

## **ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE CONSERVATION AND BIOLOGY OF TORTOISES AND FRESHWATER TURTLES CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation (TSA) and the IUCN SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (TFTSG) are committed to providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for all volunteers and Symposium participants at both in-person meetings and on virtual platforms. Individuals attending the Symposium and associated events have a right to an environment free from discrimination, bullying, inappropriate behavior, and harassment. These behaviors will not be tolerated at Symposium activities, including field trips associated with the Symposium (whether onsite or at a different venue), social events and those held at public or private facilities (including banquets). Each participant, including any speaker, poster presenter, exhibitor, or volunteer, any guest of a participant, any service provider and any TSA director, officer, employee, contractor or intern, and any TFTSG member will receive and must agree to abide by the terms of this Symposium Code of Conduct (Symposium Code) when registering for the Symposium. Participants may also be required to abide by any other policies or rules in furtherance of the Symposium Code announced at the Symposium.

TSA, the TFTSG, and the Symposium venue host reserve the right to change or alter the Symposium program or to remove a speaker, poster presenter, vendor, and/or sponsor at any time. Anyone who has violated this Symposium Code in the past or who is violating this Symposium Code may be denied or removed immediately from a speaking or presentation opportunity and may be subject to other sanctions set out in this Code.

This Symposium Code defines expected and unacceptable behavior at the Symposium and Symposium-associated events, both in-person and virtual, and the procedures for reporting and addressing unacceptable behavior (i.e., violations of the Symposium Code), including potential outcomes and consequences of unacceptable conduct. A violation of this Code may also constitute a violation of TSA's Code of Ethics.

### **EXPECTED CONDUCT:**

Examples of expected and acceptable behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Conduct yourself at the Symposium as you would at your place of work including, but not limited to, all Symposium-sponsored or affiliated presentations, workshops, socials, banquets, fundraising activities, and field trips.
- Treat everyone with respect and consideration, and value a diversity of views, opinions, and cultural practices.
- Communicate thoughtfully with others and be considerate of the multitude of views and opinions that are different than your own, in all situations including but not limited to while presenting, in one-on-one conversations, at exhibitor tables, and within group discussions.
- Assume good intentions of all participants.

- Critique ideas rather than individuals and avoid personal attacks directed towards others.
- Be mindful of your surroundings and sensitive to the experience of fellow participants.
- Welcome new participants and value the diversity they bring to the Symposium.
- Ask before initiating physical contact.
- Engage in friendly, consensual interactions among individuals and avoid potentially nonconsensual physical contact with others.
- At Symposium events where alcoholic beverages are served, drink responsibly while also upholding the standards described in this Code.
- Report any situation that violates this Symposium Code or someone in distress in the manner described below.
- Comply with all applicable laws, including wildlife protection laws.
- Respect the rules, policies, and property of the Symposium venue, hotels, or contracted facility.
- Look out for the safety and comfort of your friends and colleagues.
- Be proactive in addressing potential conflicts by addressing them in a timely and respectful manner.
- Publicly sharing sensitive turtle locality data which might create risks to those sites from illegal collection (poaching) is strongly discouraged.

## **UNACCEPTABLE CONDUCT**

**TSA and TFTSG have zero tolerance for any form of discrimination, objectification, bullying, or harassment, including without limitation sexual, sexual identity, and racial/ethnic harassment.**

Behavior that is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another, so participants in the Symposium and events must use discretion to ensure that their words and actions communicate respect for others. This is especially important for those in positions of seniority, as those in more junior or subordinate positions may be reluctant to express their objections or discomfort regarding unwelcome behavior due to a real or perceived imbalance of power.

Participation in, or facilitation or promotion of, harassment, intimidation, or discriminatory behaviors at the Symposium in person, on virtual platforms or social media associated with the Symposium, or during other associated activities organized by TSA or TFTSG will not be tolerated. TSA and TFTSG reserve the right to take any action deemed necessary and appropriate, including the immediate removal or blocking of individuals from virtual or social media platforms and the deletion of comments from the same, if comments or behavior are deemed to be unacceptable.

Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical, emotional, verbal abuse or threats against any attendee, speaker, volunteer, exhibitor, TSA director, officer, or employee, TFTSG member, service provider or other Symposium or event guest.
- Disruption of talks at the Symposium or other associated events/activities organized by TSA or TFTSG.

- For exhibitors and individuals: placement or removal of materials on exhibitors' tables other than your own without permission.
- Photographing/copying/sharing of presentation slides if the presenter includes a statement or image indicating confidentiality or copyright protection.
- Publicly sharing the location or contact information of any other participant beyond information shared in the Symposium materials.
- Making discriminatory comments.
- Reporting an incident in bad faith.

## **HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct of a sexual nature that makes a person feel uncomfortable. Harassment of any type, including sexual, sexual identity or racial/ethnic harassment, may also violate applicable US and Mexican laws. Examples of behavior constituting sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

### **Non-verbal Conduct**

- Unwelcome physical contact or inappropriate touching.
- Physical violence, including sexual assault.
- The use of threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors.
- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material or images.
- Sending sexually explicit messages or images electronically or by phone.
- Sexually suggestive gestures.
- Whistling or "cat calling."

### **Verbal Conduct**

- Comments, jokes, or insults based on appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories, or jokes.
- Unwelcome sexual advances.
- Repeated and unwanted invitations for dates or physical intimacy.
- Condescending or sexist remarks.

## **REPORTING UNACCEPTABLE CONDUCT**

Anyone reporting a violation or suspected violation of the Symposium Code must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation of the Code.

If you believe that you or anyone else is, or is about to be, a victim of conduct which is criminal in

nature, please contact local law enforcement by calling 911 and immediately notify facility security. When time permits, please share your experience per the reporting procedure set forth below.

