

VELADOR

Science-Based Sea Turtle Conservation Since 1959

Issue 4, 2021

Sisterhood and sea turtles



Sisters Keithlynn and Daneycha Rankin Abraham pose together before going out on nighttime turtle patrol in Tortuguero.

Editors Note: Portions of this article were adapted from a news story that appeared in the Costa Rican publication, *El Colectivo 506*.

Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC) has been working for over 60 years in partnership with the community of Tortuguero, Costa Rica, to protect

one of the most important sea turtle populations in the world. Being a US-based organization, STC is keenly aware that the long-term future of this nesting site depends on strong support and leadership from local residents. With that goal in mind, for many years STC has placed great

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Keithlynn Rankin with a nesting olive ridley turtle.

emphasis on recruiting and involving local youth in our work. Members of the Rankin family have participated in STC's work as paid staff or volunteers since Archie Carr launched the Tortuguero program in the 1950s. This story features the latest generation of Rankin family members, three sisters, who represent the future of sea turtle conservation in Costa Rica and beyond.

For some people in the coastal communities of Costa Rica, a passion for conservation is born early. Sisters Keithlyn, Hazel and Daneycha Rankin Abraham (23, 20 and 13 years old, respectively) were born in Tortuguero, on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, and share a passion for sea turtles. All three have been part of STC's Youth Research Assistant Program and remain involved to this day.

Keithlyn, 23, is studying marine biology at the Universidad Nacional. She says of her experience with STC, "When I was part of the Youth Program, it was a way to do something different, and to learn about sea turtles and their environment. It was also a space to acquire skills in the field. My brother and cousin were in the program before me, and that influenced me. I made the decision to participate as soon as I had the opportunity because I



The Rankin sisters jump with joy to express their enthusiasm about protecting sea turtles in Tortuguero.

VELADOR {bel.a.dor}

In Caribbean cultures, *Velador* translates as "one who stands vigil" —referring to turtle hunters who waited at night for turtles to come ashore. STC claims this title for its newsletter, and around the world 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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Hazel Rankin with a green turtle in Tortuguero.

thought it seemed cool and interesting. During each patrol, my desire to learn more about nature and how animals develop—especially sea turtles—grew. I learned about teamwork, discipline, and valuing what nature gives us. I also learned that I wanted to be a marine biologist to continue helping turtles. As a family, we learned to be the best inhabitants of the planet, even if it sounds very romantic. STC’s Youth Program buildt character and taught us how to take care of our house and animals. It taught us to be more aware.”

Hazel, 20 years old, now works for STC as the Visitor Center Coordinador in Tortuguero. She says of her experience, “I got curious about participating in the program when I saw that my older sister was going to the station a lot. I went with her once, and I liked it so much that I signed up. Later, the organization hired me as a coordinator at the Visitor Center. Some nights, I still go out on patrol. I can do things that others can’t, like work with turtles at night. Once we saved a turtle when we were out on patrol. We were walking with another STC participant in front of the airport, and I fell into a hole. I realized that something was moving. It turned out to be a turtle that had been covered with seaweed from the beach and logs; most likely, looters had hidden it there after they saw us coming. We managed to get her out of the hole, and she went out to sea. I felt very happy. My parents have been local guides for years. They are very happy that the three of us are part of this program, because they

know that we learn a lot.”

Daneycha, 13, is in the 9th grade. She doesn’t want to be left behind. “For me, the Youth Assistants Program is an opportunity to meet people from other countries and to do environmental activities to improve the world. I decided to be part of the program because I was inspired by my sisters: I watched them going out on patrol and meeting new people. I remember the day of my first patrol, in 2019. It was a very special night for me because it was the start of my time with the program, and we also worked with a hawksbill turtle. I was very lucky, because they are difficult to see here in Tortuguero. At my house, thanks to the program, everyone has learned to separate organic food from plastics. We don’t use plastic bags at my house anymore, because they affect sea turtles. We also use less water.



Daneycha Rankin

I would recommend that other young people join the STC or other programs because it is a way of trying to help, and to reduce what we produce. I have learned that I live in a place where it is very important to understand the cycle of turtles, to be able to live with them, and later to continue helping the environment. I also learned that in the future I have to put all my effort into the things I want to do, because nothing happens by itself.”

To learn more about opportunities to volunteer with STC in Tortuguero, visit:

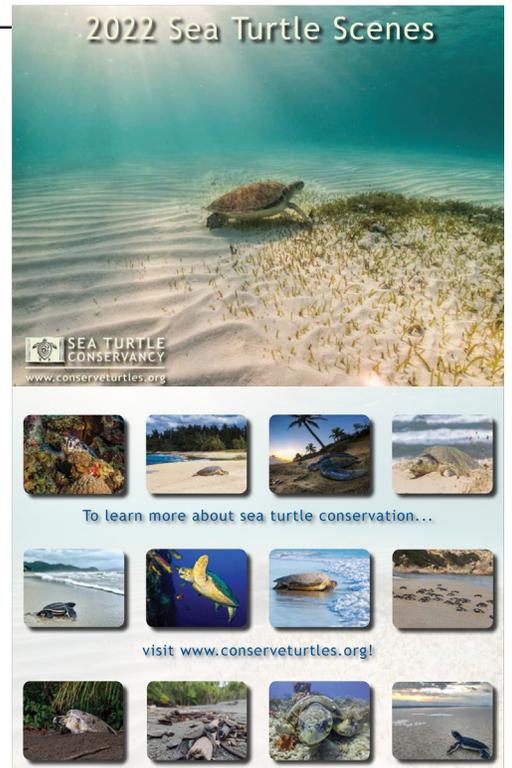
conserveturtles.org/green-turtle-eco-volunteer-program

Holiday Gift Guide

A.



B.



C.



D.



E.



F.



G.



A. 2021 Holiday Ornament - featuring artwork by Peggy Cavanaugh. Engraved on back. **\$9.95**

B. 2022 Sea Turtle Scenes Calendar - 11" x 17" (open) wall calendar features some of STC's favorite sea turtle scenes taken by talented photographers from around the world. **\$14.95**

C. Replica Sea Turtle License Plate - mock version of Florida's sea turtle speciality plate for the front of your car. Metal, size of a standard American license plate. **\$12.95**

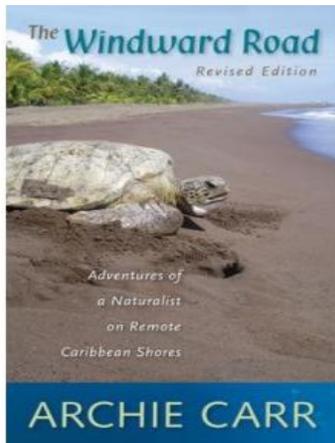
D. Sea Turtle Enamel Pin - A cute 1 1/4" die struck hard enamel sea turtle pin by Jenipher Lyn. **\$9.99**

E. Sea Turtle Wood Bead Bracelet - Stylish green sea turtle stretch bracelet with wood beads by Tortuga Moon. US Shipping Only. **\$9.95**

F. 2021 Tour de Turtles Shirt - Bella Canvas Tee in Mint Green, made of 100% cotton, available in adult sizes SM, MD, LG, XL and XXL as well as youth sizes MD and LG. **\$24.95**

G. Aqua Turtle Sea Turtle T-shirt - Shirt by Tortuga Moon, features STC's logo on the sleeve. Available in Neon Orange and comes in adult sizes S - XXL. 100% lightweight cotton. US shipping only. **\$26.95**

Visit conserveturtles.org/shop to shop for these items and other great turtle gear!

H.**I.****J.****K.****L.****M.****ARCHIE CARR****N.****O.**

H. Sea Turtle Notecards - Green, Loggerhead, Leatherback and Kemp's Ridley turtles on the front. Includes 8 assorted cards and envelopes. Cards measure 3.5" X 5". **\$14.95**

I. White Moon Sea Turtle T-shirt - Shirt by Tortuga Moon, features STC's logo on the sleeve. Available in Crunch Berry and comes in adult sizes S - XXL. 100% lightweight cotton. US shipping only. **\$26.95**

J. Sea Turtle Mask - Washable and Reusable Personal Masks with Elastic Ear Loops and Filter Pocket. Adult sized. **\$9.95**

K. STC Logo Baseball Cap - Sea Turtle Conservancy soft baseball cap with adjustable cloth strap. Has the STC turtle logo on the front and "Sea Turtle Conservancy" on the back. **\$24.95**

