Acting Globally
SWOT Small Grants 2018

Since 2006, SWOT’s small grants have helped field-based partners around the world to realize their research and conservation goals. To date, 79 grants have been awarded to 56 applicants in more than 40 countries and territories for work addressing three key themes: (a) networking and capacity building, (b) science, and (c) education and outreach. The following are brief updates from our 2018 grantees. Visit www.SeaTurtleStatus.org to apply for a 2019 SWOT small grant!

JURADÓ, COLOMBIA
Fundación Neotropical

The community of Juradó lies along the Pacific coast of Colombia near the border with Panama. The extremely biodiverse area contains sandy and rocky beaches, rainforests, mangroves, and marshes that are poorly studied as a result of 50 years of armed conflict. Juradó’s leatherback and hawksbill turtle populations face many human-generated threats, including egg consumption and predation by feral dogs. Using a 2018 SWOT grant, Fundación Neotropical will launch a program to educate local community members and to engage them in sea turtle conservation efforts. Activities will include workshops, beach cleanups, beach monitoring, and mural paintings with local children.

PEARL CAYS, NICARAGUA
Cynthia J. Lagueux and Cathi L. Campbell

The Pearl Cays lie along the central coast of Caribbean Nicaragua and are an important developmental and nesting habitat for hawksbills. Fishers often capture turtles intentionally or as bycatch. This 2018 SWOT grant will be used to support a Fisher-to-Fisher program that will enable a local fisher, William McCoy, to conduct community outreach that will reduce the killing of sea turtles. This interaction with local fishers aids in raising awareness of the importance of sea turtles in maintaining healthy marine ecosystems. It also encourages fishers to donate captured turtles so that they may be tagged and released.

NEW YORK, USA
Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation (RFMRP)

RFMRP is the primary response team for sea turtle rescue in New York, U.S.A., and it is the state’s only facility permitted to rehabilitate animals. The team responds to the second highest amount of cold stuns affecting Kemp’s ridleys, greens, and loggerheads in the U.S. Atlantic. A 2018 SWOT grant will be used to expand the lecture series and to implement a Citizen Science Response Program. Thirty-one citizen scientists have been recruited to patrol beaches daily during the cold stun season and to increase rescues, limit the time that animals are exposed to extreme conditions, and increase the chances for successful rehabilitation.

LIBREVILLE, GABON
Aventures Sans Frontières

The sea turtle nesting beaches near Gabon’s capital city, Libreville, are a popular recreation destination for the city’s inhabitants. Visitors leave behind plastic waste that can become a hindrance to nesting females, and extensive coastal development creates pockets of wastewater that can be deadly to hatchlings. Aventures Sans Frontières will use a 2018 SWOT grant to raise awareness about sea turtles among coastal residents through programs within four local schools and with beachgoers and residents living near the most heavily trafficked beaches. The program will also implement beach cleanups and hatching rescue and release efforts.

JORH, MALAYSIA
Harris Wei-Khang Heng

The Sibu-Tinggi Archipelago in Johor, Malaysia, hosts poorly known populations of foraging green and hawksbill sea turtles on the extensive seagrass meadows in its subtidal zones. Those unique habitats are also very important for dugongs. Harris Heng from the University of Malaya will use a 2018 SWOT grant to conduct surveys and spatial ecology studies that will require an unmanned aerial vehicle. SWOT support will help purchase equipment and cover travel costs to reach the remote archipelago. Results of the work will be used to encourage the expansion of conservation efforts beyond nesting beaches.

NORTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA
Manengkel Solidaritas

The village of Ranowang Dua in North Sulawesi consists of only four families totaling about 20 people, but the area is a very important nesting habitat for five sea turtle species. Turtle meat consumption is an essential part of traditional ceremonies and is the greatest threat to the animals. The nongovernmental organization Manengkel Solidaritas will use its 2018 SWOT grant to assist local villagers (a) in collecting data with the objective of better understanding turtle populations and (b) in fostering a behavioral change away from sea turtle consumption. Data will also be used by Manengkel Solidaritas to potentially verify loggerhead nesting in Indonesia.

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