If you believe that you or anyone else is the subject of conduct of any sort that may violate this Symposium Code, whether or not it is conduct that may result, or did result, in notification of law enforcement or facility security, please report this by contacting the following individuals in person at the Symposium or via email or phone:

Name: Marc Dupuis-Desormeaux, CEO of TSA  
Email : [marc@turtlesurvival.org](mailto:marc@turtlesurvival.org) Mobile  
Phone: 647-221-1929

Name: Samantha Nottingham, Chief Development Officer of TSA  
Email: [snottingham@turtlesurvival.org](mailto:snottingham@turtlesurvival.org)  
Mobile phone: 719-510-4427

Name: Craig Stanford, Co-Chair, TFTSG  
Email: [stanford@usc.edu](mailto:stanford@usc.edu)  
Mobile phone: 626-497-0699

Name: Natalia Gallego-García, Co-chair, TFTSG, Director of Conservation Genetics of TSA  
Email: [ngallego@turtlesurvival.org](mailto:ngallego@turtlesurvival.org)  
Mobile phone: +57 318 2908189

Name: Jeffrey Travers, Chief Operating Officer of TSA  
Email: [jtravers@turtlesurvival.org](mailto:jtravers@turtlesurvival.org)  
Mobile phone: 202-222-8382

If your complaint is made against anyone who is a director, officer or employee of TSA, you may file a report under TSA's Whistleblower Policy, which is available on its website (<https://turtlesurvival.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/TSA-Whistleblower-Policy-as-of-052125.pdf>). The TSA representative who receives the report of the complaint or concern has the responsibility to ensure that it is investigated. The reporter may choose to remain anonymous.

Violations of the Symposium Code should be reported to one of the above-named persons as soon as possible after the violation has occurred. If the report is verbal, the representative contacted may later request a written report. The report should include all the pertinent documentation needed for TSA, on behalf of itself and TFTSG, to investigate the violation (including but not limited to date, time, misconduct observed, name of the person accused, and names of others who may have witnessed the misconduct, and any visual or audio evidence of the violation). Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation or to the extent allowed by law. All complaints will be treated seriously and responded to as promptly as possible. Actions to be taken will be discussed beforehand with the victim of the violation, wherever possible.

Complaints will be handled with respect for the privacy of the victim and the alleged violator and will be confidential to the extent practical, given the circumstances.

If a complainant believes that the violation is of a criminal nature, TSA will assist the victim, if requested, in notifying legal authorities. If the victim does not believe that the complaint is of a criminal nature, the TSA representative(s) receiving the complaint will contact and listen to the victim and discuss next steps.

TSA, on behalf of itself and TFTSG, will employ a “Two Strikes” policy for most Symposium Code violations depending on the severity of the offense. Individuals will receive a verbal and/or written warning as described below for a first violation. Following the second violation, more severe consequences may be levied. **An exception to this Two Strikes policy will be made when an egregious violation occurs (including, but not limited to, one that requires intervention by venue security or law enforcement).** In such instances TSA, on behalf of itself and TFTSG, may proceed directly to Removal, Rescission, or Barring Participation.

## **Two Strike Policy:**

### **Strike 1: Warning**

- Anyone requested to stop unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately; this strike will be considered a first “strike” warning.
- A person who has engaged in unacceptable behavior may be warned of an alleged or actual Symposium Code violation at any time during the Symposium or afterwards based on the timing of reporting and opportunity for an appropriate investigation.

### **Strike 2: Removal, Rescission, or Barring Participation**

- Upon egregious violation, or following a second incident of unacceptable behavior which constitutes a violation (i.e., the second “strike”), authorized officers or employees of TSA or venue security may take any action which, in their discretion, is deemed necessary and appropriate, including immediate removal of the violator from the Symposium without warning or refund of any amounts paid to attend the Symposium or associated field trips or events. TSA reserves the right to:
  - Prohibit attendance by the violator at any future Symposium or any other TSA-organized or hosted event, as well as at, or in, any TSA working group or other TSA-related activity.
  - Deny consideration of the violator for any award, endorsement, leadership role, or project assignment associated with TSA.

## **PERSONAL SAFETY**

TSA works with venue staff to make sure that meeting participants are safe. **If you believe that you or anyone else is in immediate danger at any time, please contact local law enforcement by calling 911 and immediately notify facility security.**

If you are in need of emergency assistance in connection with the serious injury or arrest of a U.S. citizen, the international parental abduction of a U.S. citizen child, or if you are a U.S. citizen in immediate distress, call 55 2579 2000. U.S. citizens may call the U.S. Consulate in Guadalajara during business hours for non-emergency assistance at 52 334 170 8599 or 52 338 526 1444.

All participants should report any questionable activity to a TSA director, officer, or employee, or to venue security, for immediate action. **If you see something, say something. As a participant:**

Always be aware of your surroundings.

- Regardless of where you are, use the buddy system when walking to and from the Symposium venue and networking events, especially during early or late hours.
- Do not wear your Symposium badge on the street. Take it off as soon as you leave the venue.
- Do not carry a lot of cash.
- Do not leave personal property unattended anywhere at any time.
- Be mindful of using apps (like dating apps) to connect with people you do not know. The U.S. State department issued an alert on the risks of using these apps in Mexico:  
<https://mx.usembassy.gov/security-alert-use-caution-when-using-dating-apps>.

TSA will provide transportation between official Symposium events. Use local taxis and rideshare apps at your own risk.

Read about the current travel risk advisory from the U.S. Department of State at <https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/mexico.html>. While this advisory is intended for U.S. citizens all attendees may find the information useful.

Please be mindful of your health while in Mexico. The US Centers for Disease Control provides tips on how to stay health while traveling:  
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/mexico>.

**Reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors on March 11, 2026.**