

WORLD TURTLE DAY May 23rd



AMERICAN
TORTOISE
RESCUE

World Turtle Day 2013 Case Study

American Tortoise Rescue (ATR) (www.tortoise.com), a nonprofit organization established in 1990 for the protection of all species of tortoise and turtle, sponsored its 13th annual World Turtle Day on May 23rd, 2013. Turtles and tortoises (members of the order Testudines) have been around for more than 200 million years. But with approximately 50% of all species considered threatened, this day is perfect to celebrate these ancient creatures.

The day was created as an annual observance to help people celebrate turtles and tortoises and protect their disappearing habitats around the globe. **Susan Tellem, APR, a public relations professional in Los Angeles,** founded ATR along with her husband Marshall Thompson, to advocate humane treatment of all animals, including reptiles. There was no national turtle or tortoise rescue when we started, so we filled a void as a clearinghouse of information on the internet and a rescue organization helping place more than 3,000 animals in forever homes throughout the U.S.

ATR assists law enforcement when undersized or endangered turtles are confiscated and provides helpful information and referrals to persons with sick, neglected or abandoned turtles

Research

Being a nonprofit at the bottom of the donation food chain - we are not warm and fuzzy like other animals that inspire one to give - we conducted informal research that gave us enough valuable information to shape the campaign's goals, strategies and messages. As the only national rescue in the country, it was rather easy to see that there were no other competing observances.

After reviewing Chase's Book of Annual Events and a diligent internet search 13 years ago, I discovered that there was no observance for turtles and tortoises to celebrate their uniqueness and their plight. I registered the name World Turtle Day and it has been in the book every year. From the first year in 2000, along with the growth in the internet and social media, World Turtle Day went from a local project to one that is now celebrated throughout the globe.

Judging by the questions and comments delivered each day in my inbox and on social media, research indicated that people are hungry for this type of event to bring recognition to turtles and tortoises.

Objectives

- Provide a vehicle to spread the word about celebrating turtles and tortoises while at the same time, offer information about the plight of these animals in the wild.
- Provide a international platform to reach new friends and donors.
- Create a new vehicle for fundraising.
- Gain traction in countries throughout the world where turtles and tortoises are being decimated or are part of a conservation effort.
- Broaden our social media reach.
- Team up with Groupon to create a special fundraising campaign.
- Use promoted posts on Facebook to increase our reach to new turtle lovers.

Target Audiences

- Men, women and children six to 65
- Turtle and tortoise lovers
- Newbies wanting to learn more
- Countries where turtles and tortoises are being decimated in the wild
- Social media audiences
- Primary and secondary schools
- Groupon buyers

Execution and Implementation

Drafted a press release for long lead distribution and sent it to print media, including general media with calendar sections, animal and wildlife, school and other media that might be interested in World Turtle Day.

Distributed the press release to a variety of print, broadcast and web-based media as the month arrived to generate interest and spread the word.

(NOTE: There is a downside to press coverage so we are careful in how we outreach - people do not donate money, they want to dump their turtles and tortoises after they see press coverage. For this reason, we do not do much TV outreach. It has proved overwhelming for us with people dumping their animals after seeing a segment.)

Contacted Groupon Grassroots, the fundraising arm of Groupon to help us create a project that would garner donations in honor of World Turtle Day 2013. This would be the second World Turtle Day project with Groupon.

<http://www.groupon.com/deals/american-tortoise-rescue-1>

Implemented a variety of Facebook contests to generate excitement and increase followers.

Created several Constant Contact email blasts to our list of opt ins.

Enlisted a toy company's help by donating plush turtles for giveaways on Facebook.

Updated our website www.tortoise.com regularly with information about World Turtle Day and the Groupon Grassroots campaign.

Measurement/Evaluation

The reach this year was phenomenal. The likes and shares shares on Facebook were at a high level. The following is an overview of how we measured success:

Twitter #worldturtleday 30 million impressions including Jimmy Kimmel's show (<http://bit.ly/1dFMf2T>)

Facebook 5205 likes - 2,100 new likes in a week
<https://www.facebook.com/WorldTurtleDay>

Google – 87,600 million results!

Google images <http://bit.ly/17t4V0m>

Instagram <http://statigr.am/tag/worldturtleday>

Pinterest <http://pinterest.com/upwell/world-turtle-day-is-may-23>

YouTube <http://bit.ly/132fw0E>

Reddit <http://www.reddit.com/search?q=world+turtle+day>

Buzzfeed <http://bit.ly/16R5YZs>

tumblr <http://www.tumblr.net/tagged/world-turtle-day>

Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Turtle_Day

Results

World Turtle Day 2013 was by far the biggest international reach to date. My biggest smile was an email from Pakistan asking me to post the photo "Save Turtles" with a group of Pakistani men and women holding letters in traditional dress. Participating locations included, but were not limited to U.S., Canada, Australia, UK, Borneo, Pakistan, Malaysia, Mozambique, Belize, Africa, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Japan and China.

Groupon Grassroots helped us raise \$3,610 for our turtle hospital refurbishing.

Aquariums and zoos throughout the world held World Turtle Day observations to showcase their work in turtle and tortoise conservation, including Disney Parks.

More than 160 free World Turtle Day lesson plans and teaching materials were sent out to classrooms for use with over 5,500 students.

Stories reaching hundreds of thousands of readers appeared around the world: Huffington Post, Vetstreet.com, Cambridge UK News, greenpeace blog, Environmental News Network, New Zealand News, Pakistan Daily Times, Auckland News, The Guardian and places we have never even heard of.

Mutts cartoon featured World Turtle Day seen in more than 500 U.S. <http://bit.ly/16O0IG8> newspapers.

Mentioned in many books, including Around the World in 80 Ways, Weird Wacky Holiday Marketing Guide, Big Book of Boy Stuff, Parenting Unplugged, Tortoise, The Long, Hot Summer, 100 Ways to Get Students Involved, The Teacher's Calendar, etc.

123 greeting cards featured World Turtle Day http://www.123greetings.com/events/turtle_day

CARE2 Make a difference petition site <http://bit.ly/14ZEAnK>

We shared ongoing information through Constant Contact to our almost 3,000 opt in readers by writing announcements to drive traffic to Facebook, twitter and our Groupon donation page.

We sold Shaquille O'Neal's amazing suit that I purchased at a charity auction 10 years ago for \$100 on Ebay's nonprofit auction site for \$180 to benefit the tortoises even though it had moth holes!