

## Special Edition:

# World Turtle Day May 23, 2013

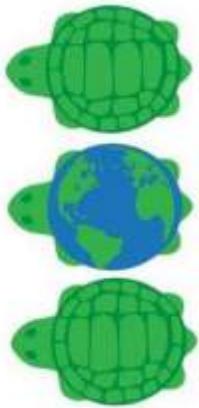
Celebrating the 20th Anniversary  
of Protecting Hawksbill Turtles in Belize!



"Conservation through Education"

### World Turtle Day

On May 23, 2000 the American Tortoise Rescue launched an annual celebration of all turtles – sea turtles, land turtles and river turtles! 2013 marks a very important milestone for Belize



**WORLD  
TURTLE DAY**  
May 23rd

AMERICAN  
TORTOISE  
RESCUE  
tortoise.com

since the hawksbill sea turtle has been protected since 1993 or 20 years! In fact 2012 marked the 10th anniversary that all sea turtles have been protected in Belize. These two milestones are great accomplishments by government and people of Belize and everyone is asked to respect and celebrate these historic events.

### Historical Importance

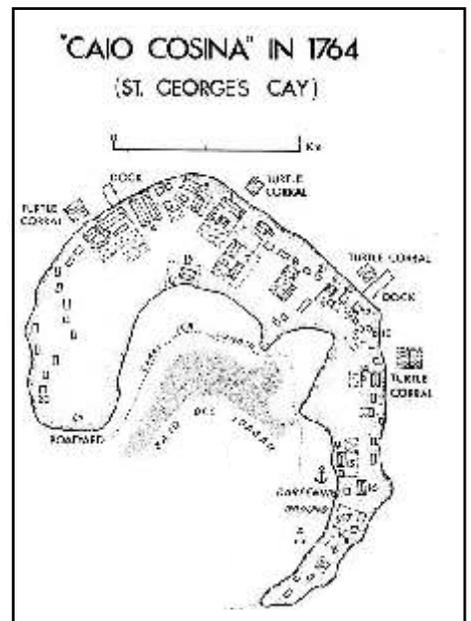
Turtles have been extremely important in the history of Belize. In the 1700s when Belize was first being settled sea turtles were kept in turtle corrals on St. George's Caye. Look on the back of the \$5 dollar bill and you will see a map that identifies turtle corrals

around the island. Turtles were an important source of protein to the early settlers, and is very likely Belize's first fishery export. Turtles can remain alive on their backs for weeks, so on the long journey across the Atlantic Ocean to England there was available a fresh source of meat for the sailors



transporting logwood and mahogany. You all probably heard about the important of these two industries in early Belize but may not have realized the important roll sea turtles played at this time. Sea turtles soon became a delicacy in many kitchens across Europe and the shell of the hawksbill turtle desirable in the making of hair combs, eye

glass frames, jewelry boxes and jewelry. The ships returned to the Caribbean to specifically harvest sea turtles and within a couple hundred



years populations were diminished so bad that the big sailing ships harvesting turtles were not longer profitable and they stopped coming. But the harvest and trade of sea turtles continued by turtle fishermen to supply the local market.



### CONTENTS

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Future Importance . Get Involved, Adopt Today!*

## Fishery Regulations

Scientific studies indicated that the turtles were becoming in danger of becoming extinct and thus regulations controlling their catch were implemented, until 1993 when the Fisheries Regulations prohibited the capture of hawksbill sea turtles and then in 2002, prohibited the capture of ALL sea turtles. The only legal way someone could



Change is not always easy and to ask people to change their diets is asking a lot, but the law now protects sea turtles and has been for the past 10 years and it is time that we all begin to respect the sea turtles, the great ocean migrators of the seas.

**Get Involved, Adopt Today!**  
Coastal property owners, Adopt A Beach and submit regular

## Sea turtles are worth more alive than dead!

harvest a sea turtle would be to apply for a permit from the Fisheries Administrator for special permission for cultural use.

### Future Importance

As a result of the laws protecting sea turtles, they are now regularly observed by tourists visiting the reefs who admire these charismatic creatures.

In fact observations submitted to the Belize Sea Turtle Census in 2011 reported that the most abundant sea turtle is the hawksbill turtle! The tourism industry is an extremely important to many people and businesses located through Belize which makes sea turtles more important alive than dead. One sea turtle can be sold for BZ \$100, whereas tourists a day on the reef will often spend much, much more.



reports on sea turtle activity on your beach and keep it turtle friendly. Dive centers and marine guides, Adopt A Reef and submit regular reports on your observations of sea turtles to aid in abundance surveys. Teachers, include celebration of World Turtle Day and World Sea Turtle Day in your classrooms.

By protecting sea turtles now, for tomorrow, will also ensure that sea turtles will be here for future generations to enjoy and share with visitors who support the economy in Belize.



Photo Credits Linda & John Searle

Everyone, help us celebrate World Turtle Day in Belize by sharing information with your friends and family as we take great pride in Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Protecting Sea Turtles in Belize!

And please always remember, ***"We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."***



## REPORT ALL

Stranded Sea Turtles  
Illegal Harvest  
Captive Sea Turtles

Tel: 224-4552

The Belize Turtle Watch Program has been made possible with support from the following organizations! Thank you!



## Adopt A Beach or Reef Today! Reporting YOUR Observations Is Easy!



## REPORT ALL

In-Water Observations  
Nesting Beach Observations  
Stranded Sea Turtles

Online @ [www.ecomarbelize.org](http://www.ecomarbelize.org)

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