



VOLUNTEER BRIEF 2022

COMUNIDAD PROTECTORA DE TORTUGAS DE OSA

SEA TURTLE PROJECT



ABOUT THE PROJECT

COPROT was initiated in the middle of the 2018 turtle season in response to a number of environmental and social issues in the rural town of Carate, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica. The nearby beaches of Carate, Pejeperro and Rio Oro are some of the most important sea turtle nesting beaches in the South Pacific of Costa Rica, with approximately 7,000 nests being laid there each year by Olive Ridley (classified Vulnerable by the IUCN) and Pacific Green (classified as Endangered by the IUCN) turtles. There are also much smaller numbers of Hawksbills and Leatherbacks on occasions.



There were high levels of poaching and predation recorded on turtle nests in the area, and losses of up to 20% of nests per annum have been seen because of this.

Development in Carate and the surrounding areas in the past 25 years has mainly been driven by eco-tourism and is limited to the construction of eco-lodges and improvements to the nearby Corcovado National Park in order to cater for tourism and research. The area has a lot to offer, being called one of the most biologically intense places on the planet. These developments, although beneficial for the area, have had minimal impact on the opportunities or quality of life for local people in Carate. A small percentage have been able to find work in nearby ecolodges or on private properties, but there are still a large number that need to carry out illegal or environmentally damaging activities in order to make a living; namely gold-mining, turtle nest poaching and hunting.

Seeing the desperate need for more conservation and education in the area to protect the nesting beaches, along with the low quality of life and continuation of ecologically damaging activities carried out by local people, made us realise that creating opportunities for local people to work in conservation, or benefit indirectly from having a successful community lead conservation project in the area, could solve a number of pertinent issues at the same time. We opened the idea up to the local people in September 2018, and we have been overwhelmed by the support for this initiative collaboration with the project over the years.

HIGHLIGHTS

COPROT has now been consistently collecting nesting population data on the sea turtles in Rio Oro for over 4 years, and has reached the point of being a stable and dependable project both in terms of conservation and community support. We have covered the greatest area of beach over the longest period of time than any other organisation that has worked in the area previously, giving us an excellent foundation from which we can look at long-term population trends.

In this 4-year period, it has become clear that we have not only one of the busiest beaches for solitary nesting Olive Ridley turtles, but also one of the strongest populations of Pacific green turtles on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. This provides lots of exciting research and practical conservation opportunities that we are looking forward to developing in the coming years with some exciting projects in the pipeline.

We have also been able to provide paid employment to a number of community members since we initiated the project, both directly in sea turtle conservation and also in other areas like construction, transport and food services.



FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Due to the successful development of our conservation camp, we are now focusing on recruiting assistants, interns and volunteers that will enable us to cover more of the beach than ever before (we are covering between 6-8km currently, and are hoping to cover 15km in total). We want to ensure that we are able to carry out night patrols regularly, nest relocations either on the beach or to a hatchery, morning census, and frequent educational activities to keep increasing the reach and impact of the project. We are also looking to continue developing our research program, which will focus more on Pacific green turtles and climate change effects.

In order to fulfil our aim of promoting sustainable development, we will be looking to continue developing our permaculture project on the property, where we are able to grow/produce a considerable amount of our own food for people involved in the project and improve the productivity and sustainability of the land around us. We are also looking to improve our waste management and hopefully become a zero-waste organisation soon! A large part of reaching this goal will be our plastic upcycling project in partnership with In Mocean, we are able to encourage community members to collect marine plastic from the beaches and bring it to the project. Here we can sort the plastic in our plastic center and upcycle the plastic in to useful products that community members can sell to support their work.

Due to the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, the economy and consequently the tourism sector in Costa Rica has taken quite a hit. We are trying to revitalise the tourism industry in our region and increase awareness for sea turtle conservation. We have seen an increase in poaching in the last few years and we are hoping to mitigate that problem by reminding people about the importance of protecting the vulnerable sea turtle populations and the economic gains that can bring to communities.

OUR NEEDS

- **Volunteers**

Volunteers needed across the board! No experience necessary in any of the areas detailed below, but plenty of enthusiasm to get involved and learn as well as the ability to work hard without constant supervision. This is a completely grass roots project that is in its early stages of development, so we need positive people that are highly driven to initiate change in developing communities! This is a great opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and make a real difference to the turtles and local community members.

- **Conservation Assistants**

Candidates should have prior experience with sea turtle conservation in the field, or a strong biological background and eager to learn. The role will involve morning and night patrol work (long hours during high season), hatchery and hatchling management, training and/or supervising volunteers, carrying out environmental education activities, data input and analysis.

