

**ASOCIACION WIDECAST**  
**Sea Turtle Conservation Project**  
**2008 Nesting Season**

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**WIDECAST**

*Red para la Conservación de las Tortugas  
Marinas en el Gran Caribe*

**Volunteer Program**  
**(Research Assistant Position)**

The Sea Turtle Conservation Program of the South Caribbean of Costa Rica is pleased to announce that will join WIDECAST Costa Rica in August 2007. After many great years working along Asociation ANAI, we will leave our friends at ANAI, and become part of the WIDECAST network. WIDECAST is a non-profit organization that supports local sea turtle conservation initiatives in most states and countries of the Caribbean region promoting cooperation between all nations. For over two decades WIDECAST has counted with the support from National Coordinators in more than 30 nations and territories in the Caribbean, and worked close with key stakeholders at a governmental and non-governmental level (including scientists, conservationists, resource managers, educators, etc.), to promote regional capacity and assist with the design and implementation of scientifically sound sea turtle management programs at local, national and regional (international) levels.

Our program will continue to support the sea turtle projects at Gandoca, Playa Negra/Cahuita, Tuba Creek, Peninsula de Osa and Ostional beaches.

**Research Assistant Positions**

**Asociación** WIDECAST was working as volunteer structure under WIDECAST Program since 1997 after the second Central America sea turtle conservation workshop in Tortuguero, now like independent organization is working for the conservation and sustainable development of the coastal regions of Costa Rica such north and south Pacific and south Caribbean is This last Region that represents around 5% of the national territory is one of the biologically richest areas of the planet with over 2% of the entire world's biodiversity. With Costa Rica's largest Native Indian population, English speaking Caribbean Blacks, and campesinos, its cultural heritage is equally rich.

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Incorporated under the Costa Rican law, Asociación WIDECAS is an independent organization with its own board of Directors. WIDECAS formal membership includes an eleven Costaricans like scientists, representants of local communities, professionals and conservationists. WIDECAS has put into practice a strategy that links conservation and sustainable development through activities that directly benefit both the people and the environment. The focus has been on establishing the conditions for a self-sustaining process involving work in the broad areas of conservation, economic development, training and education, organization, and advocacy.

Since 1986, theWIDECAS Marine Program has been working to protect the Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) nesting population at Gandoca beach in the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge. The main objective of the project is to protect the nests from human poachers and more recently from the erosion of the beach. Before the project began, the poaching rate was over 95%, but with the presence of our night patrols and the hatcheries on the beach the survival rate has increased to over 90% last season.

The nesting season runs from the end of February through to the half of August in Gandoca and the end of October in Cahuita each year. The peak nesting period for the Leatherback Sea Turtles is April/May with the first hatchling turtles emerging from mid May through to the end of the season, while the peak season for Hawksbill Sea Turtles is July/August with hatchlings emerging from mid August. The number of adult female Leatherbacks arriving on the beach drops from June until the end of July when they stop to come. For Hawksbills the drop in numbers starts in September until the end of October when there are no more nesting females.

Each season, as part of the conservation effort, the project recruits volunteers, both national and international, to help in the research and conservation work. We also welcome schools to work on the project as part of the environmental education program of the organization. Moreover, each season there are offered a limited number of **Research Assistant Positions** to work at its Biological Field Station in Gandoca or Puerto Vargas beach.

### Research Assistant (RA)

Asociación WIDECAS offers a limited number of positions to work as a **Research Assistant (RA)** in its Sea Turtle Conservation Project. This job will be voluntary and no salaries or stipends will be paid in spite of that you will be considered part of the project staff and that you will have specific duties to carry out. WIDECAS will provide room and board at its Biological Field Station in Gandoca Beach and in the Locals Houses in the Gandoca Community in Cahuita National Park without any cost to all the RA's. However, each **RA** will be responsible for their own travel expenses to the project site in Costa Rica. Also, the **RA's** should cover other extra expenses like camera films, lodging, food, drinks and transportation to and from the project.

