

## INTERVIEW WITH ARCHIE CARR

1984

Diana Tonnesson

This month, as thousands of sea turtles return to their birthplace to lay their eggs on Florida's beaches--one of the largest loggerhead nesting grounds in the world--a University of Florida researcher says that he now knows where baby sea turtles spend their first year of life.

But the seaweed life raft off the Florida coast where the hatchlings live are also deathtraps laced with heavy metals, tar balls and other pollutants that are killing the baby turtles, according to biologist Archie Carr, who studied the "lost year" mystery for the last 36 years.

And, Carr says, pollution and poachers who kill adult turtles for their meat, tortoise shells and skins could wipe out the creatures that have existed for over 90 million years in less than 90.

Carr, author of 11 books and over 100 scientific papers and articles on sea turtles, will receive Audubon Society's Hal Borland Award for his nature writings at a banquet at UF's Florida State Museum. Carr is the first to receive the Audubon Society's highest award, created in 1983 to honor Hal Borland, one of America's best-loved nature writers. Carr's book, "The Windward Road," which describes the plight of the green turtles in the Caribbean, stirred an interest in the animals that led to a worldwide effort to protect them. A chapter in the book won the 1956 O. Henry Award for best short story.

Over the years, Carr and numerous other researchers in Florida and the Caribbean discovered baby loggerhead, hawksbill and green turtles clinging to seaweed rafts that collect in patches anywhere from a few feet to a few miles long in the Gulf Stream off the coast of Florida.

"The seaweed, the turtles, the small crabs and shrimp that they eat-- they're all pulled together into drift lines, which form wherever two ocean currents meet," said Carr who began a one-man crusade to save sea turtles nearly 40 years ago.

"Unfortunately, that's also where heavy metals, busted up Styrofoam, oil and oil pellets collect," he said. Carr tied up the loose ends of the lost-year mystery last year with support from the World Wildlife Fund.

One dead hatchling that washed up on the beach was dissected and found to have Styrofoam balls in its stomach, along with sargassum floats and tiny shrimp that turtles normally eat.

"Being rather simple minded creatures, in spite of their winning ways, baby turtles eat things they shouldn't--especially tar balls," Carr said.

Tar balls cause the turtles to choke to death or gum up their jaws, making it impossible for them to eat, he added. According to Carr, pollution of the seas may be the worst of all dangers to sea turtles because it wrecks the hatchling habitats and threatens to cancel out the animals' first two years of life.



But pollution isn't the only threat to the giant sea creatures that grow to weigh from 200 to 300 pounds.

"Ever since people have lived by the ocean, they have eaten sea turtles and their eggs," said Carr, a graduate research professor at UF.

"Exploitation of sea turtles by the early colonists and buccaneers--who turned to sea turtle meat when they ran out of salt-horse and bully beef on their long ocean voyages--really dragged the turtles down to their present low state," he said.

Four hundred years ago there were at least a dozen breeding colonies of green turtles in the Caribbean. Today only three remain.

"The main menace to green turtles today is the continuing international trade for their meat. People in the Caribbean freeze the meat and ship it off to the larger hotels in the tourist ports that want to offer an expanded seafood menu," he said.

Before loggerhead turtles were declared threatened, their eggs were used in baking, especially for wedding cakes. And hawksbill turtles, whose colorful shells are to the Japanese what ivory is to the Chinese, may soon be just a memory preserved in tortoise shell carvings.

"The Japanese have turned tortoise shell carving into a high art. As a result, the hawksbill turtle has been nearly wiped out," Carr said.

How can turtles be saved?

"It's easy to protect them from poachers. Just enforce the laws," Carr said. "Florida does a darn good job protecting sea turtles and so does Costa Rica. But in the Caribbean, little is being done to protect green turtles living there." Carr added that there are no laws to protect sea turtles from pollution, and if there were, they'd be difficult--if not impossible to enforce.

"As difficult as it is to get people to do easy things on an international scale, it's even more difficult to get them to do something that isn't so easy--like cleaning up the waters--especially when some of them don't think preserving sea turtles is all that important," he said.





