

Sea Turtle Conservation and Women Empowerment Program

Position: Volunteer/Internship Opportunity

Due: applications due May 1

Salary: Unpaid

Internship duration: 6 months preferred, during the July – December field season

Location: Leon, Nicaragua

Project and job description: Volunteers/Interns will work within the sea turtle conservation project comprised of local communities and the local university. Nesting sea turtles in Pacific Nicaragua include: Critically Endangered hawksbill, Endangered eastern Pacific green, Vulnerable leather-back, and Vulnerable olive Ridley. The Sea Turtle Conservation and Women Empowerment Program began in 2018 with preliminary surveys indicating many sea turtle nests were poached and sold in the local communities and markets. Since that time, this project team has worked tirelessly to promote sea turtle conservation and engagement with the local community.

Through community support, awareness of the importance of sea turtles to the ecosystem and alternative livelihoods, former poachers now sell eggs to be placed in the safety of a guarded hatchery run by the project team. The success of the program is noted by having the first nest of the 2022 season being brought to the home of the woman leading the effort instead of being brought to market and the relocation of the 100,000th egg placed in the hatchery in January 2023. The Fabien Cousteau Ocean Learning Center (FCOLC) – a nonprofit organization focused on marine conservation and women empowerment in Nicaragua facilitates and supports the local team during the intensive nesting season which runs from July to December (<https://www.fabiencousteauolc.org/sea-turtle-conservation>).

The volunteer internship will be a mix of office and fieldwork providing interns a real-life experience in both biological data collection and conservation project management. Volunteer interns are trained in data collection methods to monitor nesting behavior, nest success, and human activities and impacts. This also includes tagging (Inconel) and collecting biometric data on nesting turtles and hatchlings. When in the office, the intern will have a chance to participate in a number of activities including: data entry and quality control, creation of monthly data analyses and technical reports, organization of different project activities and trainings, participation in outreach activities within the community, such as radio announcements, volunteer coordination, and assistance with focused research or administrative tasks. If staying for an extended amount of time (6 months) there are opportunities to discuss the potential for research projects of specific interest to the volunteer intern and organization.

Requirements: We are looking for a hard-working, flexible, good-natured and passionate person who is motivated to gain experience for a career in conservation, marine science, research or any related field. Basic knowledge and enthusiasm for biological fieldwork and marine turtles is required. Spanish language skills are preferred, however, we encourage all to submit applications and embrace the opportunity to learn Spanish through immersive coursework while in Nicaragua. Our field days include early morning and late night hours, sometimes we are in the field for long hours in adverse weather conditions (rain, storms, sun, bugs, extended time on boats, etc.). The project headquarters are located in the town of Las Penitas and the base camp for the project is situated on one of the wildlife refuge islands and is a primitive open-air shelter. Displaying cultural sensitivity, professionalism, and appropriate social etiquette is a must.

Benefits and costs: The FCOLC is a nonprofit organization and thus our budget is very limited. We offer discounted accommodation, access to kitchen and other amenities (e.g., internet, electricity, phone), and transportation to the island for field work via boat. Food is sometimes provided when in the field, but this is not guaranteed and may not be appealing to all participants. Interns are expected to cover costs for transportation to and from their home country to Las Penitas, along with any additional living costs not stated above (food, local travel, visa, entry/exit tax, etc.). The FCOLC does not provide health or travel insurance, however, proof of insurance (e.g., DAN, RED, etc.) for the duration of the internship must be shown to the FCOLC office prior to departure. A volunteer waiver must be completed and approved prior to participation in the program.

Interns will receive training from knowledgeable project team members. Training includes biological fieldwork, database management, report writing, project management and community outreach. Our goal is to provide interns with experience and training that will prepare them for a future career in marine conservation. Internship programs can be adapted to focus on different areas when possible/feasible. Those who are selected for our internship are eligible for a reference at the end of their stay, reflecting their performance and training.

To apply: Submit letter of interest, a resume or curriculum vitae, and 2 letters of recommendation to pamela@fabiencousteauolc.org with **Volunteer Internship Application – Sea Turtle and Women Empowerment Program** in the subject line of the email.



Community Engagement



Hatchery Activities



Monitor Nesting Turtles



Educate Others - Workshops