### Requirements

1. The **RA's** should be 20 years of age or older and in good physical condition.
2. Fluency in English and Spanish (optional) languages.
3. With educational background (undergraduates or graduates) in Biology, Marine Biology, Resource Conservation, Ecology, Environmental Education, Veterinarian Medicine, Wildlife Management, Oceanography, Zoology and/or experience in working with Sea Turtles.

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4. Willing to a firm commitment of a minimum of 10 weeks (more likely 3 months) or more in the project.
5. Interested in sharing his/her knowledge and to stimulate in the volunteers the interest for the protection and the conservation of the Sea Turtles.
6. To be a responsible, hard working, communicative, and enthusiastic person. Capable to live in very rustic and basic living conditions and under adverse climatic conditions. Usually it is very hot with 100% of humidity, frequent rain and very heavy sometimes. With lots of mosquitoes and/or sandflies plus the risk of Malaria and/or Dengue fever.
7. The **RA's** will be asked to pay an inscription fee of US\$ 35 and a deposit fee of US\$ 150 the latter which will be returned upon the completion of the agreed participation.

#### Duties

The **RA's** will be considered as part of the project staff and will have specific duties to carry out. However, its common duties will be of serving as a group leader in the teams of volunteers that patrol the beach at night in searching of nesting turtles and to be assured that all the activities of research and protection be carried out correctly. The **RA** will be responsible for tagging of turtles and for correctly recording data and research information for each turtle. These data include the measurements of the turtle shell as well as of the nest that she is making, numbers on the metal tags/PIT tags, number of eggs and location of the nest on the beach. Sometimes the nests should be recollected and relocated in a safer place on the beach or sent to one of the hatcheries where other volunteers in charge will make a new nest according to the previously taken measurements and the eggs should be placed inside in the same order as the turtle laid them. The number of eggs, the location of the nest inside the hatchery and the numbers of the turtle's metal tags/PIT tags (identification of the turtle) should be registered by the volunteers in charge of the hatchery at that time for further analysis of the data including the hatching success. The night patrols will be carried out in two shifts of four hours, one 8 p.m. to 12 midnight and the other one from 12 midnight to 4 a.m. As member of the project staff, the **RA's** will be asked some times to work longer hours than other volunteers.

Moreover, the **RA's** should work on their own respective and specific duties according to the positions they were assigned. Those positions and their duties are:

#### 1. Data Recorder

The duties of this position consist of updating each morning the Master Book according to the information collected at night by each patrol team on the beach. The record of these data should be carried out orderly, with clarity and without errors. Besides, this **RA** should clean the equipment utilized each night by the patrol teams and will make sure that it is complete and in good conditions. If some tools are missing from the backpack, the **RA** should ask it to the patrol leader that was in charge of that equipment for a reasonable explanation for that loss. Some used implements like gloves, plastic bags, disinfectant, and others should be replaced each morning.

#### 2. Volunteer Trainer

The duties of this position consist of the training of the new volunteers when they arrive to the project site. This training is about the protocol of the project and the job to follow on the beach during the night patrol. Also, it is about what each volunteer should do being at the project. The

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training will be theoretical as well as practical on the beach using all equipment available. Besides, the Trainer will be in charge of setting up the schedule or the roles of jobs for each night and should try to rotate all the staff and volunteers in the different shifts and sectors that exist. These roles of job should be delivered to the General Assistant for their respective distribution. Also, the Trainer should maintain a registration of the volunteers and visitants to the project with its names, directions and time of stay and collect the Evaluations from each volunteer upon finalizing its participation.

