

IUCN/SSC MARINE TURTLE SPECIALIST GROUP BULLETIN

Number 1
April 1984

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I have been thinking about starting a Group bulletin since the last meeting at Tortuguero last July, and, after discussing the idea with other Group members, I have decided that it would be a worthwhile undertaking. The main reason for the existence of the Group is to have members representing strategic geographic areas who stand ready to be called upon to respond quickly in the event of an emergency situation involving sea turtles. Of course, waiting for emergencies to happen is not a totally satisfying approach to conservation. Our Specialist Group is made up of thirty individuals, each of us working in his or her own way for turtle conservation. There are few situations that call for, or even allow, group action. Because of the rarity of group action, a few members have expressed concern that our Group is inactive--a misconception that is quickly dispelled when one begins to look at the accomplishments and efforts of our members. The problem is that we seldom hear about what other members are doing. Most of our accomplishments are made individually, although sometimes encouraged or helped directly by other members. The purpose of this bulletin is to encourage these synergistic interactions by improving communication among ourselves. The bulletin will circulate only to Group members and to a few WWF and IUCN administrators. It is hoped this very limited distribution will keep the tone informal as well as the costs low. Many of us have never met; I hope this informal exchange will let us get to know one another better, as well as foster closer communication between our Specialist Group and IUCN/WWF administration.

This short bulletin will in no way supplant the Marine Turtle Newsletter, but rather complement it. Long editorials and data presentations are beyond the scope of the bulletin. Rather, it will include brief descriptions of projects by Group members that are underway, about to be undertaken, or completed; will call attention to specific threats to sea turtles; and will contain requests by Group members for help in the form of letters, advice or data.

To start with, the Group has received a request from IUCN to prioritize sea turtle projects. The Freshwater Chelonia Specialist Group, under the direction of Ed Moll, prioritized projects and several were funded. Prioritization not only is a great help to funding agencies, it also serves to orient the actions of our Group. Please send your suggestions for high priority and lower priority projects to me. Try to maintain a world-wide perspective in setting your priorities. In the next issue(s) I will include all of the responses I receive so that we can reach a consensus on the priorities before forwarding them to IUCN. A few examples I suggest as high priority:

1. A project to work towards controlling (not just documenting) international trade in hawksbills. I would particularly appreciate suggestions from Itaru Uchida on any possible approach that we might take towards this end.
2. A project to measure nest success and determine the causes of nest failure at the olive ridley arribada beach at Ostional, Costa Rica, in order to provide necessary data for development of a management program.

3. A project to further the export of the turtle excluder device (TED) technology to certain targeted areas including the Gulf of Mexico and the area off the coast of Surinam and French Guiana, where trawling is a major cause of mortality for Kemp's ridleys and olive ridleys, respectively.

An informative Southeast US Regional Sea Turtle Conference was held in Orlando, Florida, on 5-6 April 1984. Peter Pritchard was on the organizing committee. Jeanne Mortimer spoke about her work with marine turtles in the Seychelles. Other Group members attending the meeting were Karen Bjorndal, Archie Carr, Anne Meylan, Nicholas Mrosovsky and Larry Ogren.

Anyone interested in working to introduce the turtle excluder device (TED) for trawling vessels in your area can write to Mr. Chuck Oravetz, Chief, Protected Species Management Branch, National Marine Fisheries Service, 9450 Koger Blvd., St. Petersburg, FL 33702 USA. He is very willing to help in any way he can; George Hughes and Colin Limpus are already working with him.

Nicholas Mrosovsky has had no response to his request for hawksbill eggs in the last Marine Turtle Newsletter. If anyone can help him obtain hawksbill eggs for a temperature-sex determination study, please write to him.

A major study of the effects of oil on turtles at sea, funded by the US government and directed by Dr. Peter Lutz, has been started. For those interested in this work, Peter's address is Dept. of Biology, Rosenstiel School of Marine Science, Univ. of Miami, 4600 Rickenbacker Causeway, Miami, FL 33149 USA.

