

# PROLOGUE

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## Editorial Comment

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In this 11th issue of *Chelonian Conservation and Biology*, we return to our normal format of a mixture of articles on freshwater turtles, tortoises, and marine turtles. Special focus issues on certain species or subjects will continue to be presented from time to time. Our two special issues so far have been on the leatherback and the hawksbill, focusing on those two fascinating and endangered sea turtles. Some readers have voiced their concern that our choice of sea turtles in those special issues has indicated a lack of focus on freshwater turtles and tortoises. Not so. The next special issue will focus on the freshwater Blanding's turtle, and plans are being drawn up for a possible special issue focusing on North American tortoises. Other special issues on sea turtles are also under consideration, as are plans for issues on such topics as the international turtle trade. Our goal is not to be exclusively a journal devoted to one type of turtle or another, but to reach a reasonable mixture of papers dealing with all chelonians, be they terrestrial, freshwater, or marine. A turtle is a turtle. We all benefit from exposure to the various subsets of our diverse interest groups. The freshwater turtle people need to hear more from the marine turtle people, who need to hear more from the tortoise people, who need to hear from the freshwater turtle people, and vice versa, round and round. We all need to be less parochial if we are to succeed in preserving these creatures so dear to our hearts.

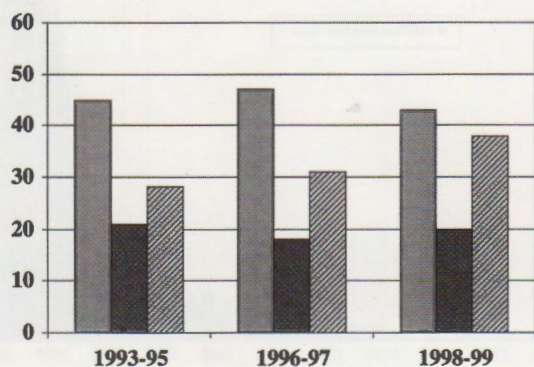
In terms of reaching a reasonable mixture of articles, we are entirely dependent upon the types of manuscripts submitted to us for publication. We appear to be converging on a mixture of about 40% freshwater turtle papers, 40% marine turtle papers, and 20% tortoise papers (Fig. 1). This seems to strike a nice and reasonable balance, but one that will no doubt fluctuate somewhat through time. If you want more articles on

freshwater turtles, then please submit more. We are an outlet that reflects what we receive.

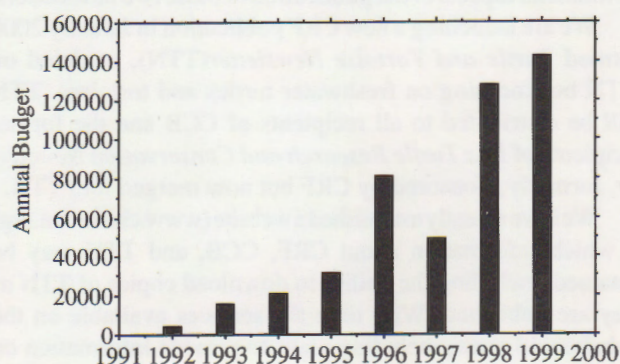
As we reach the end of the first millennium this seems a good opportunity to reflect on what *Chelonian Research Foundation* (CRF) has accomplished during its first eight years of existence. I founded CRF in 1992 as a nonprofit tax-exempt private operating foundation for the production, publication, and support of worldwide turtle and tortoise research, with an emphasis on systematic relationships, geographic distribution, natural history, morphology, and the scientific basis of chelonian diversity and conservation biology. CRF's Executive Board consists of myself, Russell A. Mittermeier, and Peter C.H. Pritchard. We have grown steadily since our founding, with increasing commitment and involvement in a number of different turtle-related programs.

Our annual revenues have climbed steadily, both from charitable contributions and program-related income from subscriptions and sales. We have had total revenues of \$735,000 over 8 years, peaking at over \$200,000 annually the last two years. At the same time we have dispersed over \$473,000 for program-related expenses and grants over the last 8 years. Our annual budget, which is over 99% devoted to the charitable purposes of the foundation, has increased steadily (Fig. 2), peaking at over \$100,000 annually over the last two years.

We have established *The Linnaeus Fund*, an endowment fund for support of turtle research, through which we have funded 52 projects for a total of \$48,000. The fund is growing steadily and currently stands at a value of \$161,000. Grants are distributed annually through an application and review process undertaken by CRF's Scientific Advisory Board, which consists of myself, Russell A. Mittermeier, Peter C.H. Pritchard, John L. Behler, Terry E. Graham, and Kurt A. Buhlmann. We

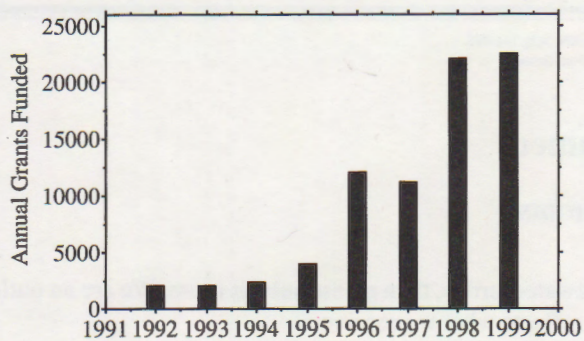


**Figure 1.** Percentage mixture of papers submitted to CCB on freshwater turtles (lighter shading), tortoises (darker shading), and marine turtles (diagonal striping) over 3 time periods.



**Figure 2.** Annual budget for CRF over its 8-year existence. Over 99% of the budget is devoted to the charitable and research purposes of the foundation.





**Figure 3.** Annual turtle grants funded by CRF over its 8-year existence. Grants include *The Linnaeus Fund* and general funding.

have also dispersed general operating and support grants for meetings, symposia, student presentation awards, publications, and other worthwhile research projects, and our total support of turtle projects (including Linnaeus grants) is \$78,000 for 74 projects over 8 years, peaking at over \$20,000 annually over the last two years (Fig. 3).

We have published *Chelonian Conservation and Biology* (CCB) since 1993. The journal has a distribution of about 1100 and reaches over 60 nations. We have published 11 issues to date, containing 246 articles in 1548 pages of text. We have strived to produce two issues per year and to be timely in our handling of the review and publications process. Sometimes we stumble and delays occur in the review process, but our overall record for time from submission to actual publication is excellent.

We have also initiated publication of *Chelonian Research Monographs*, a series of longer books on turtles, of which the first issue on Galápagos tortoises has appeared and over 1000 copies sold. The second issue in the series, *Conservation Biology of Freshwater Turtles*, has been in production for a long time and has faced innumerable and unforeseen frustrating delays, but will eventually appear.

We have established a formal association with the long-running established publication *Marine Turtle Newsletter* (MTN) and its Spanish counterpart *Noticiero de Tortugas Marinas* (NTM), and serve as their financial umbrella and distribution coordinator. We distribute MTN to over 1600 recipients worldwide and NTM to 350 subscribers and handle all financial aspects of the publication of those two newsletters.

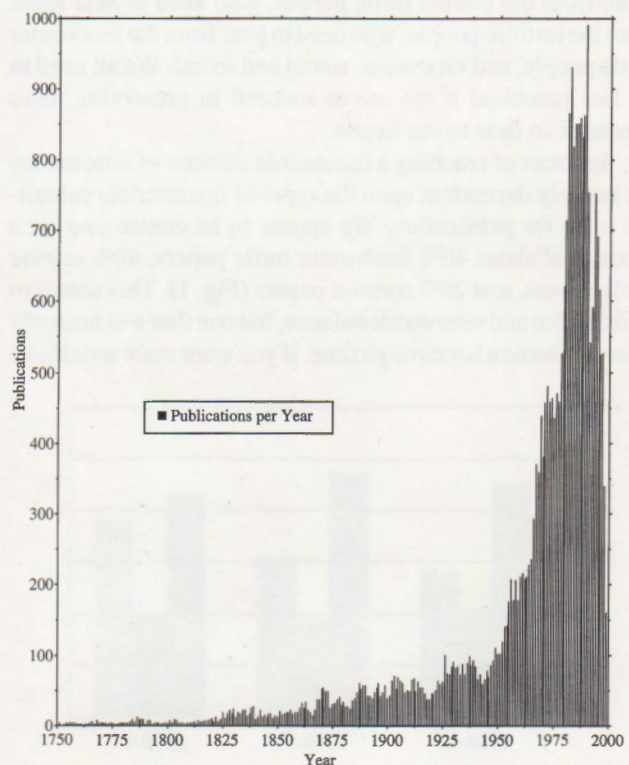
We are launching a new CRF publication in January 2000 entitled *Turtle and Tortoise Newsletter* (TTN), modeled on MTN but focusing on freshwater turtles and tortoises. TTN will be distributed to all recipients of CCB and the former recipients of *Box Turtle Research and Conservation Newsletter*, formerly sponsored by CRF but now merged into TTN.

We have recently established a website ([www.chelonian.org](http://www.chelonian.org)) at which information about CRF, CCB, and TTN may be obtained, including the ability to download copies of TTN as they are published. With time the services available on the website will grow, including plans to provide information on The Linnaeus Fund and a bibliography of turtle literature.

One of our long-running projects has been maintaining and expanding a bibliographic database of all turtle literature,

*Bibliotheca Testudinum*. That database currently stands at over 29,000 references and is available for searching by interested researchers who may contact CRF for help. We are planning on eventually placing the whole database on our website to make it searchable by anyone. A recent analysis of the contents of the database shows graphically the incredible growth over the last quarter-millennium in publications per year on turtles (Fig. 4). During the first half of the last century there was a continuation of the earlier relatively slow and steady growth, interrupted temporarily by the two world wars, but subsequently there has been an explosion of exponential growth from the 1950s to the present. The appearance of less publications in the last few years of this decade is only a reflection of our own difficulty in keeping up with all the recent literature that has been produced but not yet entered into our database. That problem is currently being corrected through the hiring of an individual to target the task of accelerating the process of bibliographic data entry.

One of our recent projects of which we are most enthusiastic, is co-sponsorship with Chelonia Institute (CI) to create and fully support a new turtle research facility, *Chelonian Research Institute* (CRI). Directed by Peter C.H. Pritchard and housed in Oviedo, Florida, CRI is an outgrowth of Pritchard's extensive turtle collections and library and will serve to preserve into perpetuity his long-standing efforts at documenting and understanding the world of turtle diversity. With support from CI and CRF, we expect CRI to prosper and grow well into the future.



**Figure 4.** The number of publications on turtles per year as recorded in CRF's bibliographic database, *Bibliotheca Testudinum*.