



## **State of the World's Sea Turtles**

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# SWOT

report

Volume VII

The State of the World's Sea Turtles



THE WORLD'S  
**MOST (*AND LEAST*)  
THREATENED**  
SEA TURTLES

## INSIDE

BEST PRACTICES FOR TURTLE TOURISM | NEW TECHNOLOGY TO REDUCE BYCATCH  
STAMP OUT EXTINCTION WITH NEW POSTAGE | AND MORE ...









A loggerhead turtle enters the surf after nesting on Masira Island, Oman.  
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# Editor's Note

## Reflections

One of the greatest challenges that conservationists face is deciding how to commit scarce resources of money and manpower in the best possible ways to achieve their goals. In response to this challenge, the science of priority-setting has advanced by leaps and bounds, fueled in recent years by rapid improvements in remote sensing, geographic information systems, and other technical tools for analysis and planning.

British ecologist Norman Myers published two journal articles on threatened biodiversity hotspots in 1988 and 1990: looking back at those classic papers today, one cannot help but see how far we have come in our understanding of priority-setting for Earth's terrestrial life and landscapes. His simple concept of quantifying and comparing the threat and uniqueness of terrestrial ecosystems was built on by groups like Conservation International, whose work sparked a renaissance in conservation priority-setting over the past two decades, yielding veritable mountains of books and numerous scientific papers on hotspots, major wilderness areas, mega-diversity countries, key biodiversity areas, and other such frameworks. Those tools and concepts have become immensely valuable for guiding conservation investments at all levels—from multilaterals, to governments and foundations, and down to local communities and individual researchers.

The past few years have also seen a renaissance in priority-setting for the sea turtle conservation movement, and this new emphasis is the focus of the “Special Feature” section in this issue, which is the first such feature since we completed our six-volume series highlighting the seven sea turtle species. “Getting Our Priorities Straight” (pages 20–31) tells the story of how the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Marine Turtle Specialist Group conducted a multiyear process to create the first lists of the world's most and least threatened sea turtle populations. And it would not have been possible without SWOT.

The SWOT Team can take great pride in the role it has played in this process. Before the creation of SWOT in 2004 and the publication of our first global map of leatherback nesting in *SWOT Report, Vol. 1* (2006), no source existed for current, global-scale information on sea turtle distribution and abundance, thus making informed global assessments of conservation priorities for sea turtles nearly impossible. Together, over the past eight years, we have built a foundation for effective conservation planning—the most comprehensive and current database on sea turtle biogeography in the world—that is already guiding investments in sea turtle conservation and will continue to do so for years to come. Although the results are imperfect, little by little data quality is improving, and we are developing a system that will enable us to eventually monitor trends over the long term through the continued contributions of the SWOT Team.

As we reflect on the past and celebrate the accomplishments that have advanced our movement, we must remember to keep looking to the future, reassessing and revamping our conservation tools, and always focusing on putting the tools to use in concrete ways that will ensure healthy populations of sea turtles forever.



Roderic B. Mast