



Baby green turtle. © DAVID DOUBILET / UNDERSEA IMAGES, INC.

The sea turtle conservation movement numbers in the thousands of concerned people from all walks of life and the far corners of the planet. We are organized, powerful, and committed. It is time for us to wield our power and step up our cause a notch—to act globally, strategically, and with shared purpose...

Welcome to the first *SWoT Report*. It has been in the making for more than two years, since the idea for a State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWoT) initiative was born among a handful of people seeking to add global momentum to the many local, national, and regional sea turtle conservation tasks under way throughout the world. We felt it was time to generate greater synergy and take full advantage of the tools that have grown to serve us so well over the past quarter century—tools such as the Annual Sea Turtle Symposium, now in its 26th year; the *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, which has served our community for even longer; the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, active since 1966; Seaturtle.org sees more than 20 million internet hits per year; a professional peer-reviewed journal, *Chelonian Conservation Biology*, that communicates our scientific findings; and most importantly, a far-flung band of researchers, conservationists, and enthusiasts from local communities, clubs, universities, research facilities, government agencies, tourism operations, nonprofit organizations, and volunteer groups the world over, numbering many thousands of people.

The time is ripe to focus these vast and valuable resources on a global vision to prevent the extinction of sea turtles and the degradation of their habitats. Many excellent local- and regional-scale data sets and sea turtle conservation programs exist. We aim to weave these successes and the data they generate into a broader whole, to begin looking at sea turtle conservation from a planet-wide perspective. Our intent is to pursue not just a single snapshot of the status of the world's sea turtles, but a permanent, annually updated tool for monitoring our success and setting priorities for conservation work worldwide.

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The vision is taking form in three ways. First is the effort to develop an up-to-the-moment, dynamic, global-scale, and geo-referenced **database** on sea turtles, covering all the species and all their life stages. This is a tall order by any measure. You will learn about our progress toward this audacious

goal in our feature article titled, “The Challenge of Collective Conservation,” on pages 16–17. Second is the development of a **network of people** who generate and interact with the data, forever improving them, and using them to guide conservation. This network is our “SWoT Team,” now approaching 160 volunteers whose names appear on page 37 of this report, and whose time, energy, and ingenuity are manifest on every page herein. And last, a broad **communications strategy**—with the *SWoT Report* as its centerpiece—puts this SWoT data and our messages of conservation into the minds and hands of people the world over.

All threats to the sea and sea turtles come from people. Hence, conservation strategies must focus on changing human behaviors, and indeed, awareness is growing. Much like pandas and tigers have drawn interest to rainforest conservation, sea turtles can focus needed attention on ocean conservation issues. They are charismatic flagships for communicating the broad and often complex concepts of marine conservation to the public. Sea turtles embody the sea's mystery and majesty.

We could not have made it as far as we have on this remarkable journey without the help of our generous donors, including Dirk Aguilar, Barbara Bauer, Conservation International, Duke University's Marine Geospatial Ecology Laboratory, Mary Estrin, Hornthal Family Foundation, Don Goodman, International Sea Turtle Society, IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group, IUCN Species Programme, Maria Semple and George Meyer, Barbara and Donald Niemann, Offield Family Foundation, Mills Family Fund, Moore Family Foundation, Panaphil Foundation, Nancy Ritter, and Kevin Thomas. Thank you for sharing in our vision. And special recognition and appreciation are extended to Lisa M. Bailey, Ben Best, Dana Coelho, Michael Coyne, Karen and Scott Eckert, Pat Halpin, Emily Howgate, Brian J. Hutchinson, María Fernanda Pérez, Colette Wabnitz, and our SWoT Scientific and Editorial Advisory Boards for contributing your expertise, hard work, and dedication to making this first *SWoT Report* a reality.

We hope you, too, will join our growing SWoT Team as we pursue our pledge of permitting “no sea turtle extinctions on our watch.”



Roderic B. Mast