

## TURTLE CONSERVATION FUND

# Growing the Coalition

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This TCF-supported project by Agyekumhene and Allman also benefited from support by both MBZ and the TSA, an exemplary collaborative conservation effort. Here, the Paramount Chief in central Ghana leads a day-long durbar (festival) to celebrate the value of Kinixys tortoises in Ghanaian culture and to proclaim full protection for them within his region. PHOTO CREDIT: PETER CRANSWICK.

**The Turtle Conservation Fund (TCF)** was founded in 2002 as a strategic funding partnership of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, the Turtle Survival Alliance, and Conservation International; and has grown gradually into an expanding coalition of several key partners, supporting organizations, and individuals. These have included: the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria's Shellshock Campaign, George Meyer and Maria Semple, Humane Society International of Australia, Frankel Family Foundation, Turtle Conservancy, Matthew Frankel, Robert Steinwurtzel, Chelonian Research Foundation, as well as Wildlife Conservation Society and Chelonian Research Institute.

This past year we also welcomed new major organizational support from Global Wildlife Conservation, whose commitment to turtle conservation has also been reflected in their support of the Behler Award as well as numerous other turtle conservation projects. We thank Wes Sechrest and Don Church for their enthusiastic support of our efforts. In addition, we are working increasingly in concert with the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund (MBZ) to help strategically and collaboratively fund the most urgently needed and compelling chelonian conservation projects (see our article on MBZ in the 2014 TSA Magazine). This organizational synergy has helped to focus

increasing resources on the world's endangered turtles and tortoises, with MBZ and TCF disbursing a total of about US \$160,000 combined in turtle-focused grants over the last year.

As of August 2016, the TCF granted over US \$954,000 in total support to 217 conservation projects focused on the world's most endangered turtles and tortoises. A total of 626 grant proposals were received by TCF since 2003, of which 35% were funded, with requests totaling US \$3,303,000, of which 29% was granted. The average award was US \$4,397. Grants were awarded to projects conducted in 53 nations, with support ranging from US \$1,000 to \$10,000. All of the Turtle Conservation Coalition's "Turtles in Trouble: The World's Top 25+ Most Endangered Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles – 2011," projects representing 25 species, were funded. Of TCF's 62 *Priority Species* (February 2014 list), projects representing 50 (81%) were supported. Of the 29 taxa currently listed by IUCN as Critically Endangered, TCF has supported projects for 27 (93%).

Through the ongoing efforts of TCF and its growing coalition of partner organizations and dedicated individuals, including the TSA, we continue to pursue our mission: conserving the world's tortoises and freshwater turtles to ensure that no more species become extinct in our time. We greatly value the support of the turtle

Over the past year, the TCF has supported 15 projects for a total disbursement of US \$44,245 split over two funding cycles. We have supported the following projects:

- Brian Folt for surveys of *Kinosternon angustipons* in Costa Rica
- Anibal Soto for restoring habitat for *Dermatemys mawii* in Mexico
- Sulemana Bawa for surveys of *Cyclanorbis elegans* in Ghana
- Ross Kiester and Tanya Berger-Wolf for biometric methodology for identifying wild *Psammobates geometricus* in South Africa
- John-James Wilson for environmental DNA studies on *Batagur affinis* in Malaysia
- Andrews Agyekumhene and Phil Allman for community education and expansion of traditional protection for *Kinixys* species in Ghana
- Gerardo Leynaud for commercial use and population studies of *Chelonoidis chilensis* in Argentina
- Caesar Rahman for his EcoGuardian Program of turtle hunting mitigation in the Chittagong Hills of Bangladesh
- Fabio Petrozzi for surveys of *Centrochelys sulcata* in Mali and Niger
- Sabine Schoppe and Charles Innis for pathologic evaluation of *Siebenrockiella leytensis* confiscated in the Philippines
- Omar Hernandez for a course on ecology and conservation of freshwater turtles in Venezuela
- Carla Eisemberg for nesting management and environmental protection for *Podocnemis expansa* at the Rio-Trombetas Biological Reserve in Brazil
- Sneha Dharwadkar and Shailendra Singh for distribution mapping and threat assessment of *Nilssonina leithii* in Karnataka, India
- Richard Vogt for work on migration and habitat use of headstarted hatchling *Podocnemis expansa* in Rio Trombetas, Brazil
- Jacob Marlin to help support a film to raise conservation awareness for *Dermatemys mawii* in Belize

conservation community in these efforts and are honored to be able to provide as much support as we do for so many of the critically important frontline and on the ground efforts on behalf of global turtle conservation.