



Caribbean TURTLEWATCH

What is Caribbean TURTLEWATCH?

Caribbean TURTLEWATCH is a groundbreaking new project which gives professional and leisure divers the opportunity to engage their skills in field research to learn more about the endangered marine turtle populations of the Caribbean.

Caribbean TURTLEWATCH is an integral part of Turtles in the Caribbean Overseas Territories (TCOT)*, a 3-year project which aims to assess the status of marine turtles and their exploitation in the UK Overseas Territories of Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Data collected and analysed through Caribbean TURTLEWATCH will be used by the governments of the UK Overseas Territories in the Caribbean to establish effective management programmes for the conservation of these spectacular but vulnerable species.

How do I conduct a Caribbean TURTLEWATCH survey?

Participating in Caribbean TURTLEWATCH is easy. Volunteer dive operators are provided with an attractive pack containing promotional posters, leaflets, ID sheets and clear, simple-to-fill-in datasheets.

The datasheets come in an easy to use booklet. **One datasheet must be filled in by one diver for every dive, even when a turtle wasn't spotted!** Your customers may find it enjoyable to complete a datasheet themselves when they return from a dive, or alternatively you, the dive operator, can complete them after each dive.

Completed datasheets are then periodically collected by TCOT staff or can be posted to TCOT headquarters. Caribbean TURTLEWATCH packs and refills can be obtained by contacting us at

info@tcot.seaturtle.org

Your TURTLEWATCH pack includes

- A booklet of 100 datasheets
- Two of these laminated information sheets
- A laminated A3 poster for your dive shop
- A laminated A4 poster for your dive boat
- Two laminated Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Network (WIDECAST) Turtle ID keys
- TCOT tourist awareness leaflets



What happens to my survey data after it's returned?

TCOT staff will review the completed datasheets and enter your data into a TCOT database, which is designed to be compatible with regional national biodiversity databases as well as complimentary regional initiatives such as the REEF initiative (www.reef.org/data/seaturtle.htm).

The TCOT database will be analysed to produce national as well as site-specific reports on marine turtle species distribution and population trends. Your contribution will be acknowledged in each report. The data will be made freely available to all local research programmes, conservation organisations and government agencies. At the end of each year, TCOT will send you a summary report, which will also be posted on the TCOT website.

When and where should I conduct surveys?

Caribbean TURTLEWATCH surveys should be conducted as part of your regular diving activities, i.e. anytime your operation has divers in the water. Through working with diver operators, Caribbean TURTLEWATCH has the potential to survey a great number of dive sites throughout the year and during different times of the day. This will allow TCOT to assess where turtle species are present and where they are absent.

Why marine turtles?

Marine turtle populations around the world are faced with a variety of threats including direct harvest for meat and eggs, accidental entanglement and drowning in fisheries, as well as habitat disturbance on the nesting beaches and coral reef degradation. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) lists loggerhead, green and olive ridley turtles as endangered, and hawksbill, leatherback and Kemp's ridley turtles as critically endangered. The Australian Flatback turtle is listed as vulnerable.

At present there is limited knowledge regarding trends of abundance of marine turtles at sea and very little data has been collected in most of the UK Overseas Territories in the Caribbean. Caribbean TURTLEWATCH can therefore make a significant contribution to the understanding of marine turtles in the Caribbean region.

Who is involved?

Turtles in the Caribbean Overseas Territories (TCOT) is a 3-year project funded by the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Environment for the Overseas Territories (FCO-EFOT). TCOT partners include: Anguilla - Department of Fisheries and the Anguilla National Trust; Bermuda - The Bermuda Turtle Project; British Virgin Islands - Conservation and Fisheries Department, BVI National Parks Trust; Cayman Islands - Department of Environment, Cayman Turtle Farm; Montserrat - Government of Montserrat, Montserrat National Trust; Turks & Caicos Islands - Department of Environment and Coastal Resources. TCOT thanks WIDECAST and Seaturtle.org for their collaboration in Caribbean TURTLEWATCH

How can I learn more about marine turtles and other marine life?

Go to the TCOT website
www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/tcot/

or contact us at
info@tcot.seaturtle.org

For more info visit the following useful links:
www.seaturtle.org

The Marine Turtle Newsletter
www.seaturtle.org/mtn

The Marine Conservation Society
www.mcsuk.org

DEFRA
Department for
Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs


