



A hawksbill turtle feeds on soft coral in the Red Sea's Ras Mohammed Marine Park, Sinai, Egypt. © ALEXANDER MUSTARD/WWW.AMUSTARD.COM. FRONT COVER: A newly hatched green turtle in Okinawa Prefecture, Japan. © PETE LEONG | FOTOSHISA PHOTOGRAPHY



Editor's Note

Congratulations, but ...

In contrast to the properly grim outlook of just a few decades ago, these are pretty good times for sea turtles. In a 2017 paper titled “Global Sea Turtle Conservation Successes,” Antonio Mazaris and colleagues reported that published estimates of sea turtle populations tend to be increasing rather than decreasing globally. We have also seen the status of some species improving in recent Red List assessments led by the IUCN-SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group, with both the leatherback and loggerhead improving to vulnerable globally (from critically endangered and endangered, respectively). Even the world’s most threatened sea turtle species—the Kemp’s ridley, which is still critically endangered—shows signs of a rebound (see pp. 32–33). Olive ridleys are smashing past abundance records at their arribada beach in Escobilla, Mexico, and *SWOT Reports* have shared many accounts of recovery, ranging from Michoacán black turtles (pp. 44–45), to the sea turtles of Japan (pp. 24–31) and Brazil, the Hawaiian honu, Cyprus greens, and loggerheads in Kyparissia Bay, Greece, to name a few.

Congratulations! Our sea turtle conservation movement can take pride in these gains as a direct result of our long and hard work on beaches, in labs, in board rooms and classrooms, at the desks of elected officials, and in innumerable conferences, multinational meetings, and community gatherings all across the globe.

But ... the human hazards to sea turtles and healthy oceans are still out there, and some threats, such as climate change and pollution—for example plastics (pp. 42–43) and toxic runoff (pp. 8–9)—are clearly worsening, while others, such as bycatch (pp. 36–39), remain difficult to solve. And the juxtaposition of greater numbers of sea turtles and a growing human population in need of economic alternatives will bring back questions about what sustainable use is and how it will be measured, issues that our community must be prepared to address wisely.

The bottom line is that we cannot allow ourselves to become complacent about our successes or to believe for a moment that our job is done. The years ahead will require the same superhuman conservation effort that our movement has invested over the past half-century, and then some.

SWOT exists to strengthen our far-flung and diverse community, to better understand the globally ranging turtles we love, and to synergize our efforts around shared goals and priorities so that our collective conservation impact can be greater than the sum of our many disparate parts. In all aspects of our commitment to turtles, we will accomplish more together than apart.

Thank you all,

Roderic B. Mast
Chief Editor, *SWOT Report*

AT LEFT: An arribada at Ixtapilla, Michoacán, Mexico, a beach where mass nesting was unknown until 1997. Olive ridleys are nesting in record-breaking numbers throughout Pacific Mexico where they were once heavily exploited. © CARLOS SALAS