



Viva la Tortuga!

NEWSLETTER OF TURTLE ISLAND RESTORATION NETWORK

SEATURTLES.ORG

TIRN Wins Protections for Humpback Habitat



No Longlines in the New Year!

ENDANGERED SEA TURTLES received a lifeline in the new year after a federal district court ruled in December that the National Marine Fisheries Service failed to adequately analyze threats to critically endangered leatherback sea turtles when it allowed longline fishing off California.

This means the Trump administration violated the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act in failing to consider the best available science on impacts to leatherbacks.

The ruling responds to a lawsuit filed by Turtle Island Restoration Network and the Center for Biological Diversity after the fishing permit issued in April exempted vessels from the federal ban on longline gear off California. Longlines stretch up to 60 miles, with thousands of baited hooks intended to catch swordfish

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THE FEDERAL government proposed a new rule in September to designate 302,961 square nautical miles in the Pacific Ocean as critical habitat for endangered humpback whales. The move could help protect migrating whales from ship strikes, entanglement in fishing gear, and oil spills.

The announcement by the National Marine Fisheries Service follows a court-approved agreement with Turtle Island Restoration Network, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Wishtoyo Foundation to issue new protections. We sued the Trump administration for failing to protect two Pacific Ocean humpback populations

listed as endangered and a third as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

“It is unfortunate that it took legal action against the Trump administration to secure protection for endangered humpback whales, but we are pleased to move forward with our efforts to create additional marine protected areas for threatened marine life,” said Executive Director Todd Steiner.

Critical habitat protection will help safeguard ocean areas essential for migrating and feeding. In addition, the designation will ensure that federally permitted activities do not destroy or harm important whale habitat.



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

New Hope in the New Year

DESPITE THE INSANITY of the current political circumstances in Washington, here at Turtle Island we ended 2019 feeling real positive hope for the future, which I want to share with you.

For me personally, our recent expedition to Cocos Island gave me a glimpse of the past and future. Underwater, Cocos Island is a snapshot of the past. It's a place that reminds me of time before overfishing, when an abundance of marine life was not limited to isolated, exotic locations, but ubiquitous across ocean ecosystems. Cocos Island is also a glimpse into what the future can hold if we secure the necessary protections to give marine wildlife a chance to flourish!

On our December research trip, we saw hundreds of hammerheads, as well as scores of other sharks including tiger, silky, silvertip, Galapagos and blacktips. And it will be hard to forget the giant schools of bigeye jacks and mullet snappers, or the giant manta ray, the school of mobula rays, eagle rays and marbled rays! We also tagged 14 sharks with transmitters that will help us better understand the movements of these species and will lead to better protections.

Before sailing I learned Sylvia Earle's Mission Blue approved our nomination to make the Cocos-Galapagos Swimway a "Hope Spot," helping move forward a unique concept to connect the National Parks of two nations through a marine protected area that will safeguard migratory sharks and turtles. We are honored to have Mission Blue as a

partner on this ocean trail-blazing journey.

With the help of our members, our accomplishments were vast as we turned hope into conservation reality. We prevented the Trump administration's attempts to undermine ocean protections for sea turtles and sharks, winning a lawsuit that reversed a California coastal longline fishery permit. Simultaneously, we stopped the Pacific Fisheries Management Council from considering yet another longline fishery that would land their bloody catch on California shores.

Through litigation, we compelled the federal government to designate 302,961 square nautical miles in the Pacific Ocean as critical habitat for endangered humpback whales. In Florida, we made progress in forcing the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant to modify its intake pipes to prevent injury and death of endangered sea turtles and sawfish. And we worked with our representatives and senators who co-sponsored the Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act to counter a cynical attempt to reverse our recent win to phase-out the turtle and shark-killing California driftnet fishery by "federalizing" it. Every day, we are on the frontlines to prevent rolling back this important conservation victory!

In Texas, we rescued turtles caught in fishing line and those cold-stunned from exceptionally frigid waters. We continued to work with students on researching micro-plastics, and to get Texas supermarkets to adopt sustainable anti-plastic bag policies. We celebrated our sophomore year of Turtles About Town and will be installing a dozen more turtle statutes throughout Galveston

Island, hand-painted by local artists. Additionally, we received awards from the Galveston Art League for inspiring the public through conservation and art, and we were named "Best Nonprofit Organization" by Galveston.com. None of this could have been accomplished without our amazing supporters and volunteers!