Jeanne Mortimer has recently returned from the Seychelles, where she completed a very successful three-year project with marine turtles. The project was funded by IUCN. Jeanne's address is now: Dept. of Zoology, Univ. of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611 USA.

Satish Bhaskar has been hired by IUCN for a very demanding project with the sea turtles at Irian Jaya, Indonesia. I hope Satish will keep us informed as to his progress.

A small population of green turtles that feeds around Johnston Atoll in the Central Pacific has been a subject of concern because the US Army plans to build a large incineration plant on the island to burn toxic chemicals now stored there. Through an effort led by George Balazs and assisted by Karen Bjorndal and Anne Meylan, the safety of the turtle population was given full attention in the Environmental Impact Statement and in the plan for construction of the incineration plant. George should be commended for risking his health by visiting what must be one of the most polluted places on earth to gather data on the Johnston Atoll green turtle population.

Also, George's efforts to encourage countries to issue sea turtle stamps as a conservation and education tool continue to be successful. George and Edgardo Gomez have just published a paper describing all known sea turtle stamps in The Chelonian Documentation Center Newsletter.

Archie Carr was asked to give the prestigious Fairfield Osborn Memorial Lecture on Environmental Science at Rockefeller University, New York, in March 1984. His topic was the conservation of sea turtles. In April, the National Audubon Society presented Archie with the first Hal Borland Award, which is to be given annually to "an individual who--through writing, photography, or art--has made a lasting contribution to the understanding, appreciation, and protection of nature."

I have been working with the Bahamas National Trust and Michael Weber of the Sea Turtle Rescue Fund to incorporate the Fund's excellent, bi-lingual (Spanish-English) sea turtle education packet into the curriculum of Bahamian schools. These packets are now being used with great success in St. Lucia and the Dominican Republic. Anyone interested should write to Mr. Michael Weber, Director, Sea Turtle Rescue Fund, 624 9th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 USA. In March, I spoke to approximately 1000 people about sea turtle biology and conservation at two public lectures sponsored by the Audubon Naturalist Society and the Smithsonian at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

By necessity, this issue of the bulletin has focused on US happenings. I hope that all of you will send in contributions so that future issues will have a more even coverage. Please send the information in a form that can be put directly into the bulletin. I also hope that I will hear from all of you about turtle project priorities.

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Number 2
July 1984

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We have a new member to welcome to our group: Mr. Guy Marie Fabio Guagni dei Marcovaldi, coordinator of Brazil's marine turtle project. His address is Fundacao Garcia D'Avila, Rua Areal de Cima no. 17, Largo 2 de Julho, Salvador - BA, Brasil.

According to information received from Patricia Chable, SSC, two more of our members, in addition to Satish Bhaskar, will be assisting with turtle conservation efforts in Indonesia. Joop Schulz will assist the Indonesian government in preparing a Turtle Conservation Strategy in mid-1984. Colin Limpus will train officers of the Indonesian Directorate of Conservation in management techniques. Both consultancies are being coordinated by Rodney Salm, WWF/IUCN Representative in Indonesia.

Satish Bhaskar's address in Irian Jaya is: c/o WWF/IUCN Project Leader for Irian Jaya, P. O. Box 525, Jayapura, Irian Jaya, Indonesia.

The three-volume English edition of the Proceedings of the Western Atlantic Turtle Symposium (WATS) is now available. Copies will be sent to all participants. Harold Hirth, Larry Ogren and Karen Bjorndal were editors of the proceedings. If there are any questions about the proceedings or about WATS II (now planned for Fall 1987 in Puerto Rico), contact Mr. Frederick Berry, National Marine Fisheries Service, 75 Virginia Beach Drive, Miami, Florida 33149 USA.

Three conferences are to be held within the year that are of potential interest.

1. George Balazs sent information about a Workshop on the Fate and Impact of Marine Debris to be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, 26-29 November 1984. Sea turtles figured prominently in the brochure. For more information, contact Dr. R. S. Shomura, National Marine Fisheries Service, P. O. Box 3830, Honolulu, HI 96812 USA. I am sure George will attend the workshop, and I hope he will summarize any information bearing on sea turtles for us.

