

2024 Annual Report



Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) utilizes the collective effort of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) to save species.

The Sea Turtle SAFE Program contributes to the conservation of sea turtles by utilizing the collective resources (expertise, human capital, material, and financial support) of the AZA community to secure sustainable populations of all sea turtle species.

Working professionals, researchers, conservation organizations, and volunteers stay connected on these projects through webinars, online meetings, and in-person conferences. With oversight from an Executive Committee, the Sea Turtle SAFE Program utilizes five committees to accomplish their conservation objectives:

1. Eastern Pacific Leatherback
2. Kemp's Ridley
3. Stranding and Rehabilitation
4. Communication
5. Finance



Gladys Porter Zoo

Sea Turtle SAFE focuses on two critically endangered populations:

Kemp's Ridley & Eastern Pacific Leatherback

SWOT Small Grants Program

Each year, the Sea Turtle SAFE Program, in partnership with the State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWOT), donates \$15,000 to fund small grant opportunities that focus on the Kemp's ridley or Eastern Pacific Leatherback. Funds are awarded each fall for research and educational projects that extend into the following year. Here are the projects that were funded in 2023 and conducted in 2024. For more information on funded projects, click: [SWOT](#).

Recipients:

USA: SC Dept of Natural Resources, Sea Turtle, Inc., Gladys Porter Zoo (for work in Mexico)

Mexico: César Paúl Ley- Quiñónez, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Campamento Tortuguero Ayotlcalli, GroBios, Elizabeth Labastida-Estrada, Centro ECOMAR- UAgro, Mildred Alpizar Quezada

Costa Rica: KUEMAR

Colombia: JUSTSEA Foundation



Provide by SWOT

2023 AZA-SAFE GRANTS BY THE NUMBERS

\$15,000 in grants given to
5 Kemp's ridley &
7 East Pacific leatherback projects

Capacity Building

10 workshops
(7 leatherback bycatch & 3 Kemp's Ridley entanglement)
165 participants
70 community members employed

Conservation Action

54 leatherback nests protected
1,762 hatchlings released
3 research questions answered

Outreach & Education

10 environmental education events
2,161 people reached
72 information resources distributed

Eastern Pacific Leatherback Committee

- SWOT small grants directly funded research and education in 7 projects
- Funding provided for Red Laúd OPO (Eastern Pacific Leatherback Conservation Network) to support small grants for field partners
- Adopt-A-Beach – continued to support the project at Playa Cabuyal in Costa Rica, and initiated a second project at Playa Ventura in Guerrero, Mexico



Kemp's Ridley Committee

- SWOT small grants directly funded research and education in 5 projects
- Funding support provided for PIT (passive integrated transponder) tagging projects on nesting beaches in Mexico
- Funding approved for a second printing of the “Soy Lora” children’s book in Spanish



Gladys Porter Zoo

Stranding and Rehabilitation Committee

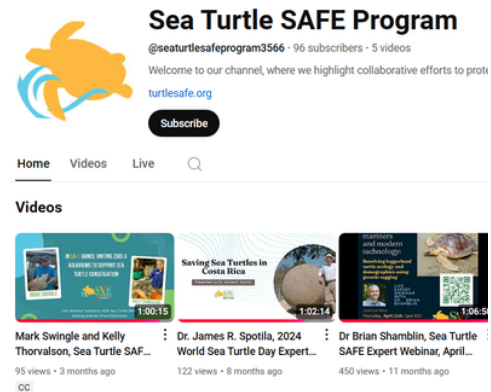
- Worked with colleagues that engage with recreational fishing interactions to develop initial plans for a workshop on the topic
- Continued to meet with US Fish and Wildlife and NOAA staff to learn more about research priorities
- Stayed engaged with Congress and policy as part of a nationwide advocacy effort to improve federal funding support for sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Communication Committee

- Promoted World Sea Turtle Day, June 16, by sharing out the Sea Turtle SAFE Toolkit and hosting live expert webinar
- Hosted three webinars in the Sea Turtle Speaker Series showcasing the work of Dr. Brian Shamblin, Dr. James Spotila, and Mark Swingle/Kelly Thorvalson
- Began development of Sea Turtle SAFE Website



Finance Committee

- Worked with federal agencies to monitor emergency response funding
- Developed a streamlined financial commitment process for Program Partners and Program Supporters



Team BEACH



With funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Sea Turtle SAFE Program, Team BEACH (Be A Change Maker) hosted an interactive workshop at the 2024 International Sea Turtle Symposium in Pattaya, Thailand. The workshop focused on the design, implementation and evaluation of behavior change strategies to improve sea turtle conservation outcomes. This workshop:

- Hosted 42 participants
- Had 14 countries represented
- Had 13 sea turtle conservation practitioners sponsored



To learn more, visit: <https://www.seaturtlestatus.org/team-beach>

Program Partners



Mystic Aquarium

- Adventure Aquarium
- Aquarium of the Pacific
- Audubon Nature Institute
- Dallas Zoo
- Gladys Porter Zoo
- Kansas City Zoo & Aquarium
- Mystic Aquarium
- National Aquarium
- New England Aquarium
- North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island
- OdySea Aquarium
- Remote Ecologist, Inc.
- SEA LIFE Arizona Aquarium
- South Carolina Aquarium
- Texas State Aquarium
- The Florida Aquarium
- The Maritime Aquarium
- Topeka Zoo & Conservation Center
- Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center



New England Aquarium

Interested in becoming a Sea Turtle SAFE Program Partner or Supporter? Reach out to Program Leader, Kelly Thorvalson: kthorvalson@scaquarium.org