At our headquarters in California, we turned back the Lagunitas Creek Watershed clock by a century for the protection of endangered coho salmon and California freshwater shrimp—removing 19,000 cubic yards of fill from former floodplains, creating creek side channels for juvenile salmon, and planting thousands of native plants with members and supporters. In an era of frightening environmental news, recreating critical habitat instills the hope and inspiration needed to continue fighting for wildlife.

I suspect the work we accomplish together gives you the same hope that it gives me, which is why Turtle Island Restoration Network has some of the best volunteers and supporters! I want to assure you we strive to use the financial and sweat equity resources you donate as effectively as possible to make the Earth safe for all living beings.

Hope sprouts from good work and I look forward to our paths crossing on a scuba expedition in Costa Rica, a habitat restoration day in the Bay Area, or a turtle rescue on the Gulf Coast! Together, we can make the Earth healthy and safe for future generations.



TODD STEINER, Executive Director
Turtle Island Restoration Network

Shop to Support!

WE ARE excited to announce the launch of a new online store! In addition to directly supporting our species-saving campaigns, every

item in our store is carefully selected to adhere to eco-conscious standards—ensuring the health and safety of both consumers and our blue-green planet. Show your support for sea turtles, sharks and more at www.seaturtles.org/shop.





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and tuna. The federal government banned the fishing method in 2004 to protect sea turtles—they become hooked while trying to take longline bait or become entangled while swimming through the walls of nearly invisible lines and hooks, drowning the turtles or leaving them fatally injured.

“The Trump administration’s illegal and anti-environmental policy to allow more endangered sea turtles to die at the hands of the commercial longline industry has thankfully been thwarted by the courts,” said Executive Director Todd Steiner. “Longline fishing is not only unsustainable; it is cruel and heartless to kill so many non-target animals.”

Prior to the December ruling, Turtle Island Restoration Network attended the Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Costa Mesa, California with protest signs in hand to testify against the government operating a longline fishery off California.

Federal Rules Could Protect Coral Reefs in Gulf of Mexico

TURTLE ISLAND RESTORATION Network submitted comments in November to voice our support of federal rules that would restrict fishing around coral reefs in the Gulf of Mexico.

Deep sea corals are already under tremendous stress from global climate change, rising sea temperatures, invasive species, and more. Bottom-contact fishing gear can exacerbate and further harm corals, causing immediate damage to these slow growing organisms, making it very difficult for corals to recover. Deep

Activists help make protest signs against longlines in Costa Mesa, Calif.

We stood proudly with environmental activists, eco-tourists, recreational fishermen, divers, surfers, animal lovers, ocean enthusiasts, and more to demand the council say no to opening up this deadly fishing practice off California. And the best part is it worked – the agency voted against opening a new longline fishery in the Pacific Ocean.

We would like to thank our members for standing with us as we fight against longlines, our friends at The SeaChange Agency for working with us to get as many people as we could to the meeting, and Patagonia Santa Monica for welcoming activists to their store to make signs the night before the protest.

The Trump administration essentially used a “secret back door” to try to push commercial longline fishing, foregoing traditional environmental review. The courts called them out, however, agreeing that this move violated multiple federal laws and threatened the survival and recovery of Pacific leatherback sea turtles as well as other endangered species.

Both of these efforts are big wins for our ocean and all marine wildlife, and it was not possible without your support!

sea corals provide important, complex, biodiverse fish habitat and are crucial for the survival of marine life.

“Although little, if any, fishing is ongoing in or near these sites, the inclusion of regulations prohibiting fishing with bottom tending gear would preclude fisheries from these areas in the future—preventing future damage to these vulnerable areas,” said Advocacy & Policy Manager Annalisa Batanides Tuel. “Coral communities are especially fragile and slow growing, so any potential damage caused in the temporal lapse of regulations could take decades or even centuries to remedy.” Read the full comment at www.seaturtles.org.

Bills Introduced to Save the ESA



THE TRUMP administration released a series of drastic cuts in August to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that make protecting wildlife much more difficult and could cause sea turtles, polar bears, and other species suffering because of climate change to slip closer to extinction.

