

REPORT

President's Report on the 35th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation, 18-24 April 2015, Dalaman, Mugla, Turkey

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The 35th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation was held in Dalaman, Mugla, Turkey on 18-24 April, 2015. The theme of the symposium was "Hospitality." It was chosen as meeting participants will be attending from around the world and hospitality reflects Turkey's friendly and inviting culture. Furthermore, Turkey brought everyone together, "bridging the civilizations," bridging Europe, Asia and Africa. This is was a great opportunity for the people from these continents to participate in the Symposium, as it was easier for them to travel from their home countries. Besides the regular sessions normally held at past symposia, specific to the meeting in Turkey, is we celebrated "World Children Day" on 23 April with special sessions for children's activities. Without a doubt, today's children are the future sea turtle researchers and conservationists, and so we wanted to ensure that we pass our mission on to the younger generation

A total of 610 people from 80 countries registered for the Symposium. An additional 250 local students and educators attended particular sessions. The venue for the symposium was the Hilton Hotel-Dalaman, Turkey. The program included 4 regional meetings (Africa, IOSEA, Retomala and East Asia), 9 workshops, 2 special sessions (Mediterranean Turtle Conference and Freshwater turtle Session), and a Video Night that showed 12 videos. In addition to the regular sessions, we hosted the 5th Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles. A total of 135 oral papers and 230 posters were presented.

Workshops: A total of 9 workshops were offered the weekend before the symposium started. These were the Fourth Workshop on Stable Isotope Techniques in Sea Turtle Research: Lessons Learned and Future Steps, Temperature-dependent Sex Determination, Sea Turtle Rehabilitation and Health, GIS, Tourism and Turtles, Biologging For Sea Turtles, Fisheries Observer Programs: Key to Successful Fisheries Management, Children Activities and New Techniques. The first parts of two of the workshops were held on Thursday, 23rd April 2015. Unfortunately, the Novel Techniques for Environmental Campaigning Workshop that was scheduled had to be cancelled. The attachment of four satellite devices and releasing of sea turtles within the Biologging For Sea Turtles Workshop II and Children Workshop activities were carried out at the DEKAMER Sea Turtle rescue center. This event attracted many local people and authorities as well as children. A 3D printed section of mandible was attached to an injured turtle on 23 April, attracting many local and international media. These activities overlapped with ISTS's mission to bring people together to promote the exchange of information that advance the global knowledge of sea turtle biology and conservation

Pre-symposium Meetings: The 5th Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles and the Terrapin, Tortoise & Freshwater Meetings

were the two main pre-symposium meetings. The regional meetings for Africa, Latin America, East Asia, and Indian Ocean-South East Asia were also held. The Marine Turtle Specialist Group meeting was set on Wednesday 22 April, 2015.

Key Note Speakers: Three keynote speakers each delivered a 30-minute address to symposium participants. Richard Reina's presentation gave the audience a comprehensive overview of the topic *Climate Change and Sea Turtles: What It is, What it isn't and What We Need to Do About It*, which came after the opening ceremony of the symposium and was presented to all of the symposium participants. Mohd Uzair Rusli gave his keynote talk on *Synchronous Activity Lowers The Energetic Cost of Nest Escape by Green Turtle Hatchlings* in the Nesting Biology-I session on Tuesday 21 April, 2015. On Wednesday, 22 April 2015, Kate Mansfield gave her talk at the In-Water Biology-II session on *Out With the Old, in with the New Hypothesis: Swimming Behavior and Ontogenetic Habitat Shifts Among Wild-Caught Oceanic Stage Turtles*. All three keynote talks were excellent and well received by the audience.

Symposium Sessions: This symposium included traditional sessions held at previous symposia, such as Anatomy, Physiology and Health; In-Water Biology Session (Ecology, Telemetry, Foraging, Behavior); Nesting Biology (Ecology, Behavior, and Reproductive Success), Population Biology and Monitoring (Status, Modeling, Demography, Genetics, Nesting Trends, In-Water Trends), Fisheries and Threats Session; Conservation, Management and Policy; Education, Outreach And Advocacy; and Social, Economic and Cultural Studies. In addition to those sessions, we also scheduled poster discussion hours for each session and these were productive times for participants to meet with all presenters in one room, facilitated by session chairs.

Business Meeting: Important issues were addressed during the plenary business meeting conducted on the last day of the symposium. The travel committee report, the Treasurer's report and other issues related to our society were discussed.

