

***Nomination Application.***

**Please fill in the blanks and/or boxes briefly addressing each of the following questions.**

Position for which you have been nominated: President-Elect

Name: Chia-Ling Fong

e-mail: [chialingfong@gmail.com](mailto:chialingfong@gmail.com)

Professional affiliation(s):

Co-founder and President of TurtleSpot Taiwan (official NPO/NGO since 2022)

Postdoctoral Researcher Fellow at National Taiwan University

Marine Turtle Specialist Group of the IUCN

Country of residence: Taiwan (R.O.C)

Geographic area of work: Taiwan focus with collaborations across East Asia.

How would you describe your work with marine sea turtles? (For example: researcher, teacher, resource manager, activist, policy specialist, etc.)

Researcher and science communicator.

How many years have you worked with sea turtles?

20 years of research and conservation (volunteered and joined a sea turtle research and conservation lab in Taiwan since my undergraduate studies, and continue to work on sea turtle and marine ecology-related research. Meanwhile, I co-founded an NGO/NPO to connect citizen scientists with sea turtle research and conservation.)

Which Annual Sea Turtle Symposia, or Annual Workshops have you attended? (Please list the years.)

42nd Annual Symposium (Pattaya, Thailand, 2024)

40th Annual Symposium (Perth, Australia - held online, 2022)

38th Annual Symposium (Kobe, Japan, 2018)

31st Annual Symposium (San Diego, USA, 2011)

30th Annual Symposium (Goa, India, 2010)

Have you been involved with any Symposium activities? If yes, please describe your involvement.

Volunteers in the ISTS 30, ISTS 31, and ISTS 42, assisted as the student organizing committee for ISTS 42.

What would you like the Nominating Committee, Board of Directors and membership to know about you as a candidate for *your position*? In what ways would you like to contribute to the Symposium/International Sea Turtle Society?

How do you envision using the Symposium to advance sea turtle biology and promote conservation?

I am a marine biologist with experience in sea turtle nesting ecology, in-water biology, health assessments, as well as marine microbiology and coral reef ecology. Beyond research, I am deeply committed to public engagement: I wrote a popular science article (in Traditional Chinese) and deliver about 5 to 10 public talks each year. In 2017, I co-founded TurtleSpot Taiwan (TST) to connect sea turtle research with citizen scientists through underwater photography and photo-ID techniques. With contributions from more than 500 citizen scientists and about 4,000 sightings (as of May 2023) they recorded, we have identified c.a. 850 individual turtles, several foraging hotspots, residency patterns, and threats to the foraging aggregations in Taiwan, which also underpinned my PhD on green turtle foraging ecology and conservation in Taiwan. We (TST) also organized at least 10 workshops on sea turtle and marine conservation over the past few years. Collaborating with other marine NGOs in Taiwan and committed colleagues, we have enhanced our marine citizen science network and broadened the impact of our conservation initiatives. This journey also made me realize the uniqueness of sea turtle scientists, who must be both rigorous researchers and effective advocates and collaborators across society for the greater good.

Through the Symposium and ISTS, I aim to highlight and strengthen sea turtle conservation and research in the East Asia region, which remains underrepresented and deserves coordinated effort from our community. By gathering more resources and strengthening connections between researchers, government agencies, and conservation groups, we can establish a robust network, similar to the one in the Mediterranean, and aim to develop a regional conservation plan for sea turtles. I also aim to gather more resources and initiate new projects for the ISTS, including encouraging the open data on sea turtles by leveraging my connections with other organizations, such as TaiBIF (Taiwan's portal to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility) and Ocean Conservation Admini.

As President-Elect, I am committed to working closely with—and learn from—the current President on symposium planning, building an effective organizing committee, and delivering an eco-friendly, fiscally responsible, and thoughtfully curated symposium that showcases Taiwanese hospitality. I will work diligently, contribute my skills, and help mobilize resources to advance ISTS's mission.

- 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?

Professionally, ISTS is where science becomes shared standards and practical tools. It brings together biologists, rehab teams, rangers, fishers, communities, policymakers, and educators into one community. Among the international conferences I have attended, ISTS feels like family to me — the auctions for raising travel grants, origin stories shared by senior researchers and conservationists, and foraging with a friend are all genuinely connective. ISTS shaped my path from curious undergraduate to engaged biologist and educator, and I would be proud to help steer the Society into its next phase.

My vision for the next 5-10 years,

- Equity & Access: Set clear diversity targets for the participants/committee/board of directors, and support multilingual content.
- Standards and Open Data: Endorse practical protocols and encourage the open sharing of data among the sea turtle society.
- Climate-adaptive management & bycatch mitigation: Many groups in Europe and the US are advancing these priorities; in Taiwan and our region, there's significant room to grow. I will leverage my ISTS role to convene partners and translate proven tools into locally workable guidance.

**Please include a 250-word bio and a photo**

Dr. Chia-Ling Fong is a marine biologist from Taiwan specializing in sea turtle ecology, with a recent emphasis on population dynamics at foraging grounds. She is the co-founder and President of TurtleSpot Taiwan, a Non-Profit Organization focused on leveraging citizen science and education outreach to bolster both scientific research and public awareness of sea turtle conservation issues.

Her research experiences with sea turtles included patrolling nesting beaches, assisting with nesting ecology studies, establishing stranding networks, conducting plasma biochemistry studies for health assessments, and interning at rehabilitation centers and the Wildlife Health Research Center. She is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the Institute of Oceanography, National Taiwan University, and maintains engagement with schools and public organizations throughout Taiwan, where she provides public talks and workshops.

As the candidate for ISTS President-Elect, Dr. Fong plans to bring the symposium to Kaohsiung, Taiwan, to increase East Asia's participation and broaden participation through more affordable pricing and equitable access. Taiwan is safe, tourist-friendly, and easy to explore by public

transit. She and her support teams will offer a greener, family-friendly, and thoughtfully curated event that showcases the best of Taiwanese hospitality. She is also committed to diligently working to execute a symposium that is on a level expected by the ISTS community, applying her skills and securing resources to advance ISTS's mission while amplifying East Asia's contributions to global sea turtle science and conservation.



**Please provide 2 letters of reference (the letter of reference should include a statement about your suitability for the position you have been nominated for)**

Yes, submitted

**Circle your response to the below statements.**

Note- If you did not attend the previous ISTS Symposium then you need to renew your membership.

I am a current member of ISTS

☒ Yes ☐ No

Version: September 2024

I have read and understand the ISTS By-Laws and Constitution.

☒ Yes    ☐ No

I have read and understand the terms of reference for the position to which I am running

☒ Yes    ☐ No

For Board of Directors nominees: I understand that the Annual Board Retreat is usually in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August

☒ Yes    ☐ No

For Board of Directors nominees: please read and initial the following statement to indicate that you understand the workload:

The Board is a working Board. All members of the Board are expected to carry the workload, share the responsibility of assigned tasks, and respond to written communications – this can typically be 40+ hours per year in addition to the Board meeting at the Symposium and the Board Retreat. If a Board member does not maintain their ISTS membership and demonstrate a high level of commitment to the ISTS as described in the Board members' TORs, they may be asked to resign from the Board. High level of commitment is defined as a Board member physically attending a minimum of three mid-year retreats during their 4-year Board term, attending online Board meetings consistently, serving annually on multiple Committees, completing assigned tasks, and being responsive to online communications and requests.

The 2026 Board retreat will be held in either the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August.

Please initial this statement to confirm that you agree \_\_ Y \_\_