2. A Symposium on Endangered Marine Animals and Marine Parks will be held in Cochin, India, 12-16 January 1985. Dr. E. G. Silas (President, Marine Biological Association of India, P. O. Box 1023, Cochin 682 011, India) wrote that they are very interested in having sea turtle papers presented at the symposium.

3. The Fourth World Conference on Breeding Endangered Species in Captivity will be held in Harderwijk, Netherlands, 24-27 September 1984. Details can be obtained from Mr. Dick van Dam, Director, Rotterdam Zoo, POB 532, Rotterdam 3005, Netherlands.

I have received a letter from Dr. D. M. Jones, member of the Captive Breeding Specialist Group of SSC/IUCN. He has written to all of the specialist group chairmen asking for a list of species that "should be the subject of special attention by the Captive Breeding Specialist Group and through them the zoo world." Unless I hear otherwise from you, in three weeks I will write to Dr. Jones that we consider Kemp's ridley to be the only species that may be in need of assistance through captive breeding. If you do not agree, please let me know.

George Balazs also sent word that the small Pacific nation of Vanuatu has recently completed their fishery regulations. Under Order No. 49 of 1983, "No person shall disturb, take, have in his possession, sell or purchase any turtle eggs; interfere with any turtle nest; or sell, purchase or export any turtle or the shell thereof of the species *Eretmochelys imbricata*, known as the hawksbill turtle." These regulations are largely a result of information exchanged at a sea turtle conference held in Noumea, New Caledonia, in December 1979, in which George Balazs, Archie Carr, Peter Pritchard and Sylvia Spring participated.

George Hughes would like to know if anyone has tagged a leatherback with tag number 1341. A leatherback with this tag number was found 20 December 1983 at Tongaland, Natal, South Africa. His worker, not realizing the significance of the find, did not check the return address. The number is not one that he has used, but it may have been a badly stamped J 341, which George has used.

George Hughes also suggested that he would like to see a brief summary of results from a season's work appear in the bulletin because of the long time it takes for details to appear in print. I think this is a good idea; if you agree, please provide summaries when they are available. A summary of George's 1983/1984 results is attached.

Project priorities received to date are as follows (not necessarily listed in order of importance within each member's contribution):

Harold Hirth: "I think the top priority of the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group is to determine, with the help of the entire marine turtle expert community, which species or populations of sea turtles are endangered, vulnerable, rare, indeterminate, out of danger and insufficiently known. Secondly, we should provide advice on what to do about the conservation of populations in these categories. Needless to say, the problems of and solutions for each population will probably be unique."

George Hughes: "I would sympathise with your view of the furthering of the use of TED. There is no doubt that many turtles die through trawling and more active demonstration and marketing may help distribute TED. In fact I would agree that all three projects that you listed deserve high priority.

"An additional project could be ways and means of identifying legitimately harvested turtle products so as to avoid confusion between legal and illegal products. You may consider that such a project should be undertaken by the farmers and ranchers but I believe it would be better done by an independent worker. Funds could be sought from such sources though.

"Another project I consider of value would be a review of monitoring techniques for sea turtle populations. The recommendations from such a project would provide a series of techniques which if applied generally could give us the ability to compare populations of the same species and see whether conservation efforts are in fact paying dividends."

Nicholas Mrosovsky: "Projects to assist existing turtle ranches operate in ways undetrimental to local populations where these are abundant; guidance in the development of turtle ranches as they become more numerous; encourage ranches to break into existing (pre-ranching) markets for turtle products. Included in this would be work on marking the turtle products.

"Development of management plans for places where exploitation is already going on and turtles are numerous (e.g. Ostional). This is different from data collection as a prelude to future management plans. Any management schemes would be interim, and established in a way that made it possible to modify them in the light of further data.

"Work on sex ratio. This is one of my own special research interests, so perhaps I should not suggest it, I do think in the long run it is very important—for hatchery practices, for the predicted greenhouse effects and other reasons."

I hope to have more contributions from members to include in the next bulletin.