ISTS Elections: The report of the ISTS Nominations Committee presented the following names of the winners of the 2015 Elections: President Elect: Frank Paladino, Board of Directors: Andrea Phillott and Laura Prosdocimi, and Nominations Committee: Michael Jensen, Thushan Kapurusinghe and Andy Estrades.

Board meeting: The Board meeting was held on Tuesday 21 April, 2015. The meeting was fruitful and lasted until midnight. The Board received and discussed reports from the Nominations Committee, Student Committee, Travel Committee, Students Awards Committee, Awards Committee, as well as reports from the Treasurer.

Student Committee: Since its inception at the 31st Symposium,

the ISTS Student Committee has played an increasingly important role in the meeting. For the meeting in Turkey, the Committee was chaired by Itzel Sifuentes and Adriana Cortez. Student participation in the Symposia is critical to the future of our Society's mission, and we commend and encourage continued productive activity by the Student Committee. They organized around 50 volunteer evaluators to provide valuable presentation feedback for about 100 students that requested it. They were actively involved in New Techniques Workshop and organized Student Committee Mixer on Tuesday afternoon.

Travel grants: A total of 162 registrants received a travel grant at ISTS35. This level of travel grant awards represents about 25% of the total registered participants. Travel grants took the form of room and board grants, which was highly advantageous for the awardees and for the Society. Only 16 people who received Travel Grant had to cover their food shares. The Travel Grant Committee was chaired by Alexander Gaos, with Angela Formia, Kelly Stewart, Karen Eckert, Alan Rees, Alejandro Fallabrino, Alike Panagopolou, Maggie Muurmans, Andrea Phillott and Emma Harrison as members. Participant distribution for Travel Grant was 28% from Europe, 18% from America, 14% from US/Canada and 14% Central and South America, 11% from Africa, 7% from Asia-Pacific and 4% from South Asia and 4% from Middle East.

Social Events: Welcome Social, Live and Silent Auctions, Farewell party, Student Awards were some of the social events held during the symposium. A welcome cocktail and Turkish Folk Dance were performed on Sunday evening. Children performed folk dances on Sunday and Monday evenings. The popular "Speed Chatting with the Sea Turtle Experts" session made an appearance on Wednesday afternoon and was enjoyed by the experts as well as the participants that plied them with questions on topics ranging from techniques to career advice. On Tuesday evening, Video Night provided informative entertainment to Symposium participants as they enjoyed 12 video presentations from around the world. On the final day of the Symposium, together with the Gala dinner, the Archie Carr Student Awards and the ISTS Awards were followed. The formal portion of the evening closed with words of appreciation from the President and the ceremonial passing of the ISTS Presidential Trowel to incoming President Joanna Alfaro Shigueto. On Friday, we organized three tours and participants visited Pamukkale, Ephesus and Dalyan lagoons.

Auctions: The proceeds from the annual Live and Silent auctions contribute to Travel Grant funding for students and international participants. We had the usual fantastic response from the sea turtle community in the way of unique donated items for both auctions. With ISTS promoting a more socially responsible outlook, the Auction Team found themselves pushed to the limits to find creative and fun ways to raise funds. The results of their efforts were brilliant and provided new paying and entertaining activities, including "Jail and Bail" and "A Sea Turtle Beauty Pageant". The live auctioneer Rod Mast did again an excellent job. The dedication of Auction Chairs, Jennifer Homcy and Marina Zucchini, for the success of these important events is appreciated by all.

Awards: During the gala dinner, a series of awards were made to prominent members of our society. Lily Venizelos and Henri Reichart were awarded the *Lifetime Achievement Award* for their extensive and significant contributions to the promotion of sea turtle biology and conservation. Awards were also given to Kutlay

Keco for *Ed Drane Award for Volunteerism*, Flegra Bentivegna for *Champions Award*. *President's Awards* were given to Ibrahim Baran and June Haimoff. Congratulations to the all awardees.

