

## **Leatherback Nesting Season: Research Assistants**

The leatherback nesting season will begin next semester. We will begin morning monitoring March 1, 2010 and night patrols will begin on April 1, 2010 and run through July 14, 2010. Surveys are conducted nightly on foot from 8 pm until 6 am on our two main leatherback nesting beaches, North Friars and Cayon to Keys. Each female leatherback will undergo a health assessment each time she visits the beach during nesting season and each nest will be excavated three days post first emergence.

Applicants for the position of sea turtle research assistant can be either from the island or off-island; however only off-island individuals who are at least 25 years of age will be considered for the position. This clause does not apply to local individuals who are currently living on island and have an automobile. Additionally, as outlined in the position description, volunteers will be expected to keep up a six night per week schedule if they are not students and at least two nights per week if they are students. Sea turtle research assistants must be organized and capable of processing their projects on this schedule or they will be dismissed. There will be no exceptions. A maximum of 10 individuals will be chosen for these positions from the island following an interview process. If you are not chosen, your fee will be put toward one leatherback nightwalk during the season, which will be scheduled for you.

Only individuals selected as sea turtle research assistants will be involved in the physical exam process, tagging, nest relocation, etc. The main nesting beaches will not be accessible to the public from 8 pm until 6 am during the nesting season as an ecotour program will be in place. Violators will be subject to a 5,000EC fine and jail time. The application fee paid will enable you to view a nesting turtle legally at a discounted fee. If you are chosen as a sea turtle research assistant a portion of your fee will go towards your project polo and t-shirt to be worn on the beach during work activities. Successful applicants from off-island will be provided housing and access to the Sea Turtle Project vehicle.

Sea turtle research assistants who will be tagging and leading groups must be able to answer basic questions regarding all of the nesting species in St. Kitts, their natural history, and biology. They must also be familiar with appropriate locations for blood draws; how to process samples; organize a field kit; and many other responsibilities. Sea turtle research assistants must be able to work in a diverse group and be adaptable to a variety of field situations. This could be tagging in a torrential downpour or preparing blood smears in dim light and wind. Volunteers must be fit and able to walk five miles in soft sand. Volunteers will be working six days per week with one day per week off if they are not currently enrolled in school. If a successful applicant is a student, he or she must work at least two nights per week. There will be no exceptions.

### **Leatherback Project Application Procedures:**

The following materials are due by January 15, 2010 if you wish to apply for the 2010 leatherback nesting season. If the materials are not received by the deadline you will not be considered for the 2010 season. Those individuals who have worked at least 40 hours with the project previously will not be expected to undergo this process and should contact me directly prior to January 31st.

1. Cover letter stating intent, why you are interested in this position, relevant experiences, any medical issues we should be aware of ,etc.
2. Curriculum vitae
3. letters of reference
4. 100 EC application fee (37US)

Preference will be given to individuals who have demonstrated a strong work ethic on the project through attendance at beach clean ups, sea turtle rehabilitation assistance, and public outreach.

Sea turtle research assistants will also have the opportunity to enroll in a Special Topics in Research (Leatherback Conservation Medicine) elective.

Application materials should be submitted electronically to [skturtles@gmail.com](mailto:skturtles@gmail.com) by the deadline. Please direct any questions concerning this process to Dr. Stewart via email at [skturtles@gmail.com](mailto:skturtles@gmail.com) or by phone at (869) 669-4268. Following submission of these materials you will be contacted for an interview.

For those of you who are considering applying for this position or if you would like to get more information on the project please see below the scheduled events for the month of November. Stay tuned for venues and times.

November 3, 2009 Presentation on Sea Turtle Project

November 4, 2009 Sea Turtle Conservation Journal Club

November 9, 2009 STRA Forum for potential applicants Question and Answer Forum

November 18, 2009 Sea Turtle Conservation Journal Club