

St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands East End Sea Turtle Conservation Project

Volunteer Opportunity!

Background: Since 1994, three small beaches on the east end of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, have been monitored for both green and hawksbill sea turtle nesting activity. Two of these beaches are within a natural area owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The monitoring project is a cooperative effort between TNC, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the USVI Division of Fish and Wildlife. More recently, the project has partnered with WIDECAS (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network) which provides valuable scientific assistance.

Timing: The project is seeking two full-time volunteers to work from 25 August – November 15, 2010.

Logistics: The beaches are remote and project housing is 45 minutes away by car. Access to the beaches is by foot only and the trails are steep and rocky. The patrol areas are separated by rocky headlands and radio communication between them is limited. Applicants must be able to walk long distances over difficult terrain while being comfortable working on their own in these remote areas. The public is not barred from the area at night, so you must be prepared to work around unannounced visitors.

Housing will be provided by a local hotelier so accommodations are shared but they include air conditioning for sleeping during hot mornings (big plus) and meals at the restaurant. Transportation to and from work and for basic errands, such as grocery shopping, is provided. A small refrigerator in your room will allow you to store food basics. All flashlights, headlamps (and the batteries they require), and technical equipment will be provided by the project.

Expectations: Volunteers will be expected to work 5 nights each week from 7pm to 6am (includes transportation time to and from the beach). Days off will vary each week, but will not be consecutive. Volunteers will patrol a single beach each night, but will be required to move back and forth between beaches to assist team members. The beaches range in length, with the longest foot patrol taking 15 minutes. The project expects to work with approximately 150+ green turtles and 30+ hawksbills. Volunteers will also monitor the small number of turtle nests found on a beach adjacent to the hotel, while providing training to the hotel staff.

Skills and other Requirements: Applicants with previous sea turtle experience including flipper tagging, PIT tagging, basic data collection, and nest excavation will be given preference during the selection process. Applicants must have a valid U.S. drivers license and a copy of their driving record. Volunteers are expected to provide their own clothing for the field including suitable long pants, shoes appropriate for the rocky terrain (boots or other sturdy closed-toe shoe recommended), rain gear, sturdy medium-sized backpack for all personal and field equipment, and a functional watch.

Responsibilities: Maintain beach patrol and coverage; Collect data on every turtle and turtle activity encountered; Maintain equipment; Monitor nests and perform nest excavations

Coordination: All nighttime monitoring will be supervised by the Principal Investigator (Amy Mackay) who has 20+ years of sea turtle field experience and has coordinated work on these nesting beaches since 1994.

Contact: For more information please contact Amy Mackay at chelonial1@comcast.net.