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Dr. G.R. Hughes

Assistant Director Conservation

(i) Tongaland Sea Turtle Project

INTRODUCTION:- Originally established to study breeding biology of the loggerhead and leatherback turtle populations. Now results are used almost purely for monitoring purposes.

OBJECTIVES:- Population assessment

STUDY AREA AND TIMING:- Tongaland coast from Kosi Bay Mouth southwards to Mabibi. October 1983 - March 1984

RESULTS

(i) Tagging

	<u>1983/84</u>	<u>Previous Highest Number</u>
(a) <u>Leatherbacks</u>		
Total number females handled	60 + 18 = 78 (including 18 south of survey area)	82 (1980/81)
Recoveries of females previously tagged.	38	37 (1980/81)
Remigration rate.	48,7%	52,3% (1981/82)
(b) <u>Loggerheads</u>		
Total number females handled.	425 + 4 = 429 (4 south of survey area)	403 (1978/79)
Recoveries of females previously tagged.	132	177 (1975/76)
Remigration rate.	39,8%	50,6% (1975/76)

The best loggerhead year we have ever had and this is very encouraging. Leatherbacks were disappointing and we would have expected a better season.

(c) Adult tag recoveries.

One animal has been reported as received in Lindi, Tanzania but details have not yet reached us.

(ii) Hatchling Markings

A total of 7585 loggerhead hatchlings were notched this season by clipping out, as viewed from above and the rear, the second right marginal and the fourth left marginal. Post-central scales are not regarded as marginals.

The total of 133 542 loggerheads hatchlings have been notched and released since 1971.

(iii) Egg Translocation

20281 loggerhead eggs were translocated to the Marine Reserve site south of Sodwana. Hatchling success was 65,5% with a successful emergence rate of 64,3%. This is a very satisfactory result considering the distance translocated which was between 80 and 90 Km.

- GOALS:-
- (a) New corrosion proof Titanium tags have been purchased from "Stockbrands" Australia and will be used in the 1984/85 season. The locking device is an improvement on the Kentucky Monel tags.
 - (b) Egg translocation next season will be closely monitored and in association with the programme work will commence on pivotal temperatures in incubating eggs by Mrs Maxwell of the University of Durban - Westville.

IUCN/SSC MARINE TURTLE SPECIALIST GROUP BULLETIN

Number 3
September 1984

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I have a few quick notes to send out before I leave on a two-week vacation. I received a letter from Grenville Lucas, Chairman of SSC, with three items of possible interest.

1. UNEP has invited IUCN to explore with USSR authorities the possibilities for utilizing credits in rubles to finance conservation projects in that currency. Please notify the Executive Officer if you can suggest candidate projects that might qualify.
2. A Program Officer at IUCN is beginning to construct a proposed Wetlands Program for IUCN and as material for a WWF Campaign to start in the fall of 1985. The Executive Officer will welcome any suggestions or candidate projects that should be considered for inclusion.
3. The number of newsletters produced by SSC Specialist Groups continues to grow (at least 16 at present). These, along with the new SSC Newsletter, have begun to attract inquiries about outside subscriptions. One suggestion is to offer a package of all the Group Newsletters (of those willing to participate) for a flat rate to outsiders with the income (no doubt modest) returned to the Groups for newsletter expenses. Please let the Executive Officer know your wishes. Would you prefer to keep your newsletter private and in-house, or would you not object to it having a wider, paid circulation? Any alternate suggestions?

If you have any suggestions regarding the first two items, please forward them to me. I will send all of our group's ideas in one package to Bob Scott, to make his life a little easier, and I will publish the lists in future bulletins.

Regarding the third item, in order to keep our bulletin very informal so that we all feel free to contribute any odd thought or fancy, I would like to write to Bob Scott supporting the idea in general, but asking him not to include our bulletin in any publications. If any of you disagree or have any comments, please let me know by 20 October.

While we are on the subject of the bulletin mailing list, I would like to clear up a possible point of confusion. In his recent letter to all of us, Nat Frazer mentioned that I had declined to add his name to the mailing list. I would like to quote from my letter to him regarding this point.