- **Marketing/Promotion Assistants**

Individuals that are able to assist us in spreading the word about our project, and encouraging other people to come out and help. Role will involve managing social media pages, searching for collaborators, sponsors and sources of funding, assisting in recruitment of volunteers to help with the project, coordinating any promotional activities or campaigns, website design/updating.



- **Volunteer Coordinators**

Members of the team who can manage others and coordinate the activities of the group. It is also very important that volunteers and assistants have an amazing time enjoying beautiful Costa Rica as well as working hard on the project, so the volunteer coordinator should be able to make their experience memorable! Role will involve coordinating volunteers prior to departure, helping with any travel arrangements, coordinating their daily activities and work schedule, planning free time activities, project logistics (food delivery, finances etc.).

- **Permaculture Developers**

Permaculture is something new to us, therefore we will require volunteers that already have a strong knowledge of permaculture practices and are willing to work hard to get this project going from scratch. Local staff and general volunteers will be there to support the manual side in their time outside of conservation activities. Role will involve designing a basic permaculture start-up project that will be easy to manage using the project's resources, teaching others about permaculture practices and their benefits for sustainable living, looking into ways we can improve the productivity of the area and making positive changes to our lifestyle, and waste management assistance (composting, recycling, upcycling etc.).

- **Community Development Assistants**

The community is the driving force behind this project, and we will need assistants to help to develop the community support side of the project. Role will involve giving English or computation classes, searching for training schemes that the local staff could undertake (first aid, construction, management of tourists, working in a team etc.), support with any other areas that could help provide our local staff with more opportunities or a better quality of life.

ABOUT THE CAMP

The camp itself is set back around 100m from Rio Oro beach, and consists of a two-story rancho with the dormitory on the second floor, a western toilet and shower block, and a large partially open kitchen and communal area. We have a solar panel charger in the kitchen that you can use to charge your phones, laptops and other equipment. We also have a greenhouse and recycling center. All buildings are made primarily with sustainable and/or upcycled materials in order to have the lowest possible impact on the environment. You will be provided with a single bunk bed (doubles are available upon request), with a single sheet set. We usually have mosquito nets available, however it is advisable to bring your own just in case.



We have limited WiFi connection (good for WhatsApp and email to keep in touch with family) and a solar panel to charge phones/laptops/torches/etc. Just expect to be a bit disconnected while you're here! Also, we are very conscious about our waste, so everything needs to be reused, recycled or sent back to Puerto Jiménez as trash. One of our goals is to become a zero waste facility within the next 5 years, and have the least possible impact on the environment. Please consider this when planning your trip, and think about what you're bringing to the camp. It will be your responsibility to get rid of the big waste articles (like shoes, big containers, batteries...) before your arrival, or bring them back with you when you leave. During your stay, please reduce the use of plastic and bring biodegradable soaps and shampoo when possible.

We share our home with a few animals, each one of them has their own spots around the camp. Betty is our beloved old dog, who spends her time sleeping in a hole she has dug in the ground somewhere. Mowgli, our jungle cat, is full of energy and you can find her running around camp when he's not taking a nap in the kitchen. Our cat has access to the dormitory space, so please be aware of this with allergies.

The beach is only 100 m away from camp, so you can always hear the sound of the waves from here. The tides in this part of the Pacific are too strong to swim or surf, but it offers a stunning view (especially at sunrise/sunset). If you enjoy water sports, there is Matapalo, one hour away, which is a popular region among swimmers and surfers, and it's more suitable for these kinds of activities.

The food we received at camp is mostly vegetarian. Meals are based on rice and legumes, such as lentils, beans, chickpeas... and also a variety of fruits and vegetables (some of them we bring from Puerto Jiménez, but others are from our own land and the surrounding fincas). We also have eggs, and sometimes meat or fish. These types of products can easily fit vegan/vegetarian diets, as well as gluten or lactose intolerance.



Volunteers and Research Assistants will share the responsibility of cooking and cleaning on a weekly schedule. People in charge of cooking and cleaning will cook breakfast, lunch and dinner for everybody at camp. We normally have these meals together. Here there is an example of a typical menu:

Breakfast: Pancakes, Gallo pinto (rice and beans), eggs and fried bananas, Oats and fruit

Lunch: Tortillas with refried beans and veggies, Vegetarian rice/pasta, Hummus with carrot sticks, Patacones, etc.

