



## EDITOR'S NOTE

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Satellite telemetry studies of sea turtles can be used to: elucidate migratory pathways, abundance, behaviour, distribution, preferred habitat, clutch frequency, neonate dispersal; identify conservation hotspots and inform protected area designation and management; and, engage communities with research and raise awareness about threats to sea turtles and their habitats (for examples see Blumenthal *et al.*, 2006; Rees *et al.*, 2010; Richardson *et al.*, 2010; Scott *et al.*, 2012; Schofield *et al.*, 2013; Weber *et al.*, 2013; Hays *et al.*, 2014; Mansfield *et al.*, 2014; Robinson *et al.*, 2016; Bradshaw *et al.*, 2017; Dawson *et al.*, 2017; Esteban *et al.*, 2018; Tucker *et al.*, 2018). There are concerns about scientific rigour of telemetry studies, animal welfare, accumulation of unpublished or unavailable tracking data, the potential to use the technology indiscriminately without clear objectives, and only a small body of evidence that telemetry studies inform policy and management (summarised by Godley *et al.*, 2008; Jeffers & Godley, 2016). However, carefully designed satellite telemetry studies have the potential to fill some of the knowledge gaps about sea turtles in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia and elsewhere (Hays & Hawkes, 2018).

Jeffers & Godley (2016) determined that the smallest proportion of sea turtle satellite telemetry studies worldwide had occurred in the Indian Ocean when compared with the Mediterranean Sea, Pacific Ocean or Atlantic Ocean, and that only 4% of studies worldwide had occurred in South-East Asia. Contributing factors to this finding may be the challenges to satellite telemetry in the region, including the cost of transmitters, despite improving affordability in recent years (Jeffers & Godley, 2016), and difficulty in obtaining permits (see Mancini *et al.*, 2018). Despite this, there are two tracking studies from the region where turtles have been tracked over a number of years (e.g Robinson *et al.*, 2018; Tiwari *et al.*, 2018) and combined in a regional analysis (Antonopoulou & Pilcher, 2018). Considering that sea turtle Regional Management Units in the Indian Ocean have been described as having “critical data needs” (Wallace *et al.*, 2011), research efforts (and funds) should be focused so as to

address unanswered questions and minimise repetition.

To better understand the breadth and findings of satellite telemetry studies conducted to date in the region and identify knowledge gaps still to be filled, IOTN has produced two special issues on this topic: IOTN28 presents studies from the south-western Indian Ocean north to the Red Sea, Arabian/Persian Gulf, and Arabian Seas, and IOTN29 comprises reports from countries in South Asia, South-East Asia, and the south-eastern Indian Ocean. As the issues will be published in the months prior to the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation to be held in Charleston SC, USA, from 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> February 2019, we hope the findings presented in IOTN28 (and the forthcoming IOTN29) will be a topic of discussion among participants at the regional meeting for the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia.

We would like to thank all authors of papers in IOTN28 and 29 and members of the IOTN Editorial Board (and especially those who both wrote and reviewed papers) for their significant contribution and patience while we compiled the body of work presented in the two issues. Planning for an IOTN special issue on satellite telemetry studies began in 2016 and it has taken some time to finalise all of the manuscripts, which presented such detail that the issue had to expand from one to two to accommodate the contributed papers. Your efforts have resulted in a combined resource which we anticipate will be of value to IOTN readers and inform future studies and sea turtle management and conservation efforts in the region.

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