"I am happy to hear that the MTN will continue with you as editor; that is good news. I am also glad that you realize that the Specialist Group Bulletin is not in competition with the MTN. As I discussed in the introduction to the first bulletin (copy enclosed), the two serve very

different purposes and audiences. I have resisted all suggestions to extend the distribution of the bulletin in order to keep its tone very informal so that all Group members will feel free to participate and to prevent any appearance of redundancy between the bulletin and the MTN. It is for this reason that I am afraid that I must also decline to add your name to the mailing list. It would be impossible for me to justify, to myself and others, sending the bulletin to you and not to the many conservation organizations in the U.S. and elsewhere that have accomplished so much for turtle conservation. If I were to extend the mailing list, not only would I leave myself open to criticism for 'competing' with the MTN, but, more important, I fear I would decrease the chances for the bulletin to accomplish its primary purpose—increasing communication and action among group members.

"You may be sure that I will forward to you all information that would also be of interest to MTN readers. In this way, we can ensure that the information reaches the greatest number of people, and that the bulletin has the greatest chance to attain its goals."

This brings up the next piece of now old, but still happy, news: the Marine Turtle Newsletter is once again being published. If you have not received the two recent issues, please let the new editor know so that he can correct his mailing list: Dr. Nat Frazer, MPOMP, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, Woods Hole, MA 02543 USA. I know you need no encouragement from me to give the Marine Turtle Newsletter and its new editor your full support.

The OECS/FAO Workshop on the Harmonization and Coordination of Fishery Regimes held in Castries, Saint Lucia, 30 July-4 August 1984 approved a moratorium on the capture, possession or disturbance of all sea turtles and turtle eggs. Mr. Peter Murray, who was the National Representative from Saint Lucia at WATS, prepared the paper on sea turtles for the OECS/FAO Workshop. Members of OECS are Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent. Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Barbados also had representatives at the workshop. Milton Kaufmann and Jim Richardson of WIDECAST are preparing a working paper to support the OECS/FAO moratorium and are interested in any information you may have on sea turtles in the Lesser Antilles. Please send information to Dr. James Richardson, WIDECAST, Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 USA.

Peter Murray, mentioned above, spent two weeks at Tortuguero this summer being trained in sea turtle conservation techniques by Jeanne Mortimer, who was in charge of the Tortuguero work this summer.

Colin Limpus had a very successful two-week training program (both lectures and field work) for fisheries officers in Indonesia in July. Rodney Salm reports that there is now interest in repeating the course, perhaps on an annual basis.

Archie Carr will be attending the IUCN General Assembly in Madrid, 3-4 November 1984.

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IUCN/SSC MARINE TURTLE SPECIALIST GROUP BULLETIN

Number 4
February 1986

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I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new members to the Specialist Group. The new members are:

Ms. Aban Marker Kabraji Director, Regional Office WWF - Pakistan 1 Bath Island Road Karachi 0402, Pakistan	Dr. E. G. Silas Marine Biological Assoc. P.O. Box 1023 Cochin 682011 India	Mr. Khan Mohadin Director, STINASU P.O. Box 436 Paramaribo Suriname
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The Sixth Annual Workshop on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation will be held 19-21 March 1986 in Waverly, Georgia. Will those of you who are planning to attend please let me know immediately? I would like to plan a short Group meeting there. I need to know your arrival and departure dates and times so that we can reserve a room at a mutually convenient time. Also, I would welcome any suggested agenda topics. Thank you.

IUCN, WWF and SSC are working together to revamp their procedures and forms for funding grants. They are trying to expedite the funding procedure, and to ensure adequate review of the proposals. The current plan is to request that people seeking financial support first submit a short, pre-proposal. This brief project statement will allow WWF to quickly judge whether the topic falls within the range that can be funded by WWF. If the proposal can be considered for funding, a more complete project plan will be requested. These proposals will be reviewed in conjunction with the appropriate IUCN Commissions and Specialist Groups. As a first step in this process, a leatherback proposal was reviewed by seven members of our Group this past year. I think all who were involved will agree that the review process and follow-up were a great improvement over past practices. I have enclosed a copy of the form that WWF has distributed. I will keep you all informed of any changes that occur as the new procedures develop.

