



# ATLANTIC MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Promoting Marine Conservation Through Action



**NEWSLETTER**  
**JANUARY - JULY 2018**



@amseasorg



”

**WITH EVERY  
DROP OF  
WATER YOU  
DRINK, EVERY  
BREATH YOU  
TAKE, YOU ARE  
CONNECTED TO  
THE SEA.**

“



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## TEAM

**Chief Scientist and Founder**  
Robert A. DiGiovanni, Jr.

**Necropsy Program Coordinator**  
Kimberly Durham

**Field Biologist and Education Coordinator**  
Hannah Winslow

**Research Associate and Field Biologist**  
Allison DePerte

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*Cover photo: Deceased leatherback sea turtle examined in Southampton*



Seals observed in Shinnecock Inlet  
Robert A. DiGiovanni, Jr., AMCS Research Permit # 20294

# WHY OUR OFFICE IS IN THE FIELD



*AMCS Chief Scientist Robert A. DiGiovanni, Jr. and  
NOAA Fisheries GARFO Marine Mammal Response Coordinator Mendy Garron*

## FROM AMCS FOUNDER AND CHIEF SCIENTIST ROBERT A. DIGIOVANNI, JR.

Vision to reality; it is where dreams meet goals. Almost two years ago we embarked on this journey of promoting marine conservation through action. Thanks to you, we have made this dream a reality. There were many questions as to why an organization like Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) was needed. We heard things like “Isn’t this already being done?” and “What is the big deal? Aren’t these animals doing well?” Every idea begins with questions. AMCS asked, “What are we missing? What are the impacts of our actions? Do people care what is harming these amazing marine animals, and can we engage and inspire the public to take action to prevent the threats these animals face from happening?”

It turns out we were not the only ones looking for these answers. It turns out there is a need for an organization like ours.

The marine environment is in danger. My mother told me early on you learn who your real friends are when times are tough. These times are here, but we can fix these problems together. We’re so thankful for the support we’ve been shown and it is our aim for us as a society to continue being a good friend to the environment and its inhabitants.

As you will see in the pages to come, it has been a busy year so far for AMCS. We responded to more than 85 stranded animals on New York shores, picked up more than 1,000 pounds of trash from local beaches, and worked with community members like you to promote marine conservation through action. We can, and will, do more. Thank you all for your continued support.



# EDUCATE. INSPIRE. TAKE ACTION.

Beach cleanup with  
Peconic Community School



Want to join us for an upcoming event? Visit [amseas.org/events](http://amseas.org/events) for details.

Whether it is inspiring the next generation of marine biologists and environmentalists or reminding people of the animals we share our waters with, education is essential in promoting marine conservation. Thanks to your support, we are taking action in the community. From January through July we...

- **led 17 beach cleanups**, collecting more than **1,030 pounds of trash**
- **participated in 56 events** with school and community groups
- **hosted 5 seal cruises** around Shinnecock Bay, observing an average of 100 animals per cruise and documenting their behavior

We took action with communities across Long Island, including [Avalon Park's S.T.A.T.E. program](#), [LT Michael Murphy Division of the US Naval Sea Cadet Corps](#), [Smithtown Library](#), [All Our Energy](#), [Hampton Bays Library](#), [Port Jefferson Library](#), [Peconic Community School](#), [Silver Gull and Breezy Point Beach Clubs](#), [US Coast Guard Station Shinnecock](#), [Long Island Maritime Museum](#), and [Quogue Library](#), among others.

We want to do more. Invite us to speak at your school, library, community center or conduct a beach cleanup in your area.

**Email [education@amseas.org](mailto:education@amseas.org)**



We're in the field, responding to unprecedented large whale stranding increases, educating the public, researching with partners, fighting single-use plastics, and promoting marine conservation through action... all thanks to you.

## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

### AND WHY THEY SUPPORT AMCS

*"So thankful for what AMCS does to help out with the water culture of our area." - TK, K.*

*"AMCS is a great organization that cares and is very enthusiastic about marine mammals, sea turtles, and the ecosystem." - Michael, R.*

*"Great group that educates people and cares for our ocean populations." - Madeline, K.*

Please, support our mission of promoting marine conservation through action. Make your tax-deductible donation today.

[bit.ly/donatefall2018](https://bit.ly/donatefall2018)





# UNDERSTANDING THE THREATS THEY FACE

*AMCS responds to a stranded humpback whale in Amagansett, July 2018*

Atlantic Marine Conservation Society is the lead large whale response organization in New York State, and is responsible for all of the large whales that wash up on our shores. We also respond to deceased dolphins, porpoises, seals and sea turtles.

Our team has conducted stranding investigations to learn what is impacting marine wildlife on **48 seals, 29 sea turtles, and 21 cetaceans** from January through July of this year.

