

~ 2019 Annual General Meeting ~  
Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network  
(WIDECAST)

Torarica Hotel / Eco Resort Inn

Paramaribo, Suriname

19-21 March 2019

**MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT**

Updated (green text) 14 February 2019



**Dates:**

The Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) will convene its annual general meeting (AGM) on 19-21 March 2019 in Suriname, South America. Participants will fly into Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport (PBM) on Monday, 18 March and travel to the [Eco Resort Inn](#) in the capital city.

WWF Guianas will host a Regional (Guianas + Trinidad) Leatherback Bycatch Prioritization Workshop (by invitation only) on March 17-18. Other sub-regional or thematic "side" meetings are welcome; contact Karen Eckert with ideas. In addition, an optional post-meeting field trip to nesting beaches at the Galibi Nature Reserve and the indigenous villages of Galibi will be offered on March 22-23 (see "Tours" below); reservations must be secured in advance.

**Reception:**

There will be a Welcome Reception Monday evening, 18 March, at the Eco Resort Inn. Hors d'Oeuvres will include meat and vegetarian options. Alcohol is available at your expense.

**Host:**

The meeting will be hosted by [WWF Guianas](#). The WIDECAST Country Coordinators in Suriname and Guyana will lead the Local Organizing Committee: Suriname: (Hanneke Van Lavieren, WWF Guianas Oceans & Wildlife Coordinator; Michael Hiwat, WWF Guianas Oceans & Wildlife Officer); Guyana: (Sopheia Edghill, WWF Guianas Oceans & Wildlife Officer).

## Objective:

The aim of the meeting is to share information on national and regional-level sea turtle research, management, and outreach programs; to learn from peer experiences; to facilitate networking and partnerships; and to strengthen science-based conservation programming. The agenda will include national reports, regional issue reviews, working groups, and technical presentations with related discussion. WIDECAST country coordinators, biologists, policy-makers, and educators from throughout the Wider Caribbean region are welcome to attend. The meeting will highlight a long and successful history of sea turtle research and conservation work in the Guianas, including French Guiana, Suriname, and Guyana.

## Location:

The meeting is hosted by the Torarica Group of Hotels in the capital city of Paramaribo, a 45-75 minute drive (depending on traffic) from the international airport. We will sleep at the [Eco Resort Inn](#) and convene our meeting in the conference facilities of the nearby [Torarica Hotel](#), where we will also have our lunch and dinner.

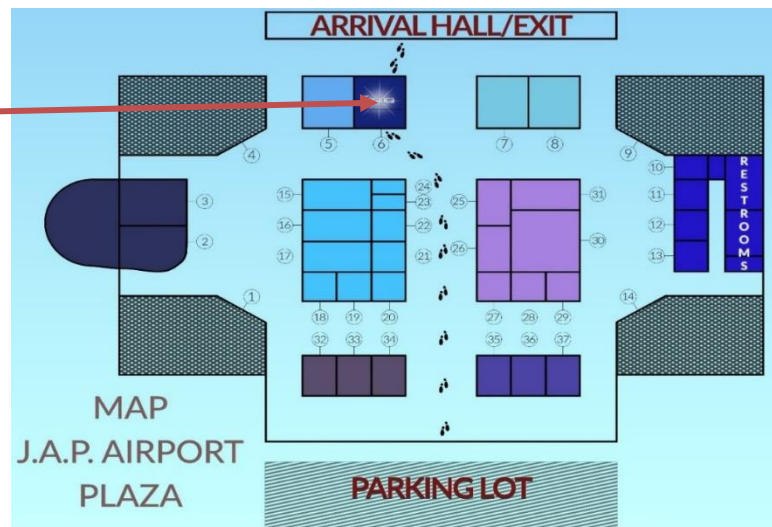
## International Travel:

There are **direct flights to Suriname from** Oranjestad - Aruba, Port of Spain - Trinidad, Georgetown - Guyana, Belem do Para - Brazil, and from Amsterdam. In general, the most reliable and cost-effective flights will transit through Port of Spain on Caribbean Airways or Suriname Airways. Try to use a single airline, combining them often increases cost.

## Airport Transport:

Visit the Torarica Booth (# 6) in the airport upon exiting the Arrival Hall to arrange your shuttle. There is no cost for this service.

Provide your flight details, including airline and travel dates/times, to Karen Eckert and copy to Melissa Gordyk, Office Manager, WWF Guianas (see "Contact Information" below) as soon as possible.



