



CALL OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

Media Kit



Call of the Ancient Mariner



Film Synopsis

Call of the Mariner tells the story of an iconic creature, the sea turtle, that has been the centerpiece for hundreds of cultures serving as the heart of creation, as a deity, as a trickster and much more. What better way to tell the story of man's connection to nature and the ocean than sea turtles, given our long-time fascination with them. The film explores the amazing world of turtles and man through thousands of years and how our futures are intertwined.



The Power of Turtles Over Man

Everything about turtles is unusual. Their shell, their connection to land and sea, their mysterious disappearance into the wide sea, returning back to the beach where they were born (or nearby) after traveling as far as half-way around the world.

This fascination has mesmerized man throughout history and they continue to intrigue us today.

Scientists call sea turtles charismatic mega-fauna, animals with big eyes and a non-threatening disposition, but the scientific term doesn't totally explain the powerful attraction humans have with them. Thousands of people show up at turtle releases across the country, many people have an epiphany when they encounter a turtle nesting on the beach. In olden days, turtles inspired art, spiritual celebrations, and folklore. Today, they inspire thousands of people to volunteer with turtle patrols, lead to the creation of turtle paraphernalia of all types and stripes from t-shirts to tattoos. In the long-run hopefully they will also inspire greater stewardship efforts on our part. Not only how we protect our beaches, but how we live our lives that directly impacts the ocean.



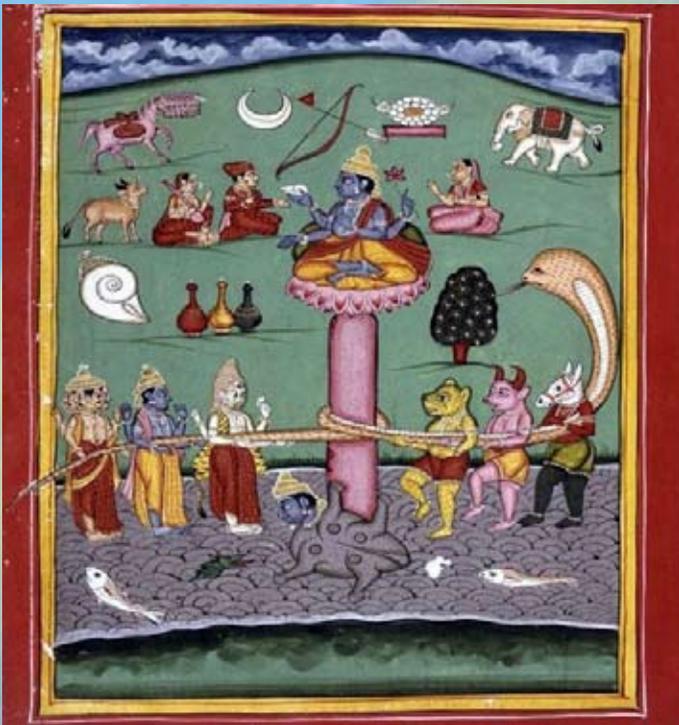
Seabrook Island Turtle Patrol at Fourth of July celebration.

courtesy Scott Sherbert

Man's Historical Connection to Turtles



Since the dawn of man, cultures throughout the world have centered their cultural celebrations, their legends and their spiritual representations on turtles. Archaeologists have found rock art that is thousands of years old depicting sea turtles where there hasn't been any water for many years.



In Hinduism, Kurma, the second avator of Vishnu, took the form of a turtle to stir the ocean of milk in order to save the world. The Iroquois or Haudenosaunee tribe as well as many other Native American tribes believe that the earth was born on a back of a turtle, hence the name Turtle Island for the world. The Comca'ac or Seri Indians of Sonora, Mexico, believe the Leatherback is their God and continue to hold ceremonies when the sea turtle comes to shore.