Since January 2016, an Unusual Mortality Event (UME) for humpback whales has been in effect along the Atlantic Coast. There have been 77 strandings, 13 of which were in New York. Of these, 10 showed evidence of blunt force trauma consistent with vessel strike.

Since the declaration of the minke whale UME in 2017, AMCS responded to 10 of the 53 animals that have stranded. There is also a UME in effect for North Atlantic right whales.

From January through July of this year, **6 of the 7 large whales** we responded to in the state had signs of human-induced mortality, including anthropogenic causes such as vessel strike and entanglement.

With your support, we will continue conducting stranding investigations, sharing findings with partners, and looking for ways to mitigate the negative environmental impacts facing these animals.

**Find large whale stranding stories at [amseas.org/news](https://amseas.org/news)**



# THE PROBLEM OF PLASTIC

Straws are among the top 10 items collected during beach cleanups



You may have seen in the news recently a movement against single-use plastics like straws. Many restaurants have been motivated to switch to paper or reusable alternatives. Atlantic Marine Conservation Society has partnered with [Group for the East End](#) and the [Surfrider Foundation's Eastern Long Island Chapter](#) to raise an awareness for the #StrawlessSummerELI campaign, which has recently expanded to include all of Suffolk County thanks to Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn.

Plastic bags and other plastic marine debris are hurting our marine life. In Southampton this summer, a deceased 4-foot long leatherback sea turtle was found with a 13-gallon plastic garbage bag in its stomach, along with plastic food wrappers and other small pieces.

Ask your local restaurants, bars, and cafes to stop using single-use plastics and offer paper or reusable alternatives instead. Talk to friends and family about carrying their own reusable alternatives. You can also join us for a beach cleanup or conduct one of your own and share your findings with us.



Plastic found inside a deceased leatherback sea turtle's stomach

Share your findings with us at [amseas.org/enter-a-beach-cleanup](https://amseas.org/enter-a-beach-cleanup)



# HELP SAVE SEA TURTLES IN NEW YORK

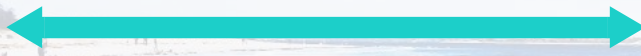


*Kemp's ridley sea turtle falls victim to cold stunning*

Want to join us for an upcoming event? Visit [amseas.org/events](http://amseas.org/events) for details.

## COLD STUN SEA TURTLE SEASON IS COMING...

As summer ends and the cooler fall weather finds its way to New York, the four different species of sea turtles that utilize our waters migrate south to warmer waters. Atlantic green, Kemp's ridley, loggerhead, and leatherback sea turtles that fail to move out of our waters before the first cold snap will become hypothermic, stop swimming and eating, and may wash up on our shores. When we act quickly there is a chance we can save them. You can help.



While you are walking, why not pick up any garbage you see, to increase the impact of your walk? Let us know what garbage you collected!



Share your finding with us at [amseas.org/enter-a-beach-cleanup](http://amseas.org/enter-a-beach-cleanup)

- Scour the wrack line where sea grass and debris wash up to look for turtles that may be mixed in, especially after high tide
- Enter the NYS Stranding Hotline number **(631) 369-9829** into your cell phone and call immediately if you find a sea turtle, even if you think it's deceased
- Attend an Atlantic Marine Conservation Society training presentation and beach walk at Hallock State Park Preserve, Orient Beach State Park, and the South Fork Natural History Museum to learn what to do if you find a turtle on the beach (Like us on Facebook and find event listings!)



# A COMMON GOAL



*Northwest Atlantic seal survey crew ready for takeoff*

## NORTHWEST ATLANTIC SEAL SURVEY

Atlantic Marine Conservation Society is pleased to be partnering with many other organizations across the country to further our mission.

We are working with [National Marine Sanctuary Foundation](#), [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center](#), [Northwest Atlantic Seal Research Consortium](#), [Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University](#), and [Marine Mammals of Maine](#) to monitor gray seals in the northwest Atlantic. This project includes conducting health assessment studies on Muskeget Island off Nantucket and Monomoy in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. We will also attach 20 satellite tags provided by [National Marine Sanctuary Foundation](#) on seals to understand their movements.

Over the last 30 years we have observed an increase in the number of seals in our waters. This project will help understand the health and movements of these animals throughout the region and within the [Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary](#). We can learn more about the success of conservation efforts and how these animals manage the changing environment, both of which are critical to understanding the threats and impacts they face.



