



**WORLD  
WILDLIFE DAY**  
3 MARCH



## Media Release

### **Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance Launches on World Wildlife Day**

*A global network of veterinarians come together to save endangered sea turtles around the world*

**Florida - USA, Bohol - Philippines, Zurich - Switzerland, 1 March 2021:** This Wednesday, March 3, marks World Wildlife Day and the launch of the Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance (STRA) with Loggerhead Marinelife Center (LMC) as its flagship US hospital, under the patronage of Swiss based marine conservation organisation, OceanCare. This first ever global alliance provides a professionally designed cloud-based platform to share resources, information, and tools to bridge the gap between leading sea turtle hospitals and smaller-scale rescue centers in a truly collaborative approach. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists six of the seven species on their Red List as Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered. Some of the main threats include entanglement in ghost nets, motorcraft strikes, tumours and infectious diseases, which all require specialist knowledge and immediate medical care.

On World Wildlife Day 2021, the Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance (STRA) will officially welcome its first members to join the interactive global network. This new organisation was formed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge between veterinarians worldwide, working to provide the best possible care to injured sea turtles. STRA's goal is to advance medical practices globally by supporting smaller centres that currently have limited access to specialist knowledge and expertise in the field. This initiative reflects a need to address recent human activities that have threatened the survival of these ancient animals, human-wildlife conflict incidents such plastic ingestion due to increased marine debris, entanglements in fishing gear and blunt trauma from boat strikes and propeller injuries are just a few of these threats.

While decades of conservation efforts have shown positive results, tens of thousands of sea turtles are still lost each year to bycatch, poaching and illegal trade. Today, all seven species of sea turtles are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species ([CITES](#)), which includes all species that are threatened by extinction. "Marine turtles have survived the dinosaurs, meteorite impacts and the ice age. The biggest threat to their survival, however, are the impacts caused by humans. We are confident that STRA will become an effective global instrument to save many crucial lives", says Fabienne McLellan, Director International Relations at OceanCare.

The basic concept of STRA is a simple and effective one, it will distribute medical material to those that need it most and to share advances and expertise from rescue centres that are able to improve the care of turtles around the world. The new digital platform will include:

- A directory and an interactive global map of rescue centers to encourage collaboration, engagement, and act as a public reference of rescue locations for injured turtles

- enhanced connectivity between professionals and veterinary efforts
- live case consultations between members and the ability to provide telemedical support
- a centralised sick turtle management system to record medication, treatments and diseases

“International collaboration, by connecting the community of turtle veterinarians and rescue rehabilitators is crucial for rescuing sea turtles around the world - our vision is that STRA will make this happen” says Dr. Claire Petros, founder and project lead at STRA. “New technological tools will break physical barriers and give rescue centers the expanded expertise they need during remote surgeries and procedures.” adds Dr. Maximilian Polyak, Director of Rehabilitation at LMC and STRA Steering Committee Member.

The network will continue to develop and roll out new features for the remainder of 2021, and will be ready to scale up its impact during the first quarter of 2022, with the addition of new and exciting features to come.

Starting now, STRA is seeking collaborators and centres that are interested in joining the alliance. Importantly we are looking for veterinarians to provide support and expertise for crucial roles, including regional leaders, reviewers for medical procedures and content creators for our online and interactive platform.

“In a time where hope is often beyond the horizon, the Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance offers a concrete and practical solution to enhance medical practices and save lives where it matters the most.”

Dr. Alessandro Ponzio, co-founder of the Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines and STRA Steering Committee Member

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#### **Further links and information:**

- Website Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance: <https://seaturtlerescuealliance.org>
- Join the STRA by emailing [info@seaturtlerescuealliance.org](mailto:info@seaturtlerescuealliance.org) and on our website: <https://seaturtlerescuealliance.org/become-a-member/>
- Find us on Facebook (@seaturtlerescuealliance), Instagram (@seaturtlerescuealliance) and Twitter (@seaturtleRA)

#### **Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance (STRA)**

The Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance has been spearheaded and funded by OceanCare, a Swiss NGO, committed to protecting the oceans and marine fauna holding Special Consultative Status on marine issues within the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. STRA's steering committee consists of an international team of veterinarians working with sea turtles, including founder Dr. Claire Petros lead veterinarian of the Olive Ridley Project in the Maldives, Dr. Maximilian Polyak, Director of Rehabilitation at the Loggerhead Marineline Center, Florida, and Dr. Alessandro Ponzio, founder and one of the directors of Large Marine

Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines. Dr. Alex McGhee, a veterinarian that is now working as a business intelligence manager, and for STRA is developing data solutions for sea turtle patient recording and management. As well as veterinarians our steering committee has Fabienne McLellan, the Director of International Relations at OceanCare, and brings marine animal conservation and international policy expertise to the team. [www.seaturtlerescuealliance.org](http://www.seaturtlerescuealliance.org)

### **OceanCare**

OceanCare is a Swiss non-profit organisation. It was founded in 1989 and has a strong commitment to realistic and cooperative initiatives. The organisation works at national and international level in the areas of marine pollution, environmental changes, fisheries, whaling, sealing, captivity of marine mammals and public education. OceanCare holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is a partner of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the UNEP/CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS). OceanCare has also been accredited as a Major Group to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which is the governing body of UNEP and is a part of the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter. [www.oceancare.org](http://www.oceancare.org)

### **Loggerhead Marinelifelife Center (LMC)**

The Loggerhead Marinelifelife Center is a nonprofit sea turtle research, rehabilitation and educational institution that promotes conservation of ocean ecosystems with a focus on threatened and endangered sea turtles. The Center features an on-site hospital, research laboratory, educational exhibits and aquariums, and also operates the Juno Beach Pier, which hosts world-class angling and sightseeing. Situated on one of the world's most important sea turtle nesting beaches, Loggerhead Marinelifelife Center is open daily and hosts over 350,000 guests free-of-charge each year. The Center's conservation team works with 90 local and international organizations across six continents to form partnerships and share conservation initiatives and best practices that are core to its mission of ocean conservation. The Center is expanding and has launched its Waves of Progress capital expansion campaign, designed to accelerate and amplify LMC's conservation and education impact. When complete, the facility will offer one of the world's most advanced and unique experiences for guests and scientific partners. For more information, call (561) 627-8280 or visit [www.marinelife.org](http://www.marinelife.org)

### **LAMAVE**

The Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines (LAMAVE) is a Filipino non-government organisation dedicated to the conservation of marine megafauna. LAMAVE believe science, people and knowledge are key to protect the oceans and the species that call them home. The team, who come from different backgrounds are united by a shared passion to ensure a secure and prosperous ocean for marine life and people. LAMAVE began in 2010 in Bohol and since then have conducted scientific research and provided expertise and support to local communities and authorities across most of the country and expanding its outreach across the Coral Triangle. LAMAVE is directly involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of marine turtles across the Philippines in collaboration with local partners and government agencies.