

**38th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle
Biology & Conservation -“Beyond Protection of the Sea Turtle,”
18-23 February 2018
in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan**

Yoshimasa Matsuzawa

Dear ISTS Attendees:

Welcome to Kobe, Japan! The city of Kobe, which borders the Bay of Osaka, is a port town that was the former capital of Japan during the end of the 12th Century, and it is now a modern and bustling metropolitan center. Kobe is known for its Nada Sake breweries, which produce 30% of the nation's sake, for its exquisite Kobe beef, and for the famous Arima hot springs. Aside from these attractions, Kobe is one of key sites for sea turtle conservation in Japan and thus makes it an ideal location to get together to discuss and innovate ways to research and conserve sea turtles. Kobe is also home to the Suma Aqualife Park aquarium, which is a major contributor to conservation efforts in the region and provides huge financial and in-kind support to the Symposium. The aquarium has developed sea turtle releasing devices to reduce the incidental capture of sea turtles in fishing activities, while also designing artificial flippers for injured sea turtles. In conjunction with the West Japan Railway Company, the aquarium also installed wildlife road crossings (ecoducts) in the area by placing u-shaped tunnels beneath the railroad tracks, with a specific focus on ensuring the safe passage for a large numbers of freshwater turtles that cross the tracks. The Kobe Airport Island has an artificial lagoon pond that is used by local conservationists to rehabilitate injured sea turtles. These and other projects enhance sea turtle conservation awareness and education to the public in Kobe and throughout Japan. With such features, Kobe is an ideal venue to celebrate the Symposium.

Urashima Taro is the protagonist of this year's Symposium and is featured on the meeting's logo, representing both Japanese culture and demonstrating this nation's appreciation of sea turtles. Urashima Taro is a Japanese fairy tale where a fisherman rescues a turtle and is rewarded with a visit to a palace under the sea. Everyone has a version of Urashima Taro inside of them, urging them to protect, understand and discover the mysteries of the sea turtles, with no personal expectations other than the intrinsic joy of knowing that sea turtles and their habitats are protected.

The theme of the Kobe Symposium is “Beyond Protection of the Sea Turtle.” As a result of decades of hard work, we have witnessed the protection and recovery of some sea turtle populations, while at the same time facing a myriad of threats and issues to others. As researchers and conservationists, it is easy to get so caught up in the day-to-day activities of our work, that we lose sight of our mission and goals. It is important to step back, envision our goals and discuss them with colleagues, and take our efforts “beyond protection.”

I hope all of you enjoy the symposium and related events. I also hope the symposium will be a turning point to start deep discussion about beyond protection. It is an honor for the hard worked staffs and me if you achieve a sense of fulfillment.

Yoshimasa Matsuzawa

Yoshimasa Matsuzawa Ph.D.
President ISTS



Symposium Logo

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