*Robert A. DiGiovanni, Jr. checks out the Hurricane Hunters at Long Island MacArthur Airport*



# ...CONTINUED



*Partnerships advance research efforts within the stranding network*

## OLIVE RIDLEY SATELLITE TAGGING PROJECT - JALISCO, MEXICO

In partnership with [Western Connecticut State University](#), [University of Guadalajara](#), and [Pacific Marine Mammal Center](#), Atlantic Marine Conservation Society will be part of a team looking at the post-nesting movement of olive ridley sea turtles on two nesting beaches. Continuing work that began in 2008, AMCS Founder and Chief Scientist Robert A. DiGiovanni, Jr. will be traveling to Mexico this fall to attach satellite tags to nesting female sea turtles. This work is important to understand where these animals travel and how they live in the environment. This data can be used by local government officials to protect olive ridley sea turtles and their critical habitats. During this trip DiGiovanni and his colleagues will also be working with local conservation biologists to

enhance the research efforts they are already undertaking.

AMCS is also proud to work with [New York State Department of Environmental Conservation](#), [Mystic Aquarium](#), [Marine Mammals of Maine](#), [National Marine Life Center](#), [Wildlife Conservation Society](#), and more to learn about the marine environment, its inhabitants, and what can be done to protect them for generations to come.



*Satellite tags provide valuable information about sea turtle travel patterns*

**Help support AMCS join these important projects.  
Donate at [bit.ly/donatefall2018](https://bit.ly/donatefall2018)**



# INCREASING OUR CAPABILITIES



BLUE HERON  
NATURE CENTER



*Large whale response training with  
NYC Parks on Staten Island*

Large whale strandings have increased and a majority of recent responses have taken place near New York City.

Atlantic Marine Conservation Society biologists have been working with the [New York City Parks](#) staff to develop protocols for marine mammal and sea turtle strandings in their response areas. These working relationships are crucial to successful investigations and enable first responders like the AMCS team to get the resources they need quickly.

Along with the NYC Parks trainings, AMCS continues to hold monthly volunteer orientations to welcome new partners to the program. The [Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai](#) recently joined AMCS by hosting a large whale necropsy training session for their students. They are now well equipped to help AMCS investigate large whale deaths and have become a vital resource.

Volunteers and interns play an important role in AMCS. They lead beach cleanups and educational presentations, conduct seal surveys and patrol beaches for cold stunned sea turtles, and more. Take your passion to the next level and join us!

Be part of the team whose office is in the field. Research what's impacting the marine environment and learn how to help. Educate the public to embrace marine conservation and inspire them to take action. Join us at the La Quinta Inn and Suites in Bohemia every third Thursday of the month for a volunteer orientation.

Learn more and reserve your spot by  
visiting [amseas.org/volunteer](https://amseas.org/volunteer)



Interested in becoming an intern?  
Email [education@amseas.org](mailto:education@amseas.org)



# THANK YOU

*As a nonprofit organization, we rely on the support of grants to help carry out our mission.*

## MOBILE RESPONSE PROGRAM

We're building our mobile response program to increase stranding response capacity in New York State. Thank you to [SeaWorld for donating trailer funds](#) to get this program started! We need \$55,000 to complete the project. You can help! Donate today at [bit.ly/donatefall2018](http://bit.ly/donatefall2018)

## PRESCOTT GRANT

In August, AMCS was awarded a prestigious [John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Program Grant for \\$100,000](#) for our program! This will help increase stranding response, support large whale response, promote education programs, and more. We still need your help in keeping the momentum going and continue responding to these animals.

## TRAINING PROGRAM

[TD Charitable Foundation](#) is helping increase stranding response in New York State by funding critical training programs led by AMCS Founder and Chief Scientist, Robert A. DiGiovanni, Jr. We thank them for their generous [\\$5,000](#) donation!

## STRANDING INVESTIGATIONS

The [Laurie Landeau Foundation](#) knows it is crucial to learn what threats marine animals are facing. They generously donated [\\$10,000](#) to support our stranding investigations program!

## MATCHING GRANT SUCCESS

This year, the [Andrew Sabin Family Foundation](#) challenged us to raise [\\$10,000](#) for our stranding investigation program. Thanks to you, we reached our goal at the end of July and the foundation generously matched your donations!



*Volunteer and intern trainings further stranding investigation efforts*

Interested in being a  
Corporate Sponsor?

Call: 631.317.0030



# WHAT'S COMING UP

ARE YOU SIGNED UP FOR OUR  
DIGITAL NEWSLETTERS?

AMCS + Sea Turtle Recovery  
Partner to Satellite Tag & Track  
Rehabilitated Sea Turtles

Working in the Northeast to  
Address the Unusual Mortality  
Event for Seals - How Will This  
Impact New York?

Connect Kids to Parks: Learning  
How to Help Save Sea Turtles in  
New York

Building a Mobile Response Unit  
Help Us Fund This Program!

Join us for seal cruises around  
Shinnecock Bay from January  
through April 2019. Learn more  
at [amseas.org/events](http://amseas.org/events)

**[bit.ly/donatefall2018](http://bit.ly/donatefall2018)**

Sea turtle release with Sea Turtle Recovery  
Robert A. DiGiovanni, Jr., AMCS Research Permit # 20294