



PRESIDENT-ELECT NOMINATION FORM

Section 1: Nominee Details:

Name: Stephen G. Dunbar

Date: 04/01/2022 01:25:04

Email address: sdunbar@llu.edu

Professional affiliations: Professor, Graduate Biology Program Director, Department of Earth and Biological Sciences, Loma Linda University; Founder and President, Protective Turtle Ecology center for Training, Outreach, and Research, Inc. (ProTECTOR, Inc.)

Country of residence: USA

Geographic area of work: Thailand, Honduras, Jamaica

Section 2: Nominee Response:

How would you describe your work with sea turtles?

I would describe my work with marine turtles as research-driven conservation and advocacy.

Which Annual Sea Turtle Symposia, or Annual Workshops have you attended?

2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019

What contributions have you made to past symposia?

I have been an active participant in past annual sea turtle symposia, assisting as an official student presentations judge at several of the meetings, have been a symposium volunteer, and was on the organizing committee for the 2011 ISTS in San Diego with Jeff Seminoff. I've also had the opportunity to be a speed chat 'expert,' have been both a session chair and on session committees at multiple meetings, and more recently have organized and led out in 3 Photo ID workshops at the 2016, 2017, and 2019 meetings with assistance from colleagues Jillian Hudgins and Claire Jean, and PhD student, Dustin Baumbach.

What would you like the Nominating Committee, Board of Directors, and membership to know about you as a candidate for President-Elect?

As President-elect and then President of the ISTS, I look forward to serving the society and expanding the influence of the global Sea Turtle Society to the underrepresented areas of Southeast Asia. Specifically, I hope to introduce Thailand to the amazing research, conservation, policy, and outreach efforts carried out by Society members around the world in hopes of greatly increasing awareness and openness of local communities, NGOs, and government agencies to best practice research and conservation policy for sea turtles in Thailand and throughout Southeast Asia.

Briefly describe the supporting staff and organizations you have available to assist you

The support staff for convening the annual symposium in Thailand includes several of my past and current graduate students who will assist with planning and logistics from here in the United States. I have been working with a team of Thai national researchers from the Department of Marine Veterinary Medicine at Chulalongkorn University (CU), who will form part of our core organizational committee in Thailand. The Director of Marine Veterinary Medicine at CU, Dr. Nantarika Chansue, is well connected with the Royal Thai Navy, Department of National Parks, and Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, and will facilitate opportunities for these agencies to take part in the symposium. Furthermore, Dr. Chansue has contacts with the Department of Tourism, which will assist us in publicizing the symposium in the national media. We will continue to rely on the experienced heads of several of the standing committees (Volunteer Committee, Students Committee, Travel Grant Committee, etc.), but will seek to have committee members integrated from the Southeast Asia region, as well.

Briefly describe the venue you foresee for the symposium and why you would choose this possible venue

There are a number of possible venues in the city of Pattaya along the Eastern coast of the Gulf of Thailand. Our aim will be to secure an all-inclusive resort with a reasonable room price. An all-inclusive resort would allow attendees to spend less time searching for eating locations and more time socializing and collaborating. We are seeking a conference venue on the beach and one that will facilitate a group of 1,000 – 1,300 attendees.

Briefly describe the actions you would take to organize a ‘green’ symposium

Our team will seek a location that will provide biodegradable or reusable drinking and silverware, and unlimited drinking water for attendees to fill non-single-use water bottles. We will not provide plastic cups or tableware. We will reduce paper use by providing all program materials digitally, and reduce papers in the registration packages, instead providing QR codes for daily information on sessions and schedules throughout the symposium venue.

How will you ensure diverse representation (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, field of expertise) in your Program Committee, Invited Speakers, and Session Chairs?

We plan to have program committee chairs submit lists of their committee members with their affiliations so that diverse representation can be considered for all symposium committees, especially including individuals from the Southeast Asia region who are less often represented at the ISTS meetings. We will convene a special committee dedicated to selecting a wide range of invited opening, closing, and keynote speakers.

Have you confirmed with your employer that you will be able to serve in the capacity as President of the ISTS as the legal representative of the Society and the associated 5-year term of commitment? Further, in your role, have you confirmed that there is no conflict of interest among yourself, your employer, and the ISTS with respect to fundraising and/or receiving funding and in-kind support from government and non-government entities in your host country?