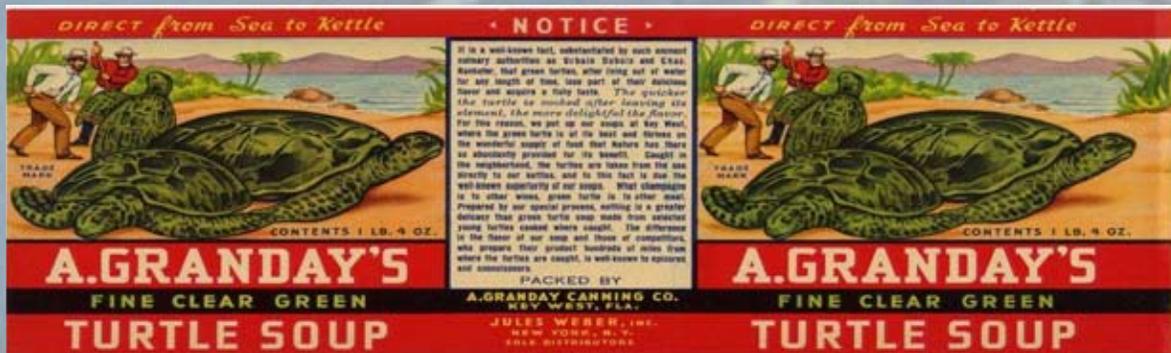
All around the world, the turtle is revered as a symbol of wisdom, a trickster, a source of sexual power and of longevity. As a result, the first coin created in Ancient Greece is festooned with a sea turtle. The first writing is thought to have originated with the Chinese called plastro-mancy where a turtle shell would be inscribed and then burned in the fire to help prophesize the future. The Mayan, one of the most sophisticated cultures in the world, were able to make accurate astrological based on the scutes of a turtle.





Because turtles were so revered in many cultures, there was a natural tendency to constrain their use or abuse to protect them. Some cultures, like those in Polynesian countries, had strict rules on the hunting and eating of turtles. Failure to follow them could lead to a death sentence. However, as commercial practices grew with international shipping and

trading, turtles increasingly became a commodity that were traded for things that nations couldn't get, which did not bode well for the turtle. As a result, the turtle who had been a trickster throughout many cultures of the world found that the trick was on them.



Turtle Threats

Many turtles, particularly sea turtles are endangered. Of the seven sea turtles in the world, all are considered endangered species and some are seriously threatened. Much of this has to do with the fact that turtles live their lives close to where humans are fishing and boating. Not very long ago, it was estimated that 45,000 sea turtles were dying each year in the Gulf of Mexico alone due to shrimp trawling.



Leatherback caught in long line.
Phillip Miller

In addition to fishing, plastics pose a special concern for turtles given that plastic garbage often resembles a food source. Climate change also directly impacts turtles in many ways. Coral reefs are stressed and many turtles feed in reefs. Higher temperatures directly effect the gender of sea turtles. Temperatures above 82 degrees favor female turtles and scientists are

finding that 80-90% of new born turtles are female, causing concern for the continuity of the species. Rising seas affect beaches, due to the loss of sand necessary for mature females to nest as well as man-made armoring of beaches that prevent turtles to reach the beach.

Conservation Success Stories

Despite the concerns for the future of sea turtles, turtles are very resilient creatures having withstood every major extinction throughout their 150 million year history. Additionally, man has become better stewards of the ocean and of turtles.

TEDs (turtle excluder devices) that were introduced in the 1970's save the lives of tens of thousands of sea turtles every year.



Turtle conservation activity in Baja, Mexico.
courtesy Neil Osbourne



Turtle excluder devices have been a key turtle conservation tool.

courtesy NOAA

Neurobiology and Modern Spiritualism

Recent studies confirm that the ocean has a healing effect on those who spend time with it. Nature is a powerful elixir that can help people living stressful lives better connect with something more powerful than themselves.

The fact that sea turtles have played such a powerful role in cultures around the world suggest that man's spiritual connection to nature has been a central part of their psyche for thousands of years. By better understanding the guidance and wisdom that sea turtles have offered man throughout our history, we might find we can better take on the challenges that we encounter, challenges that our elders tackled long before us.

