



Conservation Funding in Action

TURTLE CONSERVATION FUND: A FIVE YEAR HISTORY

TCF: A Five Year History

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The Turtle Conservation Fund (TCF) is a strategizing and granting agency that was formed in May 2002 from a need to help curb the growing global turtle crisis. A partnership of Conservation International's Center for Applied Biodiversity Science (CI/CABS), The World Conservation Union/Species Survival Commission/ Tortoise and Freshwater Specialist Group (IUCN/SSC/TFTSG) and the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA), the TCF mission is to assure that no tortoise or freshwater turtle species becomes extinct, and that sustainable populations of all species persist in the wild.

A turtle conservation action plan was prepared to provide a directional basis to implement the mission. Examples of activities included in the plan are support for *ex situ* captive breeding and management programs both in-range and out-of-range, *in situ* protection and management of natural populations, field-based conservation biology and applied research, field and trade surveys, threatened status and regulatory needs determinations, protected areas evaluations and development, and capacity building. A list of the "Top 25 Turtles on Death Row" provided further direction to TCF's endeavors.

Several sources of funds were secured to implement this plan. Since inception, TCF has received 84 grant requests for turtle conservation funding. Total project support requested for these 84 proposals was \$1,588,360, of which \$543,273 was requested specifically as support from TCF. Of these proposals, TCF funded 29 critically important turtle conservation projects for a total Grants Program disbursement of \$111,974. The average annual disbursement over 4 years has been \$29,993, which represents 7.6% of the total grant support requested, and 20.6% of the grant support requested specifically

from TCF. Awards have averaged \$3,861 and ranged from \$1,000 to \$6,000, and were provided to projects conducted in (or concerning) 26 different nations: Philippines, Cambodia, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Germany, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Egypt, Malaysia, Brazil, Vietnam, Mexico, Myanmar, Bolivia, Guatemala, Bangladesh, Cuba, Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and China.

A few examples of results from funded projects include: providing key information to communities along the upper Magdalena River in Columbia about the plight and conservation needs of its endangered Magdalena River Turtle (*Podocnemis lewyana*); documentation of illegal trade of the critically endangered Roti Island Snake-necked Turtle (*Chelodina mccordi*); head-starting and release of the critically endangered River Terrapin (*Batagur baska*) in Malaysia; development of community-based conservation programs for the endangered Egyptian Tortoise (*Testudo kleinmanni*); formation of a turtle conservation facility at the Münster Zoo, Germany; and gaining a better understanding of the ecology, distribution, and conservation needs of the poorly known, critically endangered Philippine Pond Turtle (*Heosemys leytensis*).

Building on the successes and challenges of the past, TCF will enhance its future by 1) more proactively soliciting proposals; 2) focusing its limited resources more on projects that enhance the survival of only the most critically endangered species; 3) seeking more funding sources while retaining existing ones, and striving for higher contribution levels; 4) critically reviewing its five-year-old action plan and list of target species; 5) seeking to coordinate turtle conservation efforts further with other organizations; and 6) formally evaluating its progress in fulfilling its mission. By addressing these issues, TCF can more effectively meet the challenge of making a lasting difference in turtle conservation efforts worldwide.

Visit: www.TurtleConservationFund.org to learn more.



The Magdalena River Turtle (*Podocnemis lewyana*) has been the subject of several TCF funded projects designed to provide a greater understanding of the biology of this poorly known species.



PIERRE FIDENCI

This Philippine Forest Turtle was encountered along a small creek in Palawan.



Some of the early field work on the Philippine Forest Turtle (*Heosemys leytensis*) was provided by the TCF.