If you request funds either directly from Robert Scott or through WWF, please let me know. All such requests are forwarded to me for my opinion, and I will be better able to support your requests if I understand why you are requesting the funds and what conservation benefits you expect to result.

IUCN and WWF rely heavily on priorities set by the Specialist Groups in making funding decisions. As you may recall from earlier Bulletins, we have been requested to draw up a set of priorities for marine turtle conservation. IUCN and WWF now rely on the Conservation Strategy that was adopted at the World Conference on Sea Turtle Conservation held in Washington, D.C. in 1979. George Balazs has suggested that, rather than try to undertake the difficult task of developing a set of priorities *de novo*, we modify the Conservation Strategy. I think this is an excellent idea, particularly since this document is now used by IUCN and WWF. We can take either of two different approaches. Each of us could make whatever changes are felt necessary, and I could compile all comments and circulate the compiled version for group approval. Or, we could appoint a committee to rework the priorities and submit its version for group approval. Please write and tell me whether: (1) you think we should rework the Conservation Strategy, (2) we should take the individual or

committee approach, and (3) you would be interested in serving on the priorities committee if that approach should be selected. Also, please let me know if you do not have access to a copy of the Strategy, which was distributed at the Conference and is included at the end of Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles.

Setting priorities has taken on added interest, because we actually have some money. WWF/International is holding \$10,000 for our Group that it accepted from WWF/Japan who received a contribution from the Japan General Merchandise Importers Association. There are no restrictions on how the money is to be spent, but there was general agreement that the money could be best used in a series of small awards rather than in one or two larger ones.

Rene Marquez and Mario Hurtado worked to plan and carry out the very successful First Symposium on Marine Turtles in the Western Pacific held in San Jose, Costa Rica in December 1985. George Balazs attended the Symposium. I have enclosed a copy of the agreement that was drawn up at the Symposium and signed by official representatives of 10 nations. We are working now to coordinate this international agreement with IUCN's Commission on Environmental Policy, Law and Administration.

Harold Hirth is about to set out on a trip to survey sea turtle populations in the eastern Atlantic islands and the north coast of Africa. It is hoped that he will be able to extend his survey to Equatorial Guinea in response to two requests we have received for help in that country: one from Dr. Bizimana Adada in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development of that country, and one from WWF/International. Harry's work, conducted under the aegis of the Marine Turtle Specialist Group, is being funded by Wildlife Conservation International of the New York Zoological Society.

The New York Zoological Society also funded a visit by Colin Limpus to the Philippines to develop plans for establishing the Philippine Turtle Islands as a ASEAN Heritage Park. This latest visit is a continuation of the on-going effort of our Group, headed by Stanley de Silva, to protect the Turtle Islands shared by Sabah and the Philippines. These islands are of critical importance to sea turtles in the region. If you have suggestions as to how we can further this project, or if you have had experience with ASEAN Heritage Parks, please write to either Stanley de Silva or me.

George Hughes reports that his 1984/1985 season was an excellent one, and sent the enclosed summary of his results for the Bulletin.

I would like to remind all of you that George Balazs has agreed to maintain a computerized data base on all records of sea turtles entangled in or ingesting debris, such as nets and lines that have been set adrift, tar balls, plastic bags, etc. We all recognize that the increasing pollution of our oceans is a serious threat to sea turtles, but it is difficult to quantify the extent of the problem. Only by accumulating all anecdotal records, will we be able to prove that the danger is a real one and to support the need for laws to control at-sea dumping and to insure proper disposal and/or retrieval of damaged fishing gear. Please send George any information that you have.

If anyone would be willing to maintain a data base on incidental catch of sea turtles, please let me know. These data are being collected in several countries, but an international effort is needed, particularly to focus on local fisheries which, though small on the international scale, can have profound effects on local sea turtle populations. J. Mayol and R. Honegger sent me a report on such a problem in the Balearic Islands and asked for our

assistance. I have enclosed a copy of the report. Please let me know how you think our Group should proceed.

