

REPORT

Report of International Symposium on Research/Conservation and Future Prospects of Sea Turtles in Taiwan

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An International Symposium on Research/Conservation and Future Prospects of Sea Turtles in Taiwan was held 15-16 June 2015 in Kaoshiung, Taiwan. Research on sea turtle biology and conservation in Taiwan was initiated by Forestry Bureau, Council of Agriculture, in 1992 and has been carried on by the Marine Ecology and Conservation Laboratory, Institute of Marine Biology of National Taiwan Ocean University, led by Professor I-Jiunn Cheng. During the past three decades, we have conducted long-term studies on the nesting ecology of green turtles on Wan-an Island of Penghu Archipelago (since 1992), Liuchiu Island of Pingtung County (since 2001) and Lanyu Island of Taitung County (since 1997). In addition, we have also conducted other sea turtle research, including work on satellite telemetry, nesting physiologies, nest site selection, population genetics, etc. However, with rapid development of modern technology and networks, much new knowledge, concepts and tools are continuously available. If we fail to learn about these new techniques and information, we will not be able to keep pace with the modern scientific societies. In view of this, we decided to take the opportunity of 23 years of sea turtle research and 20 years since the establishment of the sea turtle refuge site on Wan-an Island, to hold the "International Symposium on Research/Conservation and Future Prospects of Sea Turtles in Taiwan." For this meeting, we invited 10 international experts/scholars including four from Japan (Prof. Naoki Kamezaki, Dr. Yoshimasa Matsuzawa, Prof. Katsufumi Sato, Dr. Hideo Hatase), one from Malaysia (Dr. Nicolas J. Pilcher), three from Florida, US (Prof. John Weishampel, Ms. Nicole Montgomery, Ms. Adrienne McCracken), one from Italy (Dr. Sandra Hochscheid), and one from China (Director Ho-Xiang Gu) to share their valuable research and field experiences with the students and public audience. This allowed us to understand the current trends on international sea turtle research, and conservation and management policies. Ninety-six people registered for the

symposium, including schoolteachers, students, veterinarians, NGOs, members of a Buddhist group and governmental officials.

At the meeting, the head of the Forestry Bureau, Council of Agriculture introduced the current status of sea turtle in Taiwan. Professor Cheng and his PhD student introduced the sea turtle research and stranding network in Taiwan. The foreign participants made presentations on various topics, including the global and regional conservation strategies of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, the operation and achievement of sea turtle volunteer systems in Japan, the core work of a sea turtle protected site in China, the application of geographic information system (GIS) to assess the impact of light pollution on nesting beaches, the influence the incubation temperature to hatchling sea turtle physiology, the use of biologgers to study the behavior of sea turtle in the ocean, the relationship between the life history strategies and spatial distribution of sea turtles in the ocean, an overview of the nesting beach work and rehabilitation actions of a privately funded sea turtle center in Florida, etc. These presentations will help shape and inform future avenues of research on sea turtles in Taiwan, which was one of the goals of the symposium. After the meeting, all international participants were invited to visit the unique coral reef of Liuchiu Island in Pingtung County, southern Taiwan, where about 160 resident green turtles inhabit in the nearshore waters. All participants used snorkeling gear to observe the behavior of green turtles in the water, and gain a better understanding of the sea turtle resources of Taiwan.

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