Archie Carr Student Awards: There were 41 oral presentations and 67 poster presentations entered by students in the Archie Carr Student Awards. The Program Chairs worked with the Student Award Chairs to minimize conflicting student presentation times, thereby ensuring all student presentations were seen by the judges, but we encourage future Program Chairs to liaise with the Student Award Chairs early in the planning process to minimize the requirement for last minute work by all parties. Judges of the student presentations in Turkey were: Ana Barragan, Cynthia Lagueux, Dave Owens, Emma Harrison, Kate Mansfield, Marc Girondot, Mariana Fuentes, Paolo Casale, Ray Carthy, Roldan Valverde, Sara Maxwell and Zoe Meletis. The winner for Best Biology Poster was Abilene Colin Aguilar (CICESE, Mexico). Best Conservation Poster went to Mireia Aguilera Rodà (Univ. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) and runner up was Aurora Oliver de la Esperanza (Univ. Zaragoza, Spain). The Best Biology Oral was won by Natalie Wildermann (James Cook University, Australia) and Joseph Pfaller (University of Florida, USA) was Runner Up. The Conservation Oral winner was Sarah Nelms (University of Exeter, England), and Alike Panagopoulou (Drexel University, USA) was Runners-Up.

Grassroots Award: The Grassroots Conservation Award is given for the poster or oral presentation that best demonstrates a positive contribution towards the conservation of marine turtles and/or their habitats. This year the Award went to the Fundação Maio Biodiversidade for "Community-based conservation is a key to successful sea turtle protection in Maio Island, Cape Verde" with the authors of Adilson Passos, Amanda Dutra, Franziska Koenen, Alexandra Morais, and Mafalda Navas. The judges were Alejandro Fallabrino, Angela Formia, Jack Frazier, Manjula Tiwari and Ingrid Yanez.

Funding: Generous funding by many entities made it possible for the ISTS35 to be a success. The organizing committee deeply thanks the donors below for their generosity. At the Platinum level (\$25,000 and above): Turkish Government (Ministries, Governors and Mayors), Pamukkale University, and Marine Turtle Conservation Fund. At the Gold level (\$5,000 - \$19,999): WWF-Turkey, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation, Regional Activity Center, UNEP-RAC/SPA, Istanbul Aquarium and The Ocean Foundation. At the Silver level (\$1,000 - \$4,999): Hilton-Dalaman, Wildlife Computers, Istanbul SeaLife Aquarium, Sirtrack, Mugla Trade and Commerce Union, BTC Pipeline Company, Disney's Animal Science and the Environment, Telonics, Mersin Municipality, Vaughan W. Brown Charitable Trust, Bern Convention of European Council. At the Bronze level (\$500 - \$999): Sea Turtle Conservancy, MEDASSET, Denizli Trade and Commerce Union, The Leatherback Trust, DOKAY, Mac-ART Design Agency.

Vendors: This year's Vendor tables were Wildlife Computers Inc, Collecte localisation satellite, Wipsea, Kaptan June Sea Turtle Conservation Foundation, Qarapara Sea Turtles Chile NGO, Karumbé, Endangered Wildlife Trust, IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, WWF International, MEDASSET, ARCHELON, Loggerhead Marinelife Center.

Carbon Offsets: A meeting the size of the ISTS Symposium represents a considerable use of resources, primarily for travel, but also for onsite lodging and activities. This year, a coordination and

follow-through by Erin Seney and Ray Carthy, the ISTS introduced an initiative to offset the carbon footprint of the meeting. The organization made a donation to Carbonfund.org to offset the full on-site footprint of the meeting. We also gave one flask as a gift for participants to use in the future as a way of reducing plastic use.

Memorial Tribute: During the opening and closing ceremonies of the symposium, we observed one minute of silence in tribute to the lives that were lost since the last symposium, especially the recent loss of Prof. Nicholas Mrosovsky.

Acknowledgments. Organizing the symposium took a significant number of hours and effort. The successful organization strongly benefit from the selfless work of a large number of volunteers. My personal thanks goes to all organizing committee members. My deepest thanks go out to every single one of them for their hard work, friendship, and their dedication to the International Sea Turtle Society. Without the vision and generosity of our Sponsors this Symposium would not have been possible, and I thank them all for embracing our interests and cause as their own. I also thank the ISTS Board of Directors and its Executive Committee for their guidance and support, and thank every single one of the various Committees' chairs. My Program Officer Ingrid Yanez did a great job of fund raising under trying conditions. Thanks to the Program Staff: Oğuz Türkozan, Brian Shamblin and Wayne Fuller, program coordinator: Eyüp Başkale, Event Coordinator: Dogan Sözbilen, and all of the outstanding Session Chairs.

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