

You're on holiday.
You're relaxed.
You've left your cares behind.

While you're on holiday, don't forget that people aren't the only animals that need clean seas and sunny beaches. Marine turtles also depend on these places and there are a few very simple things you can do to be sure you are not making their survival any harder than it already is.



Marine turtles under threat

Marine turtles have been swimming the world's oceans for millions of years. Over the last century they have been subject to massive over-exploitation and sadly, marine turtles are now threatened with extinction.



© Matthew Godfrey

tourism

Turtles and tourism can coexist, but sensitive planning is essential. Uncontrolled coastal development can destroy turtle nesting beaches. Artificial light at night can disturb nesting turtles and lead hatchlings away from the sea.

If marine turtles vanish, many coastal communities will have lost a way of life, as well as a valuable natural resource, and we will all have lost a treasured symbol of grace, longevity, fertility and endurance.

trade

It is illegal to take turtle products across international borders without prior permission from relevant government authorities. Trade in marine turtle eggs, meat and shells has left many populations of turtles in serious trouble.



© Peter Richardson



© Peter Richardson/MCS

litter

Litter, particularly plastic, can float in the ocean for years. Turtles and other marine creatures can be killed if they get entangled in litter or mistake it for their prey.

fishing

Each year marine turtles accidentally get entangled and drown in fishing gear. Worldwide, this accounts for tens of thousands of turtle deaths.



© Jennifer Gray/ Bermuda Turtle Project

We would like to hear from you. If you have seen a turtle or if you have seen turtle products for sale, please complete and detach this form and return it to the address shown overleaf.

Name

Home contact address

Postcode

Telephone

e-mail

☐ We would like to use the information you provide us with to enhance our knowledge of marine turtles. Please tick this box only if you do not want us to use this information.

What did you see? (Please tick the appropriate boxes below)

live turtle

☐

dead turtle

☐

turtle product for sale

☐

meat

☐

shell

☐

eggs

☐

other

☐

green turtle

☐

leatherback turtle

☐

loggerhead turtle

☐

hawksbill turtle

☐

Kemp's ridley turtle

☐

unsure

☐

Where did you see the turtle/turtle products on sale? (Please give the name of the place, including the country, and the name of the nearest town or known landmark or co-ordinates at sea).

Date and time:

What were you doing?

fishing

☐

snorkelling

☐

sailing

☐

other

☐

shopping

☐

walking on the beach

☐

scuba diving

☐

Would you be happy for us to contact you to find out more about what you have seen?

yes

☐

no

☐

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION, PLEASE MAKE A DONATION TO THE ORGANISATION WHOSE ADDRESS IS SHOWN ON THE REVERSE OF THIS FORM.

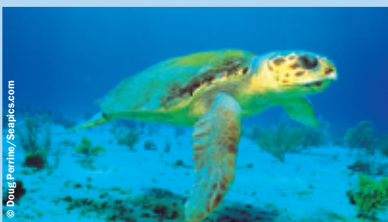
Turtles in the Caribbean Overseas Territories (TCOT) marine turtle survey

Please affix a stamp.
Thank you.

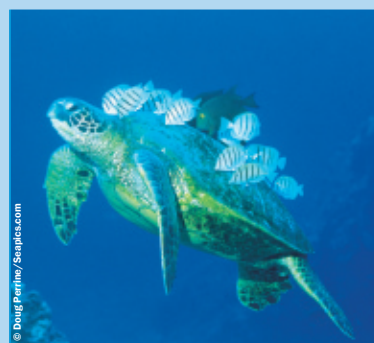
Thanks for your help!



HAWKSBILL TURTLE
(*Eretmochelys imbricata*)
LENGTH: up to 1.2 metres
COLOUR: brown, amber and black tortoiseshell pattern
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: shell scales overlapping, narrow tapered head with bird-like beak, back edge of shell serrated.



LOGGERHEAD TURTLE
(*Caretta caretta*)
LENGTH: adults up to 1.5 metres
COLOUR: reddish brown
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: large head, markedly thick shell and non-overlapping scales.



GREEN TURTLE
(*Chelonia mydas*)
LENGTH: up to 1.5 metres
COLOUR: adults dark olive or grey with dark blotches, juveniles have chestnut coloured shell
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: smooth shell, rounded (not angular) facial profile, non-overlapping scales.

LEATHERBACK TURTLE
(*Dermochelys coriacea*)
LENGTH: up to 2 metres
COLOUR: black, often spotted with white
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: large, up to 500kg, pronounced longitudinal ridges on shell, which tapers to a blunt point.



KEMP'S RIDLEY TURTLE
(*Lepidochelys kempi*)
RARELY RECORDED IN THE CARIBBEAN UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES
LENGTH: up to 80cm
COLOUR: olive green above and yellowish below
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: colouration pale, carapace relatively short and wide, non-overlapping scales.



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MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
www.mcsuk.org

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Turtles in the Caribbean Overseas Territories (TCOT) is a 3-year project coordinated by the Marine Turtle Research Group (University of Wales, Swansea) and the Marine Conservation Society/UK. TCOT is funded by the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories (FCO-EFOT). For more information e-mail info@tcot.seaturtle.org or visit www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/tcot/

YOU CAN HELP

- Always dispose of your litter responsibly. Plastic bags and other marine litter can kill turtles.
- Never drive on turtle nesting beaches as this can crush nests.
- Avoid using flashlights at night on turtle nesting beaches as this can disturb nesting females and disorientate hatchlings.
- To avoid boat strike, always pilot boats with care near marine turtle habitat such as coral reefs and seagrass beds.

Use the attached coupon to let us know about your turtle encounters. Copies of any photographs taken of turtles or turtle products on sale would also be of use to us.

TURTLE WATCHING

Turtle watching is always a magical experience and you will remember it for the rest of your life. Do make the effort to go and see turtles if you can, but remember...

If you are visiting a nesting beach, ALWAYS go with an experienced guide and follow their instructions. Support local projects whenever you can, this way you can make a direct contribution to conservation.

Keep your distance. Whether nesting, swimming or at rest, turtles don't like you to get too close. Underwater a calm turtle will be quite happy for you to watch from a comfortable distance - but if you try to touch a turtle it will swim away.

TCOT IS WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH: The University of Western Ontario, The University of Wales, Cardiff, as well as the Anguilla Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources, the Anguilla National Trust, the Bermuda Turtle Project, the British Virgin Islands Conservation and Fisheries Department, the BVI National Parks Trust, the Cayman Islands Department of Environment, the Cayman Turtle Farm, the Government of Montserrat, the Montserrat National Trust and the Turks & Caicos Islands Department of Environment and Coastal Resources. TCOT also acknowledges the support of WIDECAST and seaturtle.org.

© Front cover photographs: Turtle hatchling - Ben Osborn. Tourists watching nesting leatherback - Mathew Godfrey. Hawksbill turtle - Jeremy Stafford Deitsch.

Leaflet design by: Sue Ranger/MCS

marine turtles and tourism



how you can help