Additionally, there are hundreds of turtle patrols throughout the world, over one thousand volunteers on the East Coast of the US alone working to monitor nests, educate the public on beach stewardship and rescue stranded sea turtles.

Turtle hospitals like that at the South Carolina Aquarium help to rehabilitate turtles injured by boat strikes, hooks and disease.



Dr. J. Nichols launched a blue marble campaign to help people better connect to the ocean. *courtesy Wallace J. Nichols*

Turtle Lessons



In discussion with sea turtle experts, tribal leaders, turtle patrol volunteers and archaeologists, a similar theme arises. Turtles are not just fascinating creatures but they have many important lessons to teach. Scientists reflect on “the patience of a turtle” while studying these fascinating creatures. Tribal members consider the turtle’s calm disposition and its refusal to be bothered by

minor inconveniences as an attribute that they’ve learned from.

Historians and archaeologists notice that because turtles lay so many eggs, they have become a symbol of femininity and fertility.

Are there lessons we can still learn from turtles today?

What Would We Lose Should They Vanish From the Earth?



It’s clear what turtles would lose should our stewardship efforts fall short. But what would we lose?

Looking at the issue of conservation from the perspective of the loss to our culture, to our sense of well-being, to the magic of nature puts a very different perspective on the value of such iconic creatures as sea turtles.



Native tribes consider turtles their ancestors, their brothers, folklore depicts turtles as tricksters, children flock to the turtle tank at the local aquarium and people are mesmerized when they encounter a turtle in the wild. There's no doubt that should turtles go missing, a part of ourselves would be missing as well. The path to bringing them back is known. The consequences to our own happiness is also clear.

Maybe the road ahead requires us to look back at human history and imagination and how much we've connected our own personal star to turtles.

The Making of CALL OF THE ANCIENT MARINER



Mariner has been nearly three years in the making. It was inspired by sea turtles and the fascinating journey that filmmaker David Weintraub embarked on where he encountered hundreds of turtles and turtle people. He realized the powerful ties that man has had with turtles throughout most of our history and a story that needed to be told.



THE FILMMAKER

David Weintraub
Director/Producer

As a writer, filmmaker, environmentalist and oral historian, I have spent several decades expanding on my twin passions: natural heritage protection and cultural preservation. The fruits of this work have included award-winning documentary films, over a dozen published books, and more. **Call of the Ancient Mariner** continues to support my twin passions by exploring the untold story of man and sea turtles.

THE SCIENTIFIC TEAM



Mariner's Scientific Team consists of leading sea turtle experts from across the U.S. and around the world. Nearly three dozen scientists participated in this project. Some who advised and/or participated in the film include: **David Owens**, Marine Biologist and professor at College for Charleston, **Dr. Lew Ehrhart**, who worked with

the University of Central Florida for thirty years creating a trailblazing turtle program in Florida, **Dr. Wallace J. Nichols**, bestselling author of *Blue Mind* working with the California Academy of Sciences, **Dr. Blair Witherington**, marine biologist with the Florida Wildlife Commission, **Dr. Terry Norton**, founder of the Georgia Sea Turtle Hospital, **Jack Frazier**, Archaeozoologist working with the Smithsonian Institution, **Sally Murphy** founder of the sea turtle conservation program for South Carolina, as well as many others.



NATIVE VOICES

Native Voices are an essential part of documenting man's long time connection to sea turtles. **Mariner** partnered with tribal leaders throughout the Southeast United States and internationally. Some of these partners include the Waccamaw Tribe of South Carolina, Ghana Wildlife Commission, Lumbee Tribe of South Carolina, Cherokee Tribe of South Carolina, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Edisto Tribe of South Carolina, the Comca'ac Tribe of Senora Mexico, and the Kuna tribe of Armila, Panama.

For more information on Mariner, log on to www.saveculture.org

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