### **3. Hatchery Control**

Usually, only two hatcheries are built (Hatchery A and Hatchery B) in Gandoca Beach and the one in Cahuita will only be started in May, so only two **RA's** in Gandoca and one in Cahuita will be in charge of these positions. Their duties will be, primarily to attend the construction of the Hatcheries. With the aid of the local staff and/or project coordinator, the **RA's** will have to select the adequate place on the beach to locate the hatcheries. Also they will have to sift and to disinfect the sand in the hatchery and to raise the fences around it. By daily visits every morning, the **RA's** should ensure the cleanliness and the order inside the hatcheries and that all the equipment needed is complete and working perfectly. Also, they should assure that the research data was taken correctly day to day. For this they should train all new volunteers on the common works at the hatcheries. The **RA's** will switch roles to carry out the training of the volunteers the day after their arrival. They should be assured that the volunteers know perfectly how to handle and relocate the nests inside the hatchery and how to handle and to release hatchlings once they hatch. They should update the Master Book of Hatcheries every day with the information recorded by the volunteers.

### **4. General Assistant**

The main duty will be to help the other **RA's** in their jobs and to cover their positions in case someone gets ill or should leave the project for an important reason. This **RA** should distribute the roles of jobs to the houses of the families that are lodging volunteers (only in Gandoca), and build the metallic baskets for the individual protection of each nest in the hatcheries against flies and other animals. All **RA's** together have to coordinate and to carry out group activities for the volunteers like sports, tours, games, meetings and others.

### **Safety and Behavior**

All **RA's**, as patrol leaders, are responsible for the security and welfare of each volunteer in their night patrols and of their behavior on the beach. If any volunteer runs some risk or suffers some accident while patrolling the beach, this person will be attended immediately. Besides, if someone not follow the indications on how to behave on the beach or do something irresponsible they will be sent back to the Station of the Project.

Moreover, all **RA's** should collaborate with the maintenance of the Station being assured that the basic services work correctly.

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#### Application

The RA's will be selected to participate in one of the two established periods of the project. **The first one from February 15 till May 15, and the second one from May 15 till August 15, the 2006.**

To apply, you should comply with the requirements noted previously and to send your Curriculum Vitae (R  sume) which should include the place and date of birth, studies and job or voluntary experience at least for the last two years, directions of residence, electronic mail and telephone or fax. Besides, you should send us an Intention Letter that includes the position you think you would be best suited for or you think you would carry out better and the period and project you will be able to participate. You should also include some references with their email address. Your application should reach us before the start of December 2007. All the applicants should have their own Personal Insurance Policy for Medical Expenses.

The selected applicants will be informed in the course of December 2007 and they should confirm their participation before the first week of January and to send their arrival information to Costa Rica like the date, hour, number of flight and airline as soon as possible. Usually RA's do not need a special visa to enter Costa Rica. Just presenting your passport and entering like a tourist will let you get into the country for three months and is extensible. To get an extension you should leave Costa Rica for two nights (The Panamanian border is close by). This is not covered by the project but we can give you information about where to go.

*The law in Costa Rica (Decreto Ejecutivo 32443-MINAE) demands that every volunteer working in Protected Areas (all places where we have conservation projects are Protected Areas) have a health insurance. If MINAE (the costarican ministry for environment and energy) finds out that there are volunteers working without an insurance they will close down the project.*

*Since we don't provide an insurance volunteers that want to work in our projects have to get one for themselves (or one through your organization). We have a registration form (kept at the project place) where every volunteer needs to give there insurance company and policy number. If volunteers can not give these details we will have to refuse them the access to our project.*

#### What to bring?

- Sheet sleeping bag, sheets or blankets
- Dark colored lightweight cotton or synthetic clothing for patrolling.
- Dark colored raincoat or poncho
- Dark colored lightweight shoes for patrolling (they will get wet).
- Garden or working gloves
- Flashlight and spare batteries
- Alarm clock.
- Mosquito net and repellent.
- Basic First Aid Kit, especially for mosquito bites.

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- Photo Camera, music, Books to read, and swim suit.
- Snorkel and hiking gears.

For more information please contact the Subdirector of the program at the address below, preferably by electronic mail.

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**Please mark all applications "Research Assistant Position".**