

In Memoriam

Since the publication of *SWOT Report*, vol. XVI, in June 2021, the sea turtle conservation world has lost many beloved members of our community, including those memorialized herein and others, like Thomas Lovejoy and Edward O. Wilson. Both Dr. Lovejoy and Dr. Wilson were icons of biodiversity conservation, as well as lovers of sea turtles and supporters of SWOT. The renowned E. O. Wilson is quoted in *SWOT*'s first volume (2006): "As we begin to understand the state of the world's sea turtles, new priorities arise, global strategies form, and fresh hope swells for the survival of these incredible creatures." Special thanks go to Dimitris Dimopoulos, Karen Eckert and the WIDECAST Network, Alex Gaos, Janet Hochella, Yakup Kaska, Kate Mansfield, Dimitris Margaritoulis, Aliko Panagopoulou, Jim Stevenson, and Blair Witherington for the content that follows.



Jessica Berkel (1969–2021)

Jess was the long-standing Sea Turtle Program coordinator for Sint Eustatius and head of the Oranjestad-STENAPA (St. Eustatius National Parks) Marine Park. She was loved and respected by her colleagues—especially within the Dutch Caribbean conservation community and broader WIDECAST network—and deeply devoted to biodiversity conservation. She was unafraid, irreverent, independent, and incredibly talented. She loved her global sea turtle family, and she leveraged their collective spirit to get things done that otherwise might have been impossible. Jess was famous for her strong opinions and her bluntness in public discussions—for instance, about the constitutional status of the island with respect to COVID-19 vaccinations. But above all she will be remembered for her steadfast dedication to nature preservation and to her beloved marine park.



Kostas Bououris (1965–2021)

Kostas helped to build the Greek nonprofit ARCHELON into a force for sea turtle conservation. After working in Zakynthos, he set up a project on Crete in 1989. He left to pursue agronomy but was always there to help the turtles. For example, he found the perfect olive grove in Crete, which became ARCHELON's home, and he helped replace an unsightly seawall at the heart of the island's loggerhead beach with natural rocks and dune vegetation. His vision and principles also guided the Management Plan for the Protection of Sea Turtles in Crete, an effort that bore his ideas, passion, commitment, and love. A "turtler" at heart, Kostas later became a pioneer in sustainable nutrition and agriculture, local nature conservation, and more. But mostly, it was hard not to love Kostas simply as a human being. Whether working hard in the field, singing karaoke, or doing a dowsing, Kostas' smile always shone brightly.



Mario Boza (1942–2021)

One of the fathers of Costa Rica's renowned National Parks System, Mario's life was spent protecting his country's rich flora and fauna—especially sea turtles. He played a pivotal role in the creation of the Las Baulas National Marine Park and fought hard to protect critically endangered eastern Pacific leatherbacks for decades. He helped to organize the Western Atlantic Turtle Symposium in 1983 and the 2004 International Sea Turtle Symposium in San Jose, both game-changing gatherings for global sea turtle conservation. And he also cofounded The Leatherback Trust. Widely recognized and honored as a conservation pioneer, he was a mentor and friend to countless students and others who shared his love for nature globally and especially in his beloved Costa Rica.



Shandell Brunson (1976–2022)

Shandell pursued her lifelong passion to be a sea turtle scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries in Honolulu, beginning as a volunteer while she was still an undergraduate at the University of Hawaii. In the ensuing 20 years, she advanced to become the sea turtle stranding coordinator for Hawaii and the Pacific Islands Region, a position in which she was recognized as NOAA Fisheries' Employee of the Year. She was also working on her master's degree in zoology. Besides her love of the ocean, the beach, and turtles, Shandell loved to ride her motorcycle and to travel, sit around the campfire, and enjoy the beauty of her native Idaho. She will be remembered for her warm spirit, kind demeanor, and shining smile.



Llewellyn "Doc" Ehrhart (1942–2022)

Doc built a globally respected sea turtle research program at the University of Central Florida over three decades, and it would be difficult to find any sea turtle on Earth that was not touched in one way or another by him, either personally or indirectly through his many legacies. In all things, he was a traditionalist yet a groundbreaker; a naturalist and a conservationist; a field biologist who enjoyed getting dirty but cleaned up well; a teller of one particularly bad joke that only he thought was hilarious; and a much-loved husband, father, teacher, mentor, and friend. Doc's passion and enthusiasm for sea turtles earned him incomparable respect and admiration. He will forever be remembered by those he inspired to follow in his footsteps.



John Fuller (1947–2021)

A prominent (often *pro bono*) lawyer, John's life revolved around tireless environmental advocacy for Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean. Both in and out of the courtroom, he was unafraid to do what was right for a just cause. Friends recall him standing alongside his neighbors to stop his town's historical public library from being bulldozed, a badge of honor he wore with pride. He also helped establish the longest-running hawksbill program in the world at Jumby Bay, led the development of WIDECAST's Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan, and was a pivotal voice for biodiversity in his country. His sharp wit, altruism, and kindness, combined with his irreproachable professional and personal conduct, made John a man of great character.



June Haimoff (1922–2022)

An English-born eclectic artist (painter, opera singer, ballet dancer) and environmentalist, "Captain" June first stepped foot in Dalyan, Turkey, in 1975. It was love at first sight, and she ultimately became a Turkish citizen. She and other prominent conservationists of her day, including Britain's HRH Prince Philip, launched a successful campaign in the 1980s to halt an ecologically damaging construction project and preserve Iztuzu Beach, one of the most important loggerhead beaches in the Mediterranean and now the Köyceğiz-Dalyan Special Environmental Protection Area. And this was just the start of Captain June's storied career, which was dedicated to protecting Mediterranean sea turtle nesting beaches from development and degradation. Her passion and success earned her the title "Mother of *Caretta caretta*."



Bertrand Bennette Lettsome (1962–2021)

As the first chief conservation and fisheries officer for the British Virgin Islands, Bert (also known as "Washasha X") ushered in and led many efforts to protect sea turtles, including the development of the nation's first Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan, created in partnership with WIDECAST. He fought passionately for the well-being of nature and the people in the Caribbean, and he was a pioneer in understanding the economic consequences of impaired ecosystems. He was hailed as a leader who brought vision, growth, and direction to his work. He raised the awareness of the public, and especially of his fellow policymakers, about the importance of conserving mangroves, sea grass, beaches, coral reefs, and turtles. Bert is the reason that much of the British Virgin Islands' natural beauty is intact today.



Fernando Manzano (1957–2021)

Best known as "Papá Tortuga," Fernando was inspired from childhood, by seeing Jacques Cousteau on TV, to help the Kemp's ridleys nesting in his home town of Tecolutla, Veracruz, Mexico. In the early 1970s, the species appeared doomed to extinction from years of human impact at its main nesting beach near Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, and Fernando was disturbed by the common practice of eating sea turtle meat and eggs in his own town. He soon involved his entire community and established the nonprofit Vida Milenaria AC. After years of dedication, that important rookery's annual nest count has grown from 5 in 1974 to more than 800 nests per year today. Fernando earned the respect and admiration of his neighbors and the global sea turtle conservation movement. Tourists and the children of Tecolutla especially adored Papá Tortuga and loved to join him on the beach for hatchling releases.