In case any of you did not receive the notice sent by Jeanne Mortimer, please be advised that as a member of our Group, you can request a free copy of Jeanne's "Marine Turtles in the Republic of the Seychelles" by writing to Pascale Moehrle, World Conservation Center, Avenue du Mont-Blanc, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland.

Huang Chu-Chien has written to inform us that he has suggested to his government that a set of sea turtle stamps be issued to aid in the conservation of sea turtles in China.

Mike McCoy sent word that the chiefs on Satawal have re-instituted the taboo on taking small turtles and eggs. There is a \$50 fine for transgression.

A Hawaiian Sea Turtle Recovery Team has been established. George Balazs is chairman; Harold Hirth and Larry Ogren are members; and I am a Corresponding Consultant. If you have any comments or information that would be useful to the Recovery Team, please send them to George. We are seeking all useful information and are open to suggestions.

Last October, Jane Thornback of the Conservation Monitoring Center of the SSC, called me to request a written statement that our Group endorses the listing of the green turtle, loggerhead, hawksbill and olive ridley on Appendix I of the Bonn Convention. (Kemp's ridley and the leatherback are already on Appendix I.) She needed the statement that day, in order to take it with her to the first meeting of the parties. Although the focus of this meeting was on getting the Convention working, and not on the listing of species, she wanted to have written statements from all appropriate Group Chairmen concerning the species covered by the Bonn Convention. I sent the following telex: "The SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group strongly endorses listing the green turtle, loggerhead, hawksbill and olive ridley on Appendix I of the Bonn Convention."

Dr. Robert Jaeger, Editor of the journal Herpetologica, wrote George Balazs, requesting him to inform members of our Group that he is very interested in publishing quantitative (either theoretical or empirical) papers on marine turtles in Herpetologica.

The membership list can only be finalized when we have received responses from all individuals. If you have not done so, please write to either Gren Lucas or myself, informing us whether you are willing to serve as a member. As soon as the list has been completed, I will distribute copies to all members.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

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IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group Meeting
Tortuguero, Costa Rica
July 24-25, 1983

The meeting was convened by Dr. Archie Carr, Chairman, at Tortuga Lodge, across the lagoon from the John H. Phipps Green Turtle Research Station at Tortuguero, Costa Rica. The following members were present: Dr. Archie Carr, Dr. Karen Bjorndal, Ms. Anne Meylan, Mr. George Balazs, Dr. Leo Brongersma, Dr. David Ehrenfeld, Dr. Jaques Fretey, Dr. Harold Hirth, Dr. George Hughes, Sr. Mario Hurtado, Mr. Colin Limpus, Rene Marquez, Dr. Nicholas Mrosovsky, Mr. Njoman Nuitja, Mr. Larry Ogren, Dr. Peter Pritchard, Dr. J. Perran Ross.

Agenda items were as follows:

IUCN Red Data Book. Group members expressed unanimous satisfaction with the work of Dr. Brian Groombridge of the Species Conservation Monitoring Unit, in compiling data on marine turtles for the new IUCN Amphibia-Reptilia Red Data Book. It was acknowledged by the members that the status designations adopted in this edition of the book reflected opinions that had been expressed to Dr. Groombridge by individuals in the Group, and not unilateral decisions of Dr. Groombridge himself. The members felt strongly that the role of determining these vitally important designations should ultimately rest with the Specialist Group, rather than with the compiler. It was recommended that guidelines be set up by SSC to clarify this point for future revisions of the categories. Many members expressed concern that the present IUCN system of one-word designations are not adequate to deal with the complexities presented by the taxonomy and ecologic geography of marine turtles. A subcommittee was organized to develop a more detailed format for providing information on the survival status of individual populations. The Specialist Group endorsed CITES I listings for all species. It was strongly recommended that the flatback turtle, Chelonia depressa, be reinstated in the next edition of the Red Data Book, in recognition of the several actual and potential threats to this endemic Australian species.

