

# PROLOGUE

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## Editorial Comment

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This 16th issue of *Chelonian Conservation and Biology*, offering a major collection of papers on the Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), is our 4th Focus Issue featuring a single species of turtle. The leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) was featured in 1996, the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in 1999, and Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) in 2000. These Focus Issues have helped us and turtle specialists around the world to focus on critical conservation issues and state-of-the-art knowledge for each species. They have been extremely well received by our readership and individual copies of these issues are our best sellers; they have become a tradition we intend to continue.

The Kemp's ridley, classified as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List, is the world's most endangered sea turtle, with the global population of nesting adult females reduced in the mid-1980s to less than approximately 400 animals nesting at a single site in Tamaulipas, Mexico. As a result of heroic bi-national efforts by Mexico and the USA, with governmental and non-governmental organizations working together, the species has begun to recover, with current estimates of nesting adult females now above 2000 animals.

The papers that follow in this Focus Issue document the status of the species from the time of the discovery of the single major nesting beach in 1963, through the continuing decline of the species through the 1970s and into the mid- to late 1980s, and then the gradual recovery of nesting populations through the 1990s and into this century, as the various facets of a multi-pronged conservation program began to improve recruitment and survivorship. The species remains Critically Endangered, but is heading towards a more secure future. Its gradual recovery is a testament to the value of intensive, multi-faceted, and collaborative efforts aimed at improving the survival of a species.

Papers in this issue focus also on the species' biology, not only of adults, but also the important developmental years of juveniles and sub-adults as they disperse widely along the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, to southern Florida and beyond, into the Gulf Stream and then the western North Atlantic and eastern USA seaboard, where annual cycles of seasonal migrations form a critical part of their life cycle. No longer are these young animals in Atlantic waters considered lost waifs; instead, the normal life cycle of the Kemp's ridley stretches from Mexico to Massachu-

setts and beyond—the species is as much a part of the temperate New England fauna as it is of the sub-tropical to tropical Gulf of Mexico.

In my editorial for the previous issue of CCB, I reached out for help in the running of this journal, noting that my efforts since 1993 had been rewarding but incredibly time-consuming. I am now pleased to announce two developments that have resulted from my pleas for help. First, I have been joined at the Associate Editor level by Jeffrey A. Seminoff, who has stepped forward and taken on the burden of shepherding all marine turtle manuscripts through the editorial review process, considerably easing my work load and allowing me to concentrate more on freshwater turtle and tortoise manuscripts. With his dedicated help, we have begun to decrease the turn-around time for reviews.

The second and more major development is that Chelonian Research Foundation has been approached by Allen Press and offered a co-publishing partnership to help produce both *Chelonian Conservation and Biology* and *Turtle and Tortoise Newsletter*. Allen Press and its publishing division, Alliance Communications Group, already produce and co-publish several premier herpetological journals, including *Copeia*, *Herpetologica*, *Herpetological Monographs*, *Journal of Herpetology*, and *Herpetological Review*.

We are extremely pleased and honored to announce that starting with Volume 5, *Chelonian Conservation and Biology* and *Turtle and Tortoise Newsletter* will be co-published by Allen Press and Chelonian Research Foundation. This new partnership will combine the knowledge and academic leadership of CRF's publications with the industry expertise of one of the leading scientific publishers and printers, and will bring many new and welcome developments to the current format of the journal.

One of the most exciting changes that will be noticed by CRF readership and authors will be electronic web-based versions of both CCB and TTN. For readers this will mean convenient access to this invaluable knowledge anywhere there is internet access. For authors this equates to more researchers and institutions having worldwide access to their research. The timeliness of publication of the issues will be the other major and most welcome enhancement. Allen Press will bring its team of professionals to bear on all aspects of formatting, publishing, and distribution. This will free me up from the labor-intensive aspects of technical journal production and leave me free to concentrate on



just editing. All editorial control and oversight will remain securely at CRF in my hands and in those of the dedicated team of editors and reviewers. All subscribers will initially receive two issues of the journal, two issues of the newsletter, and full electronic access to both with each calendar year subscription. In 2005 the Vol. 5 issues will be published toward the end of the year, fairly close together, due to the late transition into the co-publishing arrangement. In later years all issues of the journal and newsletter will be published according to set schedules. Over the next few years we intend to gradually increase the publication schedule to eventually produce quarterly issues of CCB.

Finally, as we finish up Volume 4, I wish to acknowledge and thank the 159 reviewers and editorial review board

members listed below who have helped provide peer review for all the manuscripts submitted during the lengthy production of this volume. Without their professionalism, dedication, and willingness to provide insightful reviews, I could not have achieved the academic standards of excellence to which I aspired. With their help, and especially with the help and support of my Associate and Consulting Editors (Peter C.H. Pritchard, Jeffrey A. Seminoff, John L. Behler, and Russell A. Mittermeier), we have together achieved a journal of lasting quality which now stands ready to transition into an increasingly prominent role in the public dissemination of professional studies in chelonian biology and conservation. The future looks bright ahead and I look forward to meeting both its new challenges and rewards.

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