Thanks to the messages and calls from more than 8,000 TIRN members who oppose these vicious attacks on imperiled species, leaders in Congress introduced critical legislation known as the “Protect America’s Wildlife and Fish in Need of Conservation Act of 2019,” or PAW and FIN Conservation Act, that would repeal the new regulations that dramatically weaken the ESA.

The ESA is our most effective law for protecting wildlife in danger of extinction. Ninety-nine percent of the thousands of listed species have survived. We need this critical lifeline for sea turtles, salmon, whales and sharks, and all vulnerable animals, plants, and their ecosystems.

Please take action for our oceans and write and call your members of Congress, asking them to support the PAW and FIN Conservation Act to protect the wildlife and wild places that makes this country so unique. You can also use our email platform at www.seaturtles.org/action. Together, our voices make a difference!

Petition Seeks Protections for Leatherbacks Under California Endangered Species Act

TURTLE ISLAND Restoration Network filed a petition with the Center for Biological Diversity in January to protect leatherback sea turtles under the California Endangered Species Act.

The Pacific leatherback population has declined by 90 percent over the past 40 years, mostly because longline and gillnet fishing for tuna and swordfish entangles and drowns these large, ancient, soft-shelled turtles.

“California needs to end the leatherback sea turtle deaths the Trump administration has ignored while promoting destructive fishing practices off the



West Coast,” said Catherine Kilduff, a Center attorney. “Increasing industrial activities off California threaten the future of leatherbacks, which have traveled across the Pacific for millions of years. The California Endangered Species Act can be a valuable tool for preventing their extinction.”

Listing leatherbacks under the state’s Endangered Species Act would make them a state conservation priority. The state law would also provide a backstop to potentially weakened protections for leatherbacks under the federal Endangered Species Act.

them,” TIRN Researcher Dr. Kevin Weng says in the film.

In addition to offering a firsthand look at the biodiversity that inhabits one of the world’s most premiere dive sites, the film shows TIRN’s research team accomplishing a number of important research objectives including the tagging of a 14-foot female tiger shark that is believed to have killed an American scuba diver in 2017.

The film also shows chilling footage of the shark fin trade, as well as efforts to stop illegal fishing in the protected waters surrounding Cocos Island.

By actively working with the governments of Costa Rica and Ecuador, as well as several additional partners, to expand these marine protected areas, we will allow endangered species to migrate safely outside the small marine protected areas and connect two sovereign nation’s marine National Parks—something we hope will be a blue print that is copied across the globe.

Watch the film today at www.seaturtles.org/economist.

Economist Short Documentary Highlights Cocos-Galapagos Swimway



THE *ECONOMIST* magazine released a short documentary film this winter showcasing Turtle Island Restoration Network’s shark research—and it’s well worth the watch.

The film, debuted at the World Ocean Summit in Abu Dhabi, follows our research team to a remote island off Costa Rica where we have discovered

at least three endangered species of shark and two species of endangered sea turtle migrate along a 400-mile underwater highway—known as the Cocos-Galapagos Swimway—where there is little or no protection from fishing vessels.

“There are huge gaps of ocean in which these animals are swimming, but in which there is no protection for

Trump Sued to Protect Green Sea Turtle Habitat

SEVERAL ENVIRONMENTAL groups including Turtle Island Restoration Network sued the federal government in January for failing to protect green sea turtle habitat which faces threats from sea-level rise, plastic pollution and warming.

Filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the suit seeks protections for green sea turtle nesting beaches that occur in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, as well as offshore oceanic habitat in the Southeast and on the West Coast.

“Green sea turtles have been around for over 65 million years, but now all green sea turtle populations are in danger of extinction,” said Executive Director Todd Steiner. “We have the power to protect them, but only if we use the full extent of our environmental laws to do so.”



In response to green sea turtle population recovery, the National Marine Fisheries Service and Fish and Wildlife Service in 2016 found that growing climate change and sea-level-rise threats mean the turtles remain threat-

ened and still need Endangered Species Act protections. Despite those threats—particularly to low-lying nesting beaches—the agencies failed to protect the turtle’s critical habitat under the Act.