Regional Committee for Marine Turtles of the Eastern Pacific. The Specialist Group gave official endorsement to a regional committee organized at the ad hoc East Pacific Sea Turtle Meeting on July 23, 1983 in San Jose, Costa Rica to coordinate research and conservation efforts in behalf of sea turtles in the East Pacific.

Proposed Mexican Turtle Sanctuaries. The status of a long-deferred proposal to urge the Mexican government to designate marine turtle sanctuaries at strategic localities in Mexican waters was discussed. Renewed endorsement of this plan by the Specialist Group, in the form of letters of support to be sent to relevant agencies of the Mexican government, was recommended and approved.

Sabah/Philippines Joint Sanctuary. A project to seek the collaboration of the governments of Sabah and the Philippines in setting up a sea turtle sanctuary in the area shared by these countries in the Sulu Sea was discussed. This idea was conceived several years ago, but for various reasons never implemented. It was decided that funding to support the travel of an emissary to stimulate action on the proposal should be sought. If feasible, this trip might be combined with a visit to Malaysia, to discuss with

government officials the serious decline of the Sarawak rookery, and to explore solutions to that problem.

Australian Green Turtles. Colin Limpus expressed concern that green turtles nesting in Australia were being heavily harvested on their feeding grounds in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, New Hebrides and New Caledonia. It was his opinion that Australian populations cannot indefinitely sustain this high level of harvest. The Group agreed that all concerned governments should be made aware of this threat to a shared resource. The need for educational programs concerning marine turtles in the countries involved, particularly in PNG, was discussed. A recommendation to encourage funding agencies to support investigations of population status and trends, and of levels of exploitation, was formulated.

India. The Group acknowledged the invaluable assistance of S. Bhaskar, E. Moll, S. Biswas, J. Vijaya, C. Kar and R. Whitaker in monitoring the harvest of olive ridleys in India, and in providing the Group with information on disturbing developments that have been reported. Continued surveillance of the olive ridley along the Indian coast was recommended.

Marine Turtle Newsletter. Nicholas Mrosovsky expressed a wish to find a successor for the editorship of the Marine Turtle Newsletter. The subject of future funding for the publication was also discussed. Existing funds are expected to be exhausted by the end of one more year. A suggestion that costs be met by charging paid subscriptions was not approved. It was decided that a request to IUCN for funding might be appropriate in the future, providing past objections of IUCN to editorial policies and management can be resolved. Interest in encouraging guest editorials was expressed. Dr. Mrosovsky will begin to train a new editor for the Newsletter at an early date.

Turtle Excluder Device. The Specialist Group expressed its congratulations to the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service on the successful development of the turtle excluder device for shrimp trawls. Continued research and testing were urged. The Group also enthusiastically endorsed the vigorous program of technology transfer that NMFS is undertaking. Larry Ogren agreed to serve as liaison between parties interested in the device and NMFS. An information packet and educational film on the advantages and operation of the equipment is being made available, upon request to the agency.

Emeritus Category. Leo Brongersma suggested that a mandatory emeritus category be created to receive Group members 65 or 70 years old who wished to remain affiliated with the Group. Members with this status would be ineligible to hold office. There was little support for the idea, and its inconsistency with Specialist Group guidelines was pointed out. It was not adopted.

CITES Developments. Marine turtle issues addressed at the 4th CITES meeting in Botswana, 19-30 April 1983, were discussed. The French government withdrew its proposal to transfer Europa and Tromelin green turtle populations from Appendix I to Appendix II. Action on a second ranching proposal, to transfer the Surinam green turtle population to Appendix II, was deferred because of insufficient information on the methods to be used by the government to distinguish its legally ranched products from illegal products

from other sources. No Surinam delegate was present at the meeting to address this point, and the proposal was referred to the Technical Committee of CITES for further action.

Incidental catch. Although the problem of the incidental take of sea turtles by shrimp trawlers has been addressed by the National Marine Fisheries Service with some success, the importance of casual entanglement of turtles by gill nets, long lines and other fixed fishing gear as a mortality factor was discussed. Careful attention of Group members to this problem, and a search for a possible solution, were urged.