

Educational Programs

Tour de Turtles Offers Rich Educational Experience for Students

For many turtles, slow and steady may be just the ticket for survival and victory in Sea Turtle Conservancy's annual Tour de Turtles, a sea turtle migration marathon that kicks off August 15th online at www.tourdeturtles.org.

This year, Tour de Turtles will follow more than a dozen turtles, using satellite-tracking technology, as they leave their respective nesting sites and compete in a mock race to complete a "turtle" marathon. The winner will be the turtle that swims the furthest during the three-month time period of this migration marathon.

Along with the goal of traveling the most kilometers in the marathon, each of our participant turtles will also swim to raise awareness about a Cause related to sea turtle conservation. With a focus on education and designed with teachers in mind, Tour de Turtles creates a unique opportunity to learn more about sea turtle conservation in a fun, interactive manner.

Sea Turtle Conservancy caught up with long-time Tour de Turtles sponsor Karen Comstock, director of Casa Tortuga, to learn how she is using the program and educational materials to make a difference for

sea turtles and young students alike.

In a chance encounter earlier this year, Karen met Jo Royse, an instructional coach for Henderson County Public Schools in North Carolina, and learned that she has been a big promoter of

Tour de Turtles in more than 100 classrooms in the county. Last year, Jo and her students chose to support Tour de Turtles competitor Dawn, the leather-back turtle sponsored by Casa Tortuga in 2010.

"I'm astounded to find this happy coincidence," Karen Comstock said. "We will be joining forces this year and allowing the Henderson County School kids to name the Casa Tortuga turtle."

For this year's Tour de Turtles, Karen and Jo want to teach kids from this mountain community that everything is interconnected. Together, they chose the cause of Water Quality to highlight a mountain-to-sea connection and how actions in their community can ultimately impact sea turtles.

"Jo and the other educators from Henderson County North Carolina will teach the children about



Jo Royce (on left) and Karen Comstock worked together to raise awareness about sea turtles and the Tour de Turtles in western North Carolina.

Thanks to the Sponsors of the 2011 Tour de Turtles!

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A female leatherback sea turtle returns to the ocean after a satellite transmitter was attached to her shell at Chiriquí Beach, Panama. Students in Jo Royce's class selected the name "Crystal" and look forward to following her migration online starting August 15 during the 2011 Tour de Turtles.

keeping our waters clean and show how the rivers and streams that start in the Appalachian mountains will eventually join with the ocean where sea turtles and all marine life depend on chemical free and safe water to have a healthy life," explained Karen.

With Tour de Turtles being a three-month-long educational event, the Hendersonville students will watch the race unfold, while learning about water pollution, recycling and other good conservation habits that will help save sea turtles and help keep our planet healthy. Many of the students have never visited the coast, Tour de Turtles will allow them to experience and learn about a part of the world that they normally have little or no contact with.

In addition to teaching kids about sea turtles, Jo partners with teachers throughout the county to organize an annual Sea Turtle Day. Using video conferencing, Jo broadcasts directly into the classroom from the National Seashore in North Carolina to take students on a virtual field trip that gives them a behind-the-scenes look at protected sea turtle nesting



Educators from Henderson County North Carolina teach about keeping their waters clean and how the rivers and streams in Appalachian mountains flow to the ocean where sea turtles and all marine life depend on healthy water.

world in greater depth than ever before."

To learn more about Tour de Turtles educational resources, including a free educator's guide, games, and quizzes specifically designed to help teachers incorporate environmental education into classroom activities, visit www.tourdeturtles.org.

Tour de Turtles would not have been possible without the generous support of Casa

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