

Major plans announced for world-renowned turtle conservation institute, Chelonian Research Institute

Founded in 1997 by the late Dr. Peter Pritchard, the Institute, a leading facility for turtle and tortoise conservation, will transfer to a new home



The late Dr. Peter Pritchard was one of the world's foremost authorities on turtle and tortoise conservation. Images can be downloaded at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5py7x2m24u623i8/AABJb4Qfe-ffWg3A6wtcceVa?dl=0>

OVIEDO, Fla. (Feb. 25, 2021) – The Chelonian Research Institute is a scientific household name around the world. Situated on a 10-acre urban oasis in Oviedo, Fla., part of the greater Orlando area, the Institute was the place where researchers hailed from all over the world for the coveted opportunity to work alongside world-renowned turtle conservationist, the late Dr. Peter Pritchard. The Institute and the work of Dr. Pritchard, founder and director, earned him the distinction as one of the world's leading authorities on turtle conservation. As loved ones, colleagues, friends and even fans pay tribute to the world's most beloved turtle man, his wife, Sibille Hart Pritchard, announces plans to transfer the vast assets from his world-renowned turtle research center to the regarded Turtle Conservancy in Ojai, California, creating both the new **Dr. Peter Pritchard Collection** and a new dimension of his 50-year scientific legacy.

As the depository for this coveted collection, the Turtle Conservancy will acquire the world's third-largest turtle and tortoise museum collection consisting of 14,000 catalogued specimens, representing 270 of the world's over 350 recognized species of turtles. The collection also includes other notable contents, from live specimens to an impressive assortment of turtle artwork - from classical engravings to contemporary original works - as well as published and unpublished works of Dr. Pritchard. The collection will be permanently housed at the Turtle Conservancy complex.

This marks a pivotal moment in scientific history, as the announcement takes place on the exact day, one year ago, of Dr. Pritchard's death.

“It gives me heartfelt pleasure to make this announcement,” said Mrs. Pritchard. “We feel confident that the vision and work of the Turtle Conservancy aligns with that of the Chelonian Research Institute. Peter thought highly of their work and enjoyed a longstanding relationship, and now his work will continue to influence the work of future generations of scientists.” she added.

The collection, envied globally for its comprehensive distinction, represents Dr. Pritchard's 50-year legacy of extensive research and publishing on turtles and tortoises, work which took him to more than 100 countries and

territories, to his authoring 14 books and ultimately, earning him the distinction of being named “Hero of the Planet” by *TIME Magazine*; “Champion of the Wild” by the Discovery Channel; “Floridian of the Year” by the *Orlando Sentinel* and “Hometown Hero” by the Orlando International Airport.

The Turtle Conservancy is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting threatened turtles and tortoises and their habitats worldwide while also creating programs which promote appreciation for turtles. Their facility, located in scenic Ojai, Calif. is a lush, expansive campus, housing over 500 threatened and endangered turtles and tortoises across 32 species, many rescued from the illegal animal trade. Although not open to the general public, the Turtle Conservancy conducts tours for members and by appointment, hosts visiting philanthropists, students and scholars from around the world.

The Turtle Conservancy supports more than 15 programs in over 10 countries and on 5 continents. Collectively, these efforts have purchased and protected over 65,000 acres of critical habitat for endangered plants and animals, including jaguars, macaws, pangolin, bats and endangered palm trees, cacti and wildflowers.

As part of their extensive preparation for presenting the collection, the team at the Turtle Conservancy will be preparing specimens, converting images to digital formats and other measures to incorporate modern technology into some of the assets. Mrs. Pritchard, who is also a member of the Turtle Conservancy Board of Directors, will remain as a board member and help oversee the project.

"Peter Pritchard and his seminal books on turtles were probably the greatest inspiration in my life-long love affair with turtles." said Turtle Conservancy Founder, Eric Goode. "I was fortunate enough to get to know Peter and Sibille over the years and I'm deeply honored to have the privilege to help carry on their legacy by creating a new home for the Chelonian Research Institute. It is my hope the Turtle Conservancy takes on the mantle as an international hub for scientists, students, and all those who appreciate the natural world, to connect and inspire a new generation of conservationists."

The collection is projected to open at the Turtle Conservancy by 2025. According to Mrs. Pritchard, more details will be announced in the future. "We thought it was important to advise our community of scientists, educators and friends about the Institute's next phase on the day we pay tribute to Peter." she said.

People all over the world, touched by his enormous work, planned to attend a celebration tribute event in his Orlando, Fla. hometown, last year, but plans were halted by the pandemic. "This announcement is Peter's way of wrapping his arms around his broad community of supporters and inviting them to see what's next for the Chelonian Research Institute." Mrs. Pritchard said. "As we move into the next phase of Peter's 50-year legacy in global turtle conservation, we heartily pass the torch to our colleagues and friends at the Turtle Conservancy." she concluded.

*Established in 1997 by the late Dr. Peter Pritchard, one of the world's foremost authorities on turtle research and conservation, the Chelonian Research Institute is a private, 501(c) 3, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the research and conservation of turtles and tortoises throughout the world. Located just 15 miles northeast of Orlando in Oviedo, Florida, the Institute features a research facility, library, offices, museum, visiting scholar residence and a sanctuary housing both captive and wild groups of living turtle species. More than 14,000 catalogued specimens, representing every known genus of chelonians (turtles) - are housed at the Institute. This is the world's third-largest turtle and tortoise museum collection -with 270 of the world's over 350 recognized species of turtles. The Institute attracts researchers from across the globe as well as short and long-term resident interns from many countries. Its longstanding work in turtle and tortoise conservation as well as its philosophy of **conservation without confrontation** have been hailed globally. No turtles were sacrificed to make preserved specimens or skeletons for the Institute.*

The Turtle Conservancy is a 501(c) 3, non-profit public charity based in Southern California. The organization is dedicated to protecting threatened turtles and tortoises and their natural habitats worldwide. Currently, the Turtle Conservancy houses over 500 living animals at their rescue center and has protected over 65,000 acres of wild land. In doing so, we also protect all other biodiversity in these areas. We envision a world where all species ultimately thrive in the wild.