



FACTSHEET

Green Turtle



Green Turtle

Common Name: Green Turtle

Scientific Name: *Chelonia mydas*

Conservation Status: Listed as Endangered under ICUN (2014). The EPBC Act classifies Green Turtles as Vulnerable. The waters around Rottneest Island are a designated Marine Reserve.

Habitat: Seagrass meadows, coral reefs, Sandy floors, open ocean

Length: 1-1.5 m

Weight: 315 kg

Gestation period: 64 days

Number of young: up to 10 clutches of 80-120 eggs per season

Description:

The Green Turtle is a large, heavy sea turtle. It has a wide, smooth, nearly circular or heart-shaped carapace (upper shell). Its shell is a mixture of brown, reddish-brown, olive green and black on top. Underneath, its shell is whitish or cream.

There are four pairs of costal shields (shell plates on either side of the mid-line) between the centre and outer part of the

upper shell. It has greenish skin which and four flippers. The two front flippers are bigger than the two back ones.

Diet:

Algae, seagrass, jellyfish.

In the wild:

Green Turtles live in tropical and subtropical waters throughout the world. There are seven regional populations of Green Turtles in Australia. These are thought to be genetically distinct subpopulations as they very rarely mix. There are around 20,000 turtles in the Western Australian subpopulation.

Green Turtles have an inter-nesting habitat where they feed and where females live at non-breeding times. Feeding grounds are in seagrass meadows and around reefs. Nesting grounds are sheltered, sandy beaches. Male and female Green Turtles move from their feeding grounds to areas near nesting beaches to breed. In doing this, they can migrate more than 2600 km. Female Green Turtles breed every 1 to 9 years.





After mating, the females crawl up onto the beach to lay their eggs and the males go back to the feeding grounds. Nesting (egg-laying) takes place on several different nights and can take place on multiple beaches. The females usually stay in the shallow water within 5–10 km of the beach between nesting episodes.

To develop and hatch properly, marine turtle eggs must be buried in aerated, moist sand. This means there has to be air in-between the sand particles and the nest beach cannot be flooded.

The temperature has to be between 25°C and 33°C. The temperature of the nest sex controls the sex of the hatchlings. Nests at or below 26°C will produce all male hatchlings, and nests at or above 29°C producing all female hatchlings.

Hatchling sea turtles emerge from their nests at night and move down to the sea. They are guided by light. The sea horizon is brighter compared to the darker shadows of dunes and vegetation. Hatchlings can be affected by artificial lights. It can distract them away from the sea and make them more likely to be killed by predators or exposure.

Once they reach the water's edge, the hatchlings swim out to sea and are then carried by currents while they are still very small. When they are bigger and stronger, juveniles swim long distances against the current to get back to the coastal habitats where they live as adults.

Threats:

- Pollution (rubbish, oil spills)
- Entanglement or ingestion of marine debris
- Rising sea temperatures caused by climate change

DID YOU KNOW?

The Green Turtle cannot retract (pull back) its head into its shell.