

From: Kelly Stewart
Subject: Leatherback turtle internship

Leatherback Sea Turtle Project at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge

Seasonal Internship Opportunity

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is recruiting six interns to be hired by the Student Conservation Association (SCA) for the 2017 leatherback sea turtle nesting season at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge.

Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge (SPNWR) is located on the beautiful island of St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands. The leatherback sea turtle project began monitoring and management activities at SPNWR in 1977. The Project has since developed into one of the most comprehensive, long-term sea turtle research and recovery efforts in the world. This work contributed to the creation of Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge as the first refuge in the US Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge System established for the purpose of protecting endangered sea turtles. During the last three decades, there has been a substantial increase in the number of nesting leatherbacks, from less than 20 individuals in the early years to more than 100 in recent years.

Dates: 31 March to 10 July 2017

Duties:

- All training will be provided. Perform regular nightly beach patrols of the 3.0-km beach every 45 minutes to intercept all nesting turtles. Patrol from ~7:30 pm until 5:15 am. Tag nesting turtles with external flipper tags and internal PIT tags, collect genetic samples.
- Track the frequency and distribution of nesting activities by recording date, time and beach location for each activity. Relocate nests deposited in known beach erosion zones to stable beach areas. Excavate emerged nests and collect data on hatch success.
- Maintain project equipment and vehicles. Maintain and clean communal housing.
- Perform data entry and error check; summarize data and prepare reports.
- Participate in outreach activities in the community and on the refuge as needed.

Requirements:

- Optimal physical fitness required for walking ~10 miles each night in soft and wet sand, carrying a 25-lb backpack.
- Turtle experience is not required but you must have the proven ability to work night-time hours in the field.
- Patience to endure extreme outdoor conditions such as inclement weather (heat, humidity and rain), noxious insects (sand fleas and mosquitoes), and frequent changes in plans.
- Ability to work independently when required and as part of a team for the entire season.

- Enthusiasm and a positive attitude as field conditions vary daily and are unpredictable.
- Ability to live communally in shared housing in close quarters.
- Local applicants (US Virgin Islanders) are strongly encouraged to apply; regretfully we cannot accommodate any international applicants at this time.

To apply, submit a cover letter detailing how you meet the requirements, include your resume and 3 references (with contact info) to Claudia.Lombard@fws.gov. Deadline for applications is Thursday November 10, 2016.

Benefits: Round trip airfare up to \$1,115, \$100/week stipend, shared housing, local transportation, worker's compensation insurance, SCA uniform, and an incredible field experience in a beautiful tropical location are included. Opportunities for independent study are possible.