## Visas:

All passports must be valid for at least 6 months from date of entry, so please check your passport ASAP and renew it if necessary. CARICOM nationals can enter Suriname (a CARICOM member state) without a visa. For other nationalities, visa requirements will differ depending on your citizenship and passport. Please visit the following website for details: [http://www.surinameembassy.org/visa\\_extension.shtml](http://www.surinameembassy.org/visa_extension.shtml)

WWF Guianas has been in contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We had hoped to get complementary visa for everyone, but we were unable to do so. However, everyone, except CARICOM nationals, will get a multiple entry business visa upon arrival at the airport. Price USD 60,- to be paid in cash upon arrival. Importantly, the **names of all meeting participants need to be at the Ministry at least 10 days** before arrival. Please make your travel reservations as soon as possible.

A complete list of Surinamese Embassies can be found [here](#).

## Health:

**Yellow Fever:** The Ministry of Health in Suriname requires passengers arriving from [countries with high risk of yellow fever transmission](#) to get [vaccinated for Yellow Fever](#). This means that any passenger arriving from Brazil, Colombia, French Guiana, Guyana, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, or Venezuela must be vaccinated at least 10 days before arrival in Suriname, and will be required to show proof of vaccination. For more information, please visit <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/suriname> or <https://www.flyslm.com/en/yellow-fever/>

**Malaria:** The coastal area has been free of malaria since 1968. In the interior, populated areas are free of malaria. There are some malaria incidences in illegal gold mining areas. Unless you plan to visit illegal gold mines, Malaria prophylaxes are not necessary.

**Drinking water:** Tap water is safe to drink in Paramaribo and in the districts, where tap water is provided by the Surinaamse Waterleiding Maatschappij (Suriname Water Supply Company). Galibi also has potable tap water.

## Safety & Security:

Avoid wearing expensive jewelry or displaying large amounts of money in public. Please keep valuables (passport, tickets, driving license, cash/travelers' checks) secure, and photocopies of travel documents in a separate place. Avoid remote and secluded areas, quiet streets and quiet parks. Avoid the Palm Garden (Palmentuin) area in Paramaribo at night. Apart from the entertainment center around the Torarica Hotel, avoid walking in lonely areas. Travel in the interior of the country is generally trouble-free, but always use a well-established tour company. Only use reliable taxis, ask the office or hotel to call a taxi for you, as needed.

## Meeting Expenses:

Transportation to/from the airport in Suriname: **None** (see "Airport Transport").

Registration fee: **None** 😊

Hotel: WWF Guianas has negotiated very favorable rates for our meeting! The rates are as follows, including service charges, tax, breakfast, and airport transportation:

- \* Single or Double Occupancy Room "Standard"           US\$ 61 per room, per night
- \* Single or Double Occupancy Room "Riverside"        US\$ 72 per room, per night
  - o Check In: 5 pm (17:00 hours \*) daily, Check Out: 1 pm (13:00 hours) daily
  - o \* We know that this is quite late, but most flights arrive late in the evening. If you arrive earlier, we will do our best to ensure a timely entrance to your room.

**Please indicate** your preference for a SINGLE (King bed) or DOUBLE (two Double size beds) room. The cost of the room remains the same, so roommates each pay half the posted rate, while a single occupant is responsible for the entire cost (\$61 or \$72, depending on the room style; see above). There are 72 "Standard" rooms (including 38 singles) and 48 "Riverside" rooms (including 18 singles). Please let us know if you have a preference!

Please do **not** call and make your own hotel reservation, all reservations will be made by our hosts (see "Contact Information") so that we can place you with a compatible roommate(s). If you plan to arrive early or stay late, you are responsible for the cost of the extra hotel nights. The rates for these extra night will be the **same** as the conference rate.

Meals: Breakfast is complimentary (included in your room rate). Lunch and (2) coffee breaks during the meeting will be served at no additional cost to participants. Dinner, served to our group buffet-style on Day 1 and Day 3, is US\$ 25 per person. (Note: Dinner on Day 2 is sponsored by WWF Guianas as part of the field trip.) Meals are served on-site with a variety of delicious choices, including vegetarian. Alcohol is at your own cost. **Please email any special dietary needs in advance to: Melissa Gordyk: [mgordyk@wwf.sr](mailto:mgordyk@wwf.sr)**

Conference Room: The Conference Room has a capacity 100+ persons and is fully equipped with all amenities, including a screen, beamer, laptop, and flipchart (with markers), two microphones, and a service staff member.

### **Additional Sessions:**

WWF Guianas will host a **Regional Leatherback Bycatch Prioritization Workshop** on March 17-18, before the start of the WIDECAST meeting. The Conference Room can be subdivided into three meeting spaces, so we welcome other "side meetings" (akin to the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Assessment meeting at the 2018 AGM in Trinidad); contact Karen Eckert if you have ideas.