Both my employer (Loma Linda University) and my department Chair are well aware of my sea turtle research and frequent attendance to the annual ISTS meetings. They are supportive of my nomination for President-elect and the commitment to the Society for the associated 5-year term. I also confirm that I have no COI for myself, my employer, my potential organizing committee members, or with the ISTS that would preclude me from the position of President-elect.

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How would domestic and international participants reach your proposed venue?

International attendees would fly into Bangkok Airport (Suvarnabhumi), and could then either take a short 40 minute flight from Bangkok to Pattaya, or take a train, bus, or rental car from Bangkok to Pattaya (approximately 3 hours by car). For those requiring overnight accommodations in Bangkok, there are hundreds of economy hotels within a 10-20 minute taxi ride from Suvarnabhumi, as well as a wide range of reasonably priced luxury hotels in and around downtown Bangkok. Travelers will need to check with their immigration office or travel agent to find out if there are specific Visa or visitor requirements for their national citizenship. Thailand is a very welcoming country with many cultural and natural attractions at very economical costs. Therefore, we encourage symposium attendees to take advantage of their visit with extra sightseeing days either before or after attending the symposium.

Why is convening an ISTS symposium in your region important at this time, and how would regional sea turtle conservation benefit from hosting a symposium?

The ISTS has not been held in Southeast Asia since 2003 when it was held in Malaysia. Thailand is an economic and tourism hub in Southeast Asia and can be a strong influence for sea turtle research and conservation in the region. Our recent work in Thailand has caused a resurgence in interest in sea turtle conservation by local communities and government agencies in the Gulf of Thailand. Holding the 2024 ISTS in Thailand will further encourage conservation and research for the long-term within the country and the region.

Why is the ISTS as an organization important to you, professionally and personally? What is your vision for the ISTS over the next 5 to 10 years?

The ISTS represents an amazing, global network of sea turtle researchers, conservationists, educators, policy makers, and activists that provide support and resources for the global sea turtle community. Through the C-Turtle listserve, the ISTS

provides a platform for both new and experienced sea turtle researchers and educators to communicate and collaborate with each other, which is also a wonderful resource for graduate students as they seek expert opinions on aspects of their research work. I have found both the listserv and the annual meetings to be places where I've been able to openly discuss ideas and research plans with experienced researchers, and gain new ideas from student and expert presentations. In more recent years, I've also been able to provide ideas and advice to new grad students and researchers from my own experiences. The society has always been a place where there is wide acceptance and collegiality among researchers and students, and even among those who may hold opposing views on important issues. While there is room for vigorous discussion, I've found there is little tolerance among society members for disrespect and personal attacks. I believe the ISTS is an excellent model for how global research societies should function.

I would like to see the Society continue to grow its membership with additional opportunities to provide funding assistance to researchers and projects in developing nations where there are few national opportunities for funding sea turtle research and conservation efforts. The establishment of a dedicated research fund to provide small-funding assistance for under-represented geographic areas would be helpful for developing and training additional sea turtle researchers in areas that need improved opportunities for species conservation and recovery.

Please include a 250-word bio

After receiving my Ph.D. in Biology from Central Queensland University in 2002, I was immediately hired into a graduate teaching position at Loma Linda University, a position I've held for the last 19 years. Although I initially worked on intertidal crustaceans (and still do), I happened into sea turtle research and conservation while undertaking marine rapid assessments in Honduras in 2006. Knowing nothing about sea turtle biology, I was encouraged by Jeff Seminoff to 'jump in,' and in 2007 started the non-profit organization, ProTECTOR, Inc. to facilitate my research and that of my graduate students, in the country of Honduras. My graduate students and yearly crew of ProTECTOR, Inc. Interns and Volunteers have made enormous contributions to our current understanding of sea turtle ecology and biology in Honduras. After 13 years of productive research, conservation, and education outreach in Central America, I'm now also starting sea turtle research in the country of Thailand. I've learned much about turtles and people through my international sea turtle research experiences and look forward to many future years as a turtle researcher. If elected as the Society's President for the 2024 ISTS, I plan to take the meetings back to Southeast Asia for the first time

since the 23rd ISTS in Malaysia in 2003, and hold an exciting and informative symposium in the country of Thailand.

Photo of Nominee:

[Photo](#)

Section 3: Declaration

Circle your response to the below statements:

I am a current member of ISTS Yes

I have read and understand the ISTS by-laws and constitution Yes

**I have read and understand the terms of reference for the
ISTS President-Elect:** Yes

**I understand that the Annual Board Retreat is usually in the
3rd week of August:** Yes