L. Sea Turtle Necklace - Sea turtle necklace by Tortuga Moon. Available in a green or white turtle with an adjustable sliding knot necklace. US shipping only. **\$9.95**

M. The Windward Road - by Dr. Archie Carr. This 2013 paperback edition includes a foreward by STC Executive Director David Godfrey. **\$19.95**

N. STC Turtle Logo Tote - Reusable tote bag available in jade or black (13" x 13" x 5") **\$7.50**

O. Sea Turtle Purple Velvet Glass Ornament - Featuring a custom printed sea turtle glass ornament with turquoise colored glittered border by Brenda Schodt. **\$19.95**

Visit conserveturtles.org/shop to shop for these items and other great turtle gear!

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endangeredcosmetics.com



Seaqual Towel
 1888mills
bedbathandbeyond.com



Flippery When Wet Soaps
 Benefitting the Lisa Randgaard Fund at STC
LoveIntoSustainedAction.com

Giving Tuesday 2021

Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC) is hoping all of its supporters will participate in this year's Giving Tuesday Campaign, which seeks to raise funds to support a health assessment of Bermuda's sea turtles. Though not as well-known as Black Friday or Cyber Monday, Giving Tuesday, which occurs the Tuesday after Thanksgiving (November 30 this year), is one day when everyone can join together to make a huge difference.

For Giving Tuesday last year, STC supporters raised more than \$50,000 for STC's Inwater Research Project in the Gulf of Mexico. STC has set its sights even higher this year, and we are confident we can reach our goal of \$70,000 thanks to generous pledges from STC's Board of Directors to match every dollar donated (up to \$35,000).

Through the Bermuda Turtle Project (BTP), for over 50 years Sea Turtle Conservancy and its partners in Bermuda have been monitoring juvenile sea turtles in their marine environment to track how these animals are doing at a critical life stage. The BTP is unique because it allows for the study of sea turtles in their developmental habitat – a place where young sea turtles from around the Atlantic and Caribbean congregate to grow up.



BTP participants measure juvenile green turtles.

Over the last several years, the BTP has observed an ecological calamity unfolding in Bermuda that has resulted in a massive die-off of seagrasses—the main food source for juvenile green turtles. As a result, sea turtles are disappearing from Bermuda at an alarming pace, and many of those remaining appear to be in very poor health. Expanded research and conservation efforts are needed urgently to fully

understand and respond to the complicated factors at work. The ecological changes in Bermuda almost certainly can be traced to water quality degradation associated with nutrient runoff from the island, combined with rising ocean temperatures and disturbance by human activities.



STC's Dan Evans receives assistance organizing samples.

Through this year's Giving Tuesday campaign, STC is raising funding to support a health assessment of Bermuda's sea turtles, which will include a comparison with healthy turtle populations in Florida. This baseline information will allow us to better understand how the seagrass die-off is impacting Bermuda's turtles so we can best address this problem in Bermuda. STC also needs funding to conduct vessel-based surveys around Bermuda to identify new areas where the turtles may be congregating in search of suitable food sources.

Finally, STC will use funding from Giving Tuesday to expand public awareness about the ways human activities—even in a place as remote and seemingly pristine as Bermuda—can threaten sea turtles and the entire marine ecosystem. The calamity unfolding in Bermuda has STC's full attention, and we need our supporters to contribute this Giving Tuesday. 🌊

Help support STC's Giving Tuesday Fundraiser by donating in one of three ways:

1. Online at conserveturtles.org/GivingTuesday or facebook.com/conserveturtles
2. Call 352-373-6441 with your credit card info
3. Mail a check with "Giving Tuesday" in the subject line. All checks received with "Giving Tuesday" in the subject line will count towards the campaign, even if received after November 30.



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With your tax-deductible donation of \$56 or more, you are making a direct difference in the lives of sea turtles! Sea Turtle Conservancy will send gift recipients a special folder with a personalized adoption certificate, Sea Turtle Conservation Guide, window cling, sea turtle sticker, bookmark, hatchling magnet, one-year subscription to STC's newsletter, and a gift of your choice (turtle plushie, ornament or calendar). Please order by **Dec. 10, 2021** to ensure your order is shipped by Christmas.



To adopt a turtle, visit [conserveturtles.org/adopt-a-turtle](https://www.conserveturtles.org/adopt-a-turtle)