# TURTLE TRUST

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A charitable trust for the protection of  
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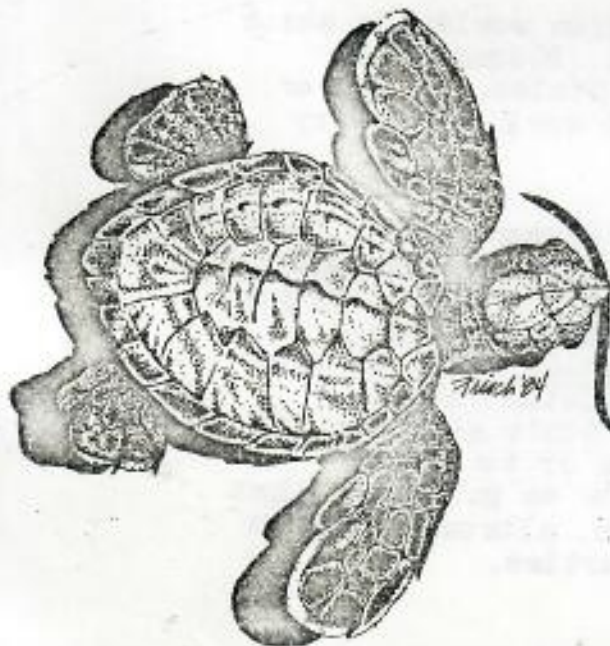


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Thank You to Fran Frisch of St. Paul, Minnesota who donated to Turtle Trust the outstanding artwork herein, except our letterhead turtle done by Ellen Beattie Nichol. Thanks also to J.J. Fann of Southern Bell who sent me the Carr interview in a telephone company envelope (I wondered if they had not received my payment). Thanks to Carl May of Lake Park, Florida for donating 3 hatchling redfoots, Geochelone carbonaria, which he had just hatched. Thanks to all who have helped.

Richard Cary Paull  
Trustee



In turtles we trust.

Turtle Trust Tee Shirts are now available with the above design by Fran Frisch. They cost \$8 each post paid in the United States. Order yours now.

If this box is checked your membership is due for renewal please continue with us.





## How Important are Turtles?

Richard Cary Paull, Trustee

About a year ago, I inquired about fund raising for Turtle Trust with a professional in that field. Somewhat to my surprise, he asked why I was involved in such a trivial pursuit. Instead of becoming angry, I tried to explain what we were attempting to do and how his efforts could be beneficial. I failed then.

Turtles are only a small part of the animal world. They have no close relatives. The other reptiles are either more closely related to each other or to birds than they are to turtles. The less than three hundred species of turtles are an important part of the earth's biomass-- especially in temperate and tropical rivers. Turtles are diverse and virtually ubiquitous within temperate and tropical regions.

Turtles are interesting. Some have the capacity to live more than 200 years. They have considerable memory and excellent vision. Many have complex and delicate courting behavior. Turtles maintain fertility either life long or for far longer than we do. Turtles have great recuperative powers from traumatic injury. All of the above are only a few of the reasons that the study of turtles holds great potential to benefit mankind, but turtles are worthy of study for their own sake.

Turtle Trust is now the largest organization worldwide which is dedicated to the study of all turtles. Because our membership is concentrated in the United States, we center our attention on our native forms, but we work with every available species.

To expand our efforts, we must have your support and involvement. Please complete the enclosed membership and pledge forms and return them to me by July 31, 1984. If you have contributed \$25 by then to Turtle Trust you will receive a copy of our Tortoises of the World. This portion of the Turtle Trust Turtle Book is now substantially complete and will be printed in August. Don't miss it. It is available as part of the entire volume or to our contributors of \$25 or more. There is now no guarantee that it will ever be available in another form, although we hope it may be. Together we shall not fail turtles.

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*A charitable trust for the protection of turtles especially through captive breeding.*

Richard Cary Paull, Trustee

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I hereby apply for membership in Turtle Trust and enclose my contribution for \$10 for one year or \$25 for three years.

