



40th International Sea Turtle Symposium

Workshop Proposal for ISTS40

Title of Proposed Workshop:

Bridging the gaps: The Asia-Pacific Marine Turtle Genetic Working Group

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Suggested Duration of Workshop: Half Day (4 hours)

Description and Justification of the Workshop:

The Asia Pacific region hosts many globally significant nesting and foraging populations of six species of marine turtles and a few collaborative genetic studies have been previously successfully conducted. Access to genetics laboratories has become more common across the region, and more studies are incorporating genetic aspects into their projects. Given the increased accessibility to genetic laboratories, there is a need to further enhanced in-country capacity to develop and carry out genetic research studies and to facilitate region-wide studies. As such, there is also a need to standardize methods and collaboration between groups to ensure work can be compared and combined for effective analysis.

In response to these needs, in late 2020 the Asia Pacific Marine Turtle Genetic Working Group was established to bring together researchers from the region that have access to marine turtle ecological data, tissue samples or genetic laboratories, and that are interested in supporting or leading genetic studies.

A series of monthly workshops and meeting has been hosted virtually since January 2021 with participants from Asia, and an upcoming series of workshops will provide a similar opportunity for researchers from the Pacific Island region.

This workshop during the 40th IST Symposium will allow to bring the 2 groups together, and allow to expand the participations to new interested researchers. Participants will be invited from countries throughout East and South Asia and the

West Pacific in order to build on existing local and international collaborations and further this regional initiative.

The workshop will include a series of short presentations to provide updates on the status of the genetic work in the Region, new technologies and current collaborative projects, as well as a facilitated discussion to identify research priorities and gaps, both in sampling and analysis.

Expected Outcomes of the Workshop:

Goals

Identify research priorities and establish a regional collaborative network to facilitate genetic studies that can support national and international marine turtle management and protection efforts.

Preliminary Objectives

- 1) Expand and enhance a directory of individuals, groups and institutions currently involved in genetics work (or with the potential to get involved) in the region, as well as their current capacity and interests.
- 2) Identify and prioritize conservation knowledge gaps that can be solved with a genetic approach and design common priority research questions (i.e. Identify core issues and key research questions, highlight challenges and needs and identify opportunities and priority actions).
- 3) Consolidate regional best practice protocols for sample collection and long term storage and standardize genetic analysis protocols and pipelines for priority research questions (ie. tools and techniques to define appropriate “units to conserve”, applicability of emerging technologies and analytical tools).
- 4) Discuss the possibility of developing a regional collaborative digital tissue sample database (including existing repository databases and museum collections) and identify mechanisms for data sharing.

The proceeding of the workshop will be made available on the Working Group website www.marineturtlegenetics.org