TIRN Welcomes New Team Members!

WE’RE EXCITED to welcome two new faces to the TIRN team!



AYANO HAYES joins us as Watershed Biologist and will be assisting with our habitat restoration programs in Northern California. Ayano strives to protect and restore the natural environment through action, education, and connection. In just her first month she has overseen progress on the Jewell restoration site; helped upkeep the

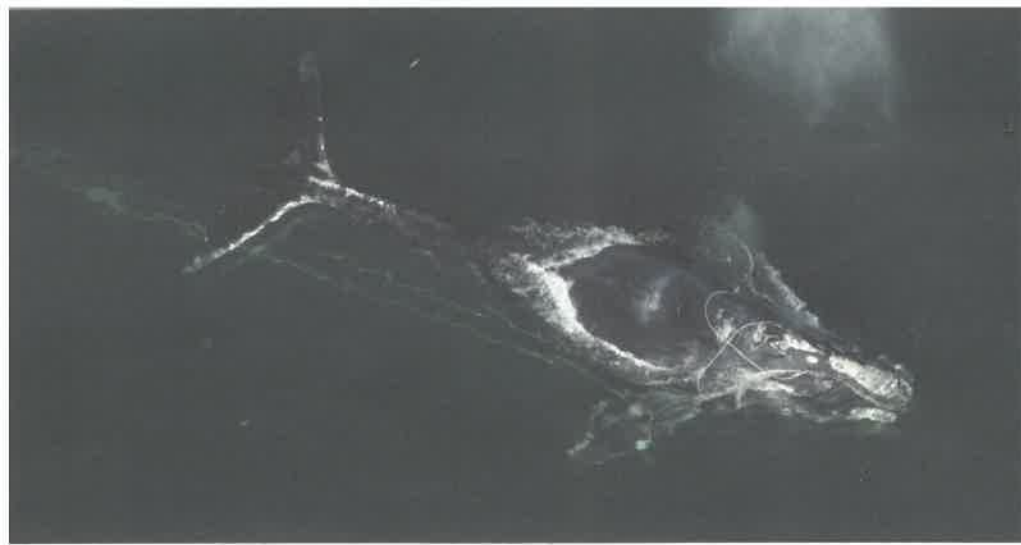
Tocaloma site with sediment redistribution, weeding, reassessing irrigation line and pinning down loose erosion fabric; and lead surveys of our newly constructed side channels. Ayano studied environmental science and psychology at UC Santa Barbara and for the past couple years, has monitored endangered and threatened salmonid species and other wildlife within the Klamath River and Tomales Bay/Lagunitas Creek Watersheds.

ANNALISA BATANIDES TUEL is joining us as Policy & Advocacy Manager to oversee the policy and legal aspects of our advocacy campaigns. Annalisa is an environmental attorney and policy analyst working to create holistic habitat uplift by focusing on imperiled marine and anadromous species. She loves her amazing husband and daughter, dancing in appropriate and inappropriate settings, chocolate,

science fiction and fantasy books, long naps, and all animals except for spiders. Annalisa spent her first week diving head-first into all of our past, ongoing, and prospective legal and policy issues. She is thrilled to be in an office with such a wealth of expert knowledge at her disposal, and is looking forward to working with everyone here and creating big wins for the world’s oceans and marine wildlife!



Welcome, Ayano and Annalisa!



A North Atlantic right whale entangled in fishing gear off Daytona Beach.

right whale's second major cause of death and serious injury.

SAVE Right Whales Act would establish a new grant program at the Department of Commerce to fund collaborative projects between states, nongovernmental organizations, and members of the fishing and shipping industries to develop, test, and implement new technologies and other strategies to reduce entanglements and vessel collisions.

Turtle Island Restoration Network is among several organizations who endorse this legislation. Cooperation between multiple organizations is vital to protect the right whale, and congressional action would help prevent the right whale's extinction.

Without action, the North Atlantic right whale may be extinct within just a few decades. Congress has the opportunity to reverse this trend and prevent the extinction of this iconic species by supporting S.2453—SAVE Right Whales Act. **Contact your members of Congress today!**

Time is Running Out to Save Right Whales

NORTH ATLANTIC right whales are dangerously close to extinction. There are less than 400 individuals remaining on Earth, and only 95 of those remaining are reproductively active females. In order to prevent extinction, we must work to recover these numbers and halt any actions that lead to right whale mortality.