My principal interest in turtles is \_\_\_\_\_

Articles I'd like to read: \_\_\_\_\_

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## PLEDGE

In order to provide some modicum of additional protection for turtles, we require the following pledge to be signed before you will be given information on habitat locations, taken on field trips, or given any other sensitive information.

I shall take no action which shall harm any wild population of turtles, nor give any information to anyone who shall not take this same pledge. If given habitat information through Turtle Trust, I shall not visit the location without permission from either the trustee of the person studying the site.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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Enjoy your Turtle. Soft Cover List Price \$1.50 Turtle Trust Contributor Price \$1.00.

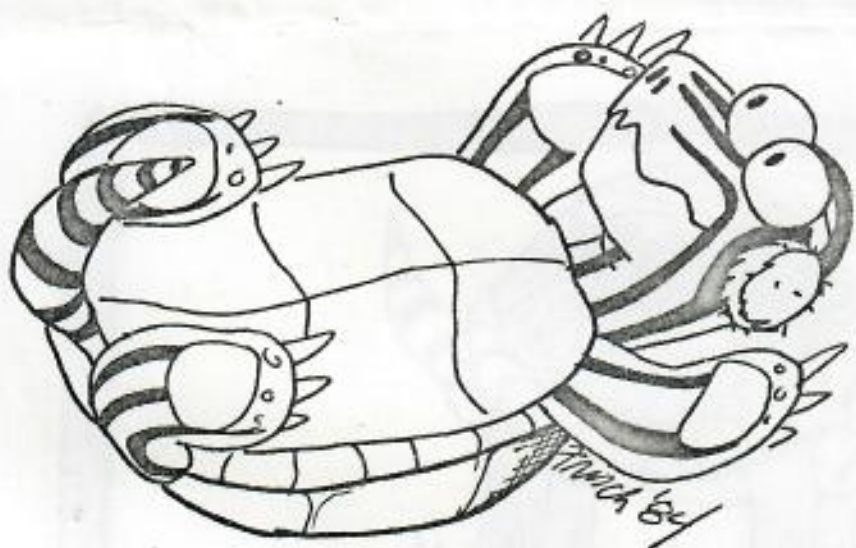
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Encyclopedia of Turtles by Peter Pritchard Hard Cover List Price \$49.95 Turtle Trust Contributor Price \$35.00.



WARM EARED SLIDED

The present, third, issue of For Your Eyes Only which should accompany this issue if we have your pledge, contains directions to see all of the native tortoises of North America in the wild. If you have not received this publication, which is free of additional charge to pledged Turtle Trust members, please fill out the enclosed pledge form and return it to me, even if you have already done so because we are missing some of the pledges. Thank you.



Short Report on Sick Cuora Discussed on Page 1 of Occasional Paper 19

Unfortunately, the edema reoccurred and we, Professor Riemer and his wife Jan were visiting me, took the patient to Fort Myers to see R.D. Bartlett at the Reptilian Breeding and Research Institute. The Cuora there went through another cycle of edema and caused us all, the Riemers, Dick and Patti Bartlett, and me, to make a concerned visit to Miracle Mile Animal Clinic in Fort Myers. There J.S. Wilson, D.V.M. was most helpful and started treating our little patient with a diuretic--Lasix. Almost immediately the little female Cuora started to urinate large quantities and again quickly returned to normal appearance. Unfortunately, Dr. Wilson indicated that the prognosis for her was poor. It is most likely that she suffers from heart or kidney failure. He attempted to obtain a reading from her on his heart monitor on Saturday afternoon, but was unable to do so. We appreciate his efforts which he donated to the cause.

Our little Cuora is still alive and has been joined by other Cuora galbinifrons in the country, but she fails to eat and we are still treating symptoms. The others of her species are reported, by Ellen Beattie Nichol, to eat first on earthworms and then on shrimp. These are the prettiest turtles from Asia and rival our spotted, Clemmys guttata, and painted turtles, Chrysemys picta, for the designation as most beautiful of their kind.

