

TOM HARRISSON. : OBITUARY

Professor Tom Harrisson, Co-Chairman of the Marine Turtle Group, and his wife Christina, were killed in a road accident in Bangkok last January.

Tom was an incredibly versatile individual who has left his mark in many fields. His contributions to sea turtle conservation were enormous. Before the Japanese occupation the turtle egg industry of the Sarawak Islands (Talang 2 Besar, Talang 2 Kechil and Satang), off the southwest coast of Borneo, had been in the hands of a few prominent Malay families. In 1941 the industry was placed under a Turtle Trust Ordinance to be administered by the Curator of the Sarawak Museum. In 1947, Tom Harrisson became Curator of the Museum. He took charge of the Turtle Islands, instigated regulation of the exploitation there, and established a tagging program. His adoption of a metal cow-ear tag as a fin-clip, replacing the unsatisfactory shell-tags previously used, was a milestone in sea turtle research procedure. On July 4, 1956, a turtle that had been tagged at one of the rookery islands three years before returned to nest. This was the first remigration of a tagged turtle; and since then, hundreds of similar returns recorded at the Sarawak rookery and elsewhere have shown that the three-year absence

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represented the predominant intermigratory interval of the species. Tom's frequent short published accounts of his conservation problems and achievements at the islands attracted worldwide attention, which surely lengthened the survival-expectancy of Chelonia. When he died, the Turtle Group lost an irreplaceable officer, the green turtle a staunch benefactor, and the surviving Co-Chairman a valued friend.

Archie Carr

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EDITORIAL

Efforts are going on all over the world to save marine turtles from extinction. Marine turtles are widely distributed and their migrations take them across international boundaries. These facts complicate both arriving at an understanding of their biology and devising the necessary measures for their conservation. Given this situation, the authorities at IUCN and the members of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group felt that better communication between workers in different parts of the world was needed.

The aim of this newsletter is:

- 1) to provide a forum for exchange of information about all aspects of marine turtle biology and conservation
- 2) to alert interested people to particular threats to marine turtles, as they arise.

The letter will appear at irregular intervals, depending on the amount of new information and any particular circumstances calling for action on the part of conservationists.

Recipients of this first newsletter can help by letting the editor know if he has their correct mailing address, and also who else should receive the newsletter. A yellow form has been provided for this at the end of the newsletter. In addition, any comments, suggestions or items for inclusion would be welcome. Please remember that people in other parts of the world may be interested to learn what you are doing and what the turtle situation is in your area. This letter is being sent to people in more than 30 different countries.

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