Right now, Congress has the opportunity to reverse this trend and prevent

the extinction of right whales by supporting bipartisan legislation known as SAVE Right Whales Act, that seeks to target and alleviate the main threats to right whales—entanglement in fishing gear and ship strikes—before it's too late.

Entanglement in fishing gear is the most frequent cause of death for North Atlantic right whales, causing more than 80 percent of diagnosable deaths. Ship collisions are the North Atlantic

Second Marin Ghost Town Transformed

IN OCTOBER, TIRN completed the second phase of our salmon habitat restoration project at the ghost town of Jewell in Northern California.

The project is re-creating floodplain wetlands along Marin County's Lagunitas Creek to help recover key populations of endangered Central California Coast coho salmon.

We began the first phase of the project in August 2018 by removing 13,000 cubic yards of dumped fill from a floodplain at the former town of Tocaloma, located one mile downstream from Jewell. The channels held up well during the stormy winter months, and spring began with the sight of meadow barley spreading across the floodplain, scores of juvenile fish, and endangered



In just a few short months, the Tocaloma project area (pictured on the left in late July) has become a water-receiving side channel, providing shelter and sustenance for young salmonids.

California freshwater shrimp in specially made shrimp structures.

This project has been made possible through funding and support by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Water Resources Control Board, Environmental Protection Agency, State Coastal Conservancy, the National Park Service, the Each

Foundation, the Joseph & Vera Long Foundation, and the members of Turtle Island Restoration Network.

The project has also been made possible from the support of hundreds of dedicated volunteers and students who help grow native plants in our nursery, plant trees and plants, and maintain the restoration sites. Thank you for your support!



Climate Strike Staff, interns and volunteers joined the youth-lead Global Climate Strike in San Francisco where organizers estimated 7.6 million people around the world joined the strike, with SPAWNers joining as many as 40,000 in San Francisco alone.



Microplastics Research

Students across the Gulf of Mexico are helping TIRN sample microplastics to understand how certain areas accumulate various types of microplastics and the impacts of differing weather conditions, watersheds, and currents. It is unfortunate that we find so much plastic debris on our beaches, but we are hopeful our educational program will inspire youth to reduce their use of plastics.

Ridley Rescue Our Gulf team responded to many stranded sea turtles this year, including this critically endangered Kemp's ridley found hooked and entangled in a mixture of fishing line, leaders and seaweed. One flipper was on the verge of falling off and another tightly wound with line. We ask anglers not to cut a line and release sea turtles accidentally hooked while fishing, as this situation is often the outcome, and instead report it to your local rescue hotline.



Galveston Gala

More than 150 community members came together in September to celebrate the newest additions to our Turtles About Town campaign and the impact this project is having on our sea turtle conservation efforts. Thank you, Texas, for raising nearly \$22,000 at The Art of Saving Sea Turtles!



Cold Stunning Season

We helped rescue the first of this season's cold stunned sea turtles on the upper Texas coast in November. As cold-blooded reptiles, sea turtles rely on surrounding temperatures to maintain their body temperature and act very lethargic when too cold. They might be found floating or washed up on shore and are susceptible to boat strikes, predation, pneumonia and death.

Turtle Island Restoration Network
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About Turtle Island Restoration Network

TURTLE ISLAND RESTORATION NETWORK, a leading advocate for the world's oceans and marine wildlife, was founded in 1989 and was originally called the Sea Turtle Restoration Project. Over the years, we have expanded our work to protect marine mammals including whales, dolphins, monk seals and dugongs, as well as sharks, salmon, and seabirds.

Our work is based on science, fueled by people who care, and effective at catalyzing long-lasting positive change that protects the likes of green sea turtles and steelhead trout.

Our mission is to mobilize people in local communities around the world to protect marine wildlife and the oceans and inland watersheds that sustain them.

We accomplish our mission through grassroots empowerment, consumer action, strategic litigation, hands-on restoration, environmental education, and by promoting sustainable local, national and international marine policies. Learn more at seaturtles.org.

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Viva la Tortuga!

Fall + Winter 2019 Newsletter



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