## Tours:

There will be an afternoon “**Dolphin & Sea Turtle Watching Tour**” on **March 20** (Day 2), free of charge (sponsored by WWF Guianas), during which time we will visit the estuary of the Suriname River and the sea turtle nesting beach of Braamspunt. Here you will get a real impression of the muddy waters of the Guianas! We embark from the pier of Hotel Torarica, enjoying the view of Paramaribo and the banks of the Suriname River. At the confluence of the Suriname and Commewijne rivers, we start looking for the Guiana dolphin (*Sotalia guianensis*). If nature is on our side, we will see this small dolphin in its natural habitat. Because of the murkiness of the waters you can only see them when they rise to the surface. Other than watching, there is no interaction (no swimming or feeding!).



Before sunset we will reach Braamspunt, where we will transfer to the beach in smaller boats. Here we will enjoy the sunset and everyone who wants to experience swimming in muddy waters is free to do so. We may see green turtles coming ashore to nest before we had head back to the boat at ca. 9 pm (21:00 hours) for dinner and a return cruise to Paramaribo.



We will offer an **optional post-meeting excursion to Galibi Nature Reserve on March 22-23**. The Reserve is located in the northeast corner of Suriname at the mouth of the Marowijne River and the border of French Guiana. The cost is US\$ 135, including the tour, all meals and non-alcoholic drinks, all transfers (bus/boat), and a return to the hotel on Saturday night. Excluded is a guided tour in the French Guiana museum (Camp de la Transportation) that currently cost €6 p/p.

Due to a limited number of rooms, the tour shall be on a first-come, first-served and shared room basis. The sooner you book, the fewer people you will share a room with. In other words, the double rooms will go out first, then the triple, the quadruple, etc.!

### What makes this tour special?

- Adventurous boat trip on the Marowijne River
- Excellent blend of Nature and Culture
- Witnessing sea turtles laying their eggs
- Get to know the Kari'na Indigenous Culture
- Visit to St. Laurent, French Guiana



**Red line:** Bus ride

**Blue line:** Boat ride



### What should I wear?

For both tours please ensure you take sun screen, mosquito repellent, sun hat, swim gear and appropriate shoes and clothing. For the turtle tour in Galibi, please wear dark clothing!

### Post-meeting Tour: Day 1

Morning transfer by bus from Paramaribo to Albina, situated at the Marowijne River at the border with French Guiana. The route will take you across the Wijdenbosch Bridge from where you will have a magnificent view over the capital city Paramaribo. A few stops are made to stretch the legs or to use sanitary facilities. From Albina we continue north by *piaka* (an indigenous boat) to Galibi. The Myrysji Lodge where you will spend the night is situated along the Marowijne River in Christiaankondre, one of the two indigenous villages that make up Galibi. After check-in, lunch is served. In the afternoon you can learn more about the local indigenous communities and their lifestyle. After a guided stroll through the village you can relax on beach loungers or the local bar. After dinner your guides will give instructions for a night trip to the sea turtle nesting beach at the Galibi Nature Reserve. Departure will be by boat to the Witsanti or Babunsanti beach.

## Post-meeting Tour: Day 2

After breakfast there is the possibility to purchase indigenous souvenirs in the local souvenir shops. You may swim in the river or explore the village on your own, after which you will be transferred by boat back to Albina. En route a stop is made in St. Laurent, French Guiana, where you can tour the local museum, one of the French Guianese prisons of the old penal colony described in the novel *Papillon* by Henri Charrière, and visit the local market. For lunch we cross the river to Albina. After lunch we travel back to Paramaribo by bus. You will spend the night again at The Eco Resort, with international travel on 24 March.

*Note:* Check-out of the hotel on March 22, removing everything from your room and packing only what's needed for the tour; extra luggage is securely stored at the hotel, free of charge

## **Currency:**

Local currency is the Surinamese Dollar (SRD). Credit cards are accepted at our host hotel, but are unlikely to be accepted elsewhere. US Dollars are widely accepted, but your change is likely to be SRD. The current exchange rate is about USD \$1 = SRD \$7.5. For the latest daily rates, please visit <https://www.dsb.sr/Wisselkoersen-info> Cash USD can be changed at all local banks and cambios. ATM's are readily available throughout the country and will dispense every withdrawal in SRD equivalent, **NOT USD**. Local banks usually support all major cards (e.g., Mastercard, Visa) but there is limited support for payment systems (e.g., Maestro, Cirrus, Cashnet) at business locations. Check your bank whether it requires you to adjust international settings for your card to enable using ATM's in Suriname.

## **Electrical and Internet:**

Electrical: The hotel has 127V outlets, which can meet the regular electricity demands of local and international equipment. Suriname uses **European plugs** and socket outlets, as below:



If your equipment doesn't have one of these plugs, **please have a travel adapter with you.**

Internet: Free Wi-Fi Internet is available in all rooms, hotel lobbies and conference rooms.

## **Contact Information:**

If you have any questions, please let us know!

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