



# Editor's Note

## Miracles Worth Celebrating

The first draft of this note lacked my usual optimism. I was in quarantine, separated from family, and mired in gloomy news, which has become omnipresent. I was impatient with the seemingly tectonic pace of ocean protection; saddened by wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and elsewhere; troubled by the daily signs of and slow responses to a steadily warming planet; and stricken by the barely noticed moment when humanity exceeded the 8 billion mark, representing an additional 5 billion people on the planet since my birth.

But the clouds lifted as I began to review the contents of this, our 19th volume of the *State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWOT) Report*. Volunteers from a dozen countries have contributed data, ideas, photos, writing, and mapping and editorial skills to create the special feature on Southeast Asian sea turtles (pp. 22–37), with stories reflecting mostly good news and quality science, technology, and collaboration that could not have happened even a few short years ago. Articles rolled in also with good news about Mexico's black turtles (pp. 16–17); rebounding hawksbills in the U.S. Virgin Islands (pp. 38–39); community-led conservation in the Maldives (pp. 20–21); innovations to tackle plastic pollution (pp. 40–41); and promising results from collaborations in the eastern Pacific (pp. 12–13), Indonesia (pp. 14–15), and the Asia-Pacific region (pp. 18–19). And although we still have much to learn about climate impacts on turtles and their habitats, the science has advanced enormously in recent decades (pp. 6–9). Even answers to simple questions about sea turtles' diving and breath-holding abilities (pp. 46–47) and their lost years (pp. 12–13) remind us of how we are continually discovering important details about sea turtles' lives that improve our ability to conserve them.

Perhaps most importantly, our community is now seriously exploring the role of human social identity, basic needs, value systems, and norms in our conservation planning. We are breaking old paradigms, measuring success more wisely, and embracing the idea that the only cure to make the oceans healthy lies in understanding and changing human behavior (pp. 42–43). We have realized that people are at the core of both the problems and the solutions for nature, at all scales.

Though it is undeniable that there are some bad things happening on Earth, most things used to be worse. Slow change in the direction of saving nature is a whole lot better than no change, and the advances made by our community in the face of many challenges are miracles worth celebrating.

Please join me in stepping away from the endless bad news as you turn the pages of this report, which is filled with the positive results of our community's hard work and dedication. We have a lot to be grateful for. I am uplifted by the camaraderie, enthusiasm, and volunteer spirit of our community, and I am certain that if we keep doing what we've been doing, things will continue to get better for the sea and her turtles.

**Roderic B. Mast**  
Chief Editor

AT LEFT: A green turtle rests among the corals in Ningaloo Reef, Australia. © Jake Wilton Photography