MADRAS CROCODILE BANK TRUST

Madras Crocodile Bank Trust — India

The coast of Chennai in southern India has been a historically important nesting area for sea turtles. Recognizing the importance of educating and sensitizing local Chennai schoolchildren, the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT) seeks to integrate those children into its Awareness Programs for Conservation of Sea Turtles. Using funds from its SWOT Outreach Grant, MCBT inaugurated its educational program at Bhuvana Krishnan Matriculation Higher Secondary School in the state of Tamil Nadu. There, nearly 200 children, ages 12 to 15, and their teachers enjoyed MCBT's puppet theater, poster exhibition, and slideshow about conservation of Chennai's olive ridley turtles. The bank plans to extend its program to several local schools in the coming months, contributing copies of *SWOT Report* to each school's library.

Visit www.SeaTurtleStatus.org to apply for a 2008 SWOT Outreach Grant!