



THE INDO-PACIFIC SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION GROUP

November 2006 Newsletter

Proposed name change and expanded focus for IPSTCG

A Special Meeting held in Townsville on October 4 approved a motion to change the group's name from Indo-Pacific Sea Turtle Conservation Group Inc to Sea Turtle Foundation Inc.

The proposed change reflects the intention to expand the group's geographic scope and broaden its funding base. A key component of this plan is the establishment of a completely new web site with the aim of attracting international interest as well as international donations to support turtle conservation.

Committee and membership responses to the proposal were almost unanimously favourable. One member, who opposed the motion, expressed regret that the new name did not retain any regional connection. However a crucial local component underpins the new "going global" initiative: The proposal received its impetus from the generous support offered by a Queensland businessman to fund professional design and implementation of the new web site, and to employ a project coordinator on a part-time basis.

In conjunction with the name change and new web site, an application will be lodged shortly seeking Deductible Gift Recipient status for the group. This would enable private and corporate donations to be tax deductible in future. Summing up the committee's positive expectations, Secretary Sara Bell said "As a result of these changes, we would like to be in a position as a group to fund research and community projects locally, nationally and internationally within a few years."

Implementation of the name change is pending, subject to regulatory approval by the Office of Fair Trading. Members will be notified as the matter progresses. In the interim the group's normal activities will continue under the well-established IPSTCG banner.

Julia Hazel

IPSTCG team 2006-07

At the Annual General Meeting on 30 July 2006, the following office bearers were elected unanimously:

President: David Savage

Secretary: Sara Townsend

Treasurer: Nicole Kenyon

Scientific Advisory Officer: Neil Mattocks

Membership Secretary: Helen Ellacott

Education Officer: Rayna Page

Newsletter Editor: Julia Hazel

The positions of Vice President, Information Technology Officer and Campaigns Officer remain vacant, to be filled as soon as possible.

Meet our new President, David Savage



Hello everyone.

My name is David Savage, and I recently received the honour of being voted in as president during the last Annual General Meeting.

I am a marine biologist by training, and have been involved at the edge and occasionally directly working on marine turtle conservation issues in my

work with government agencies in marine parks in the last 26 years.

But growing up in New Guinea and then in southeast Queensland – with most weekends and holidays snorkelling and boating – meant turtles have always been part of the marine world's magic experience.

In those days the perception of marine turtles seemed to be as a wonderfully robust and thriving part of nature. But the last two decades, and particularly since around 1990 – the awareness has moved towards serious concern as human impacts have clearly shown up in falling population numbers of the various species; increasing diseases, and significant increase in non-natural injuries.

Most governments have arranged some protection for turtles, and sometimes their habitat, but the diverse impacts need to also be highlighted within the general community – our organisation is part of that, and we know there are many others seeking to similarly address the more pressing concerns. Like our other keen members I joined seeking to help in this cause, and hope we can continue to raise enthusiasm and support for turtle conservation in a wider scale.

David Savage

Australian bid to host 2009 international turtle symposium

Australian sea turtle biologists recently presented a bid to host the 2009 Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation to the International Sea Turtle Society.

The Australian Proposal Organising Committee nominated Dr. Colin Limpus, who has more than 40 years experience with sea turtles, as President for the 2009 symposium.

If the bid is successful, it is anticipated the event will be held in Queensland. This will provide an excellent opportunity for members of IPSTCG to attend the conference, meet international researchers and members of other community-based turtle conservation groups, and assist in the organisation and running of this prestigious event.

The outcome of the bid is expected to be announced early in 2007.

Andrea Phillott

A big thank-you to Tim Harvey – IPSTCG President for the past 5 years



We are saying a farewell to our wonderful President of the last five years – Tim Harvey.

Tim has been a dynamic and vigorous personality, showing in an ideal mixture of public advocacy expertise, good humour, energy and commitment. He has readily taken on public engagements at little notice, and engaged in most of the field components and hands-on turtle work. That he has delivered so much voluntary work while under heavy commitments for his employed work arena underlines the achievement and value of his time in the role of president.

Tim has shown other attributes that a non-profit conservation organisation always desperately needs – and the ability to obtain federal and local government funding grants, with persuasive applications and suitable flattery at the right moments, has been a memorably successful skill. Under his presidency IPSTCG has not only won these grants – it has also won praise for the way we have operated with them.

So replacing Tim is a challenge, and for many of us his departure seems a situation of regret – but we hope to keep ongoing contact with him in his new lifestyle in the woods of northern New South Wales. Best wishes in this new and interesting future Tim, and all that have worked with you will thank you for your leadership, friendship, and wholehearted involvement in the pursuit of marine turtle conservation.

David Savage

A very special occasion!



Sara Townsend and Ian Bell, both dedicated champions of turtle conservation, were married in a beautiful outdoor setting at Ethel Creek on 20 August 2006.