Dinner: Chickpeas with spinach, Tortillas with black beans, Vegetarian burgers and salad

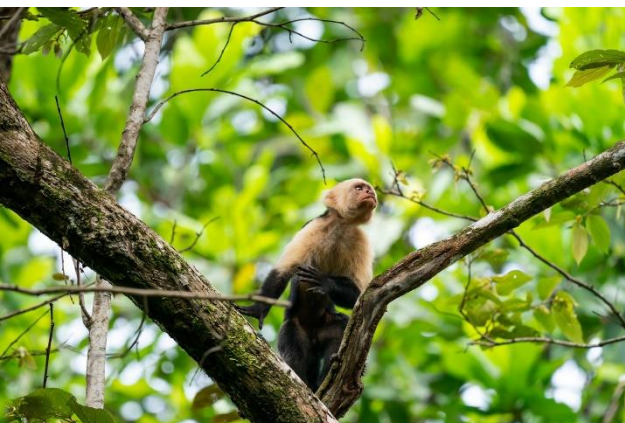
A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF VOLUNTEERING

As a volunteer, you will participate in daily turtle patrols, morning patrols (3-5 hrs) or night patrols (4-7 hrs). On the patrols you will protect new nests, record data on the nesting females, see flipper tagging, excavate hatched nests, assist in the tourism element and release hatchlings! During the day, we will also have beach clean-ups, plastic classification, English lessons for local people, presentations at our local schools, and tree planting and other maintenance projects around our camp!

We normally work very hard on the project, but there's still always plenty of time to relax and explore. There are a lot of different activities around the Osa Peninsula that can be arranged in advance and may have discounts for volunteers. Here you have a list of some

of these activities (these prices are just for guidance and may be subject to change) and also an example of how your week could be in the last page:

- Corcovado National Park (70 USD 1-day hike, 190 USD + for overnight stays).
- Surfing in Matapalo (50 USD lesson + renting the boards)
- Horse-riding (50 USD)
- Chocolate tour (50 USD)
- Whale and dolphin tour (50 USD)
- Waterfall hike (free, or 35 USD if you would like a guided tour)
- Guided gold-mining tour (25 USD)
- Plus a lot of free activities: night walks, jungle walks, beach cleans, game and movie night, pizza nights, etc.



COMMUNICATION AND HOW TO GET HERE

There is a colectivo (white Toyota 4x4) that runs on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (one in the morning, one in the afternoon) that passes by camp to take you in either direction towards Carate or Puerto Jimenez. During the heavy rainy season (Oct/Nov) flooding can make transportation more difficult and occasionally the bus is suspended for the day. The bus schedule is as follows:

LEAVING PUERTO JIMENEZ	LEAVING CARATE
06:00	08:30
13:30	16:00

Taxis are available in this region with advance notice, but for a price of roughly \$80 one way between Carate and Puerto Jimenez. It is also possible to walk to Carate from the base camp in Rio Oro, which takes about an hour along the beach (3km) or an hour and a half along the road (6km).

It is recommended that you buy a KOLBI SIM card for your phone for communicating while at camp (must be Kolbi as no other network providers reach to our area). There is very basic WiFi available at camp, but this can sometimes go down. There are a few eco-lodges in the area that have WiFi access that can be used if purchases are made (a drink or something) that can be visited in free time.

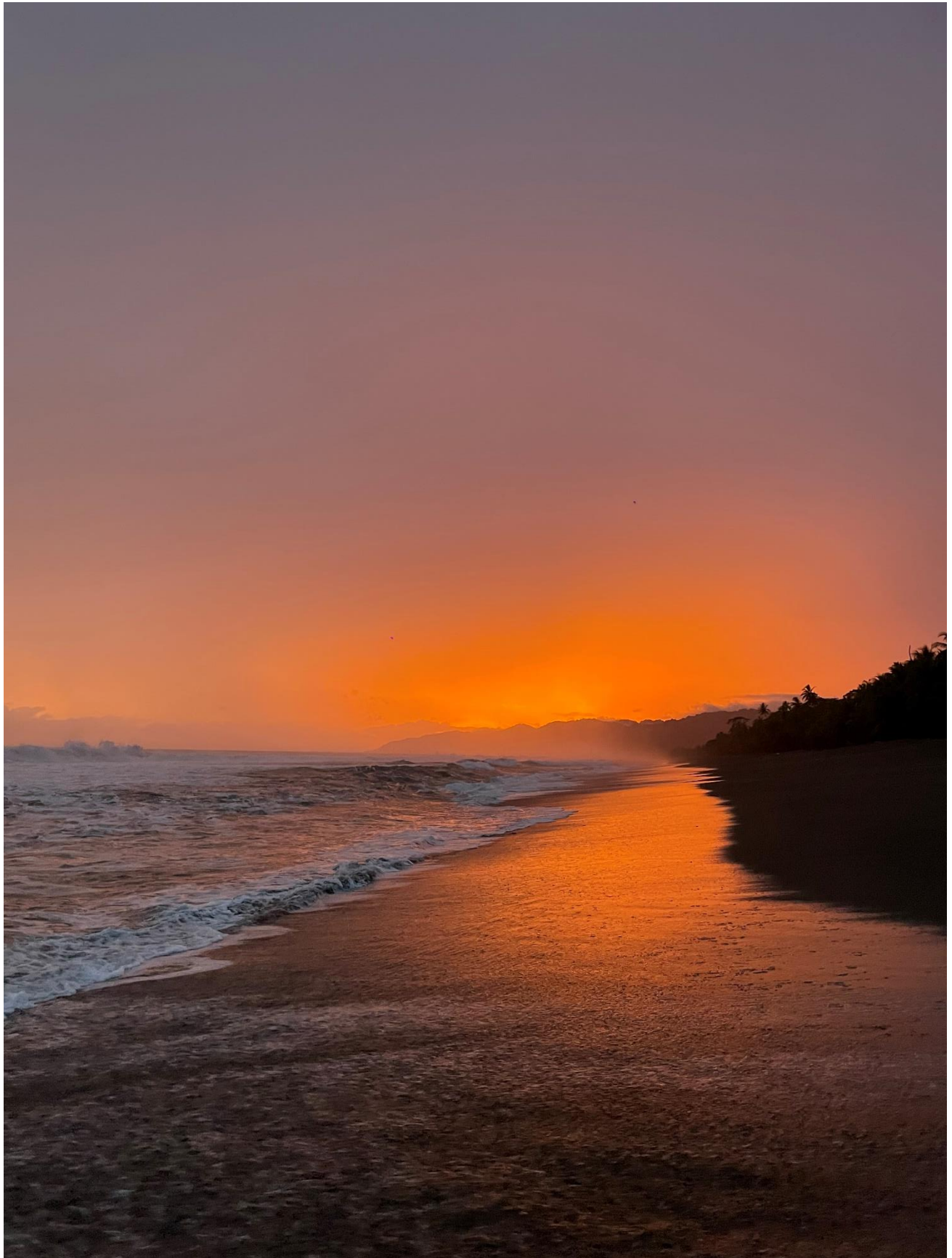
Mail and packages take about 4-8 weeks to arrive. They can be received at:

- [Insert name]
- Correos de Costa Rica
- Puerto Jiménez, Golfito, Puntarenas, Costa Rica. 60702.

The cost of staying in camp for volunteers is 200 USD per week (minimum stay). This amount covers food and lodging, as well as their training during their stay. Volunteers must cover their transportation costs to reach and leave COPROT, and any extra activities that they want to do during their free time. If you pay before your arrival through PayPal (tortugasdeosa@gmail.com), an extra 5% would be added due to the fees. On the other hand, the payment would be also done in cash on the first day of your arrival.

We have 6 weeks internships and Research Assistant positions available for those that have longer to dedicate to the project or have some prior field research experience.

You can find more information on these things on our website under Research Assistants [www.tortugasdeosa@gmail.com](mailto:tortugasdeosa@gmail.com)



WEEKLY PLANNER

	MORNING PATROL	MORNING	AFTERNOON	NIGHT PATROL
MON	BEACH 1	WELCOMING TALKS AND CAMP TOUR	JUNGLE WALK	BEACH 2
TUE	BEACH 2	TURTLE BIOLOGY AND ANATOMY TALK	BEACH CLEAN	BEACH 1
WED	BEACH 1	DATA ENTRY AND ORGANIZATION	GARDEN WORKSHOP	BEACH 2
THU	BEACH 2	EXCAVATION ON THE BEACH (PHI)	JUNGLE WALK	BEACH 1
FRI	BEACH 1	SPORT ROUTINE	WOMEN'S GROUP	BEACH 2
SAT	BEACH 2	DATA ENTRY AND ORGANIZATION	GAME, MOVIE AND PIZZA NIGHT	X
SUN	BEACH 1	FREE	DAY	X

An example of a standard week on camp.