



TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Alice O'Connor has joined our team in southern California as a development associate. Alice grew up in Toronto, Ontario, and spent summers with her family in a remote farmhouse in northern Vermont. The presence of deer, moose, and bear in the area cultivated her awareness of the importance of animal habitat.

Alice has a humanities degree from Antioch University and took a strong interest in her biology and marine biology courses. She has spent the past three months studying Paso Pacifico's conservation projects and will soon visit



CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Paso Pacifico is happy to announce the 2016 results from our sea turtle conservation program. **Last year, Paso Pacifico successfully released 4745 baby sea turtles into the ocean!**

These sea turtles were hatched across four key nesting beaches that we monitor, including Nicaragua's most important nesting beach for the Eastern Pacific Green Turtle, or *torita*. Our sea turtle conservation program also helps protect the Olive Ridley, Leatherback, and Hawksbill turtle species. However, the sea turtle rangers—local men and women who lead

these conservation efforts—are the program's most important component. Their hard work, knowledge, and passion for the ocean make it successful.

Last year was challenging for rangers and sea turtles alike because of the extreme heat generated during the El Niño climate event. Although we are pleased with the year's results, the number of nests was one-third

of the annual average. In addition, the heat and sun exposure were demoralizing for the ranger team. In response to this challenge, Paso Pacifico took advantage of the "down time" to train the rangers on important topics that included first aid, disaster planning and response, team-building, and leadership. We also worked with the rangers to review monitoring methods and data sheets. These training sessions have helped motivate the team and strengthen the program, which is in its ninth year.

This capacity-building work was made possible thanks to the generous support of the [New England Biolabs Foundation](#). Other donors who have helped to sustain the sea turtle program through the years include The Woodtiger Fund, [SEETurtles.org](#), and anonymous donors.



Team-building exercises like this one, as well as other trainings, have helped strengthen our sea turtle conservation program.

Nicaragua to meet the rest of the team. Alice is proud to be working for an organization that helps to conserve essential habitat corridors for wild animals and birds, while at the same time creating new economic prospects for the local people.



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IN GRATITUDE

Ofelia Gaitán Palacios has led the conservation efforts at Nicaragua's most important leatherback sea turtle nesting beach for the past seven years. Thanks to her leadership, more than 150 nests of this critically endangered species have been protected from poachers. Her efforts have received longstanding



FEATURE THE PLANET

Inside A Covert Mission To Defeat Poachers In Nicaragua

IN THE NEWS

Last month, GOOD Magazine highlighted Paso Pacifico's innovative use of technology to combat illegal wildlife trade. Our [award-winning design](#) uses GPS technology to track illegally poached sea turtle eggs. The two articles were published in the December issue. The first article ([read here](#)) discusses the design process around the egg, while the second article ([read here](#)) explores some of the challenges that come with implementing the technology on the ground.

PARTNERS MAKE IT POSSIBLE



Members of the Aqua Wellness Resort team pose with Paso Pacifico sea turtle rangers.

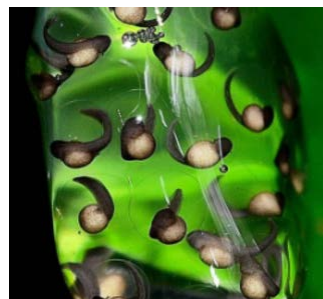
support from [Fauna & Flora International](#). [Turtle Island Restoration Network](#) has also contributed over the past two years. Ofelia is co-owner of the non-profit reserve known as [Reserva Quelantero](#) where she promotes sustainable ecotourism and environmental education at the reserve and throughout nearby communities. We are grateful to Ofelia for her leadership in conservation and the impact she has had on sea turtles.

THIS MONTH ON INSTAGRAM



Nicaragua's Pacific beaches are popular destinations for tourists as well as endangered sea turtles. Our conservation reach has greatly increased through our partnerships with seven hotels and private landowners. We train these partners on sea turtle monitoring, and in turn the hotel staff patrol the beaches to protect sea turtles and their nests. The efforts of our partners make a difference for sea turtles both in situ and in nurseries, and expand conservation efforts at their beaches.

Rancho Santana and Aqua Wellness Resort meet regularly with us to share their results. Through their efforts, we have learned that the beach at Aqua Wellness Resort has the highest number of critically endangered hawksbill turtles nesting at any open beach on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua, while Rancho Santana has the second most important green turtle nesting beach known on Nicaragua's Pacific coast. In addition, Parque Maritimo El Coco generously provides the site for our sea turtle hatchery, which is run by two of our female sea turtle rangers. Our other four hotel partners are Costa Dulce, Playa Hermosa Beach Hotel, Morgan's Rock Hacienda and Ecolodge, and Hacienda Iguana.





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info@pasopacifico.org
www.pasopacifico.org

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Carretera a Masaya Km 12.4 • Residencial Villas del Prado, Casa No. 7 • Managua, Nicaragua
Phone: +505-2279-8423 or +505-2279-7072
USA: PO Box 1244 Ventura, CA 93002-1244 Phone: 1-805-643-7044