The happy couple were surrounded by family and friends as celebrations continued at the Townsville Maritime Museum.

On behalf of all IPSTCG members, congratulations and very best wishes to Sara and Ian!

Julia Hazel

New research to study the mysterious movements of flatback hatchlings

Dr. Andrea Phillott has recently moved to Townsville and become a member of IPSTCG. Andrea finished her PhD at Central Queensland University on the fungal invasion of sea turtle nests in 2002, and is now working with frog diseases at James Cook University. As she is a sea turtle biologist at heart, she plans to continue her turtle research by becoming involved with IPSTCG activities.

Andrea plans to follow flatback turtle hatchlings from Peak Island, central Queensland, in January 2007 to determine dispersal patterns from the beach and swimming behaviour.

The flatback turtle is the only species of sea turtle endemic to the Australian continental

shelf and therefore has one of the most restricted geographic ranges of all sea turtles. It is also one of the most poorly understood turtle species.

Unlike other sea turtles, flatback hatchlings do not enter a pelagic phase of “lost years”. They remain in coastal waters and therefore provide an opportunity for visual tracking and radio telemetry to monitor their dispersal patterns and swimming behaviour. Such data is essential for understanding the habitat requirements and consequently developing management plans for this unique species of sea turtle.

Hatchlings will have a radio transmitter and float attached to the rear of their carapace and will be released from the beach at dawn. Andrea will follow the hatchlings in a kayak with an accompanying support vessel.

It is hoped the hatchlings will be followed for as long as possible to monitor their dispersal and determine their preferred in-shore habitat. All of the animals will have the tracking apparatus removed when the study is finished.

It has taken Andrea 12 months of careful planning to design a study that will not place the hatchlings at risk and to obtain the required GBRMPA and QPWS permits, and CQU Animal Ethics certificates. She will be assisted by sea turtle biologist Dr. John Parmenter and previous IPSTCG president Tim Harvey.

Andrea Phillott



Where does a flatback hatchling go after it leaves its natal beach? No one knows - but Dr Andrea Phillott plans to find out..

B Legg photo by courtesy of GBRMPA

Turtle news in brief

Nesting season: After several sightings of mating turtles in the Townsville area, the first nesting activity for the season has been observed. On October 19 a turtle was reported laying 200 eggs in mid-morning at the very quiet area of Shelley Beach (northern end of Townsville). If the egg count was accurate, the turtle was probably a green. Later the same day a flatback crawled up the Strand, but was apparently unsuccessful on her first nesting attempt.

Volunteers needed for beach monitoring: As usual IPSTCG will monitor turtle nesting at AIMS Beach, dates this year from 24th November through to 7th December. To participate please contact Sara Bell: ipstcg@beyond.net.au

Turtle talk: Tim Harvey and Rayna Page gave a talk to the NQ Herpetological society in September. The scheduled 20-minute talk turned into more than an hour of questions as their presentation was so popular.

More research: Investigating the activity patterns of green turtles in coastal foraging areas is keeping newsletter editor Julia Hazel busy in Moreton Bay - look out for tracking updates at: www.seaturtle.org/tracking/index.shtml?project_id=181 (web address must be typed as a single line)



An emerging flatback on West Island, NT
Chloe Schauble photo

Safety for hatchlings: IPSTCG is preparing a brochure on sea turtles and beach lighting, to help beachside residents understand the danger that bright lights pose for hatchlings and encourage people to minimise these risks. Please email ipstcg@beyond.net.au to request a copy.

TLC for turtles: Three turtles have received special care at the turtle rehabilitation centre at Reef HQ in Townsville, which re-opened recently. A donation towards the cost of feeding turtles at the centre came from Willows State School students who raised funds by selling environmentally-friendly bags. Public tours of the Turtle Rehab Centre are available at certain times - contact Reef HQ on (07) 4750 0700 for details.

Wear a T-shirt with the famous diving turtle logo... and show the world you care!

IPSTCG has T-shirts in stock now – and they make great Christmas gifts. To purchase please send an email to Sara at ipstcg@beyond.net.au and let her know the quantity, styles, colours and sizes you require. Sara will contact you to arrange payment and pick-up (in Townsville) or postage if required.



- Unisex T-shirt
- Turtle logo front and back
- Beige or blue 100% cotton
- Sizes S, M, L, XL

Price \$28.00
(\$24.00 for members)



- Ladies v-neck T-shirt,
- Turtle logo on the front
- Jacaranda poly-cotton
- Sizes 8, 10, 12, 14

Price \$ 26.00
(\$22.00 for members)



- Childrens v-neck T-shirt
- Turtle logo on the front
- Size 6 only, burgundy cotton/elastane,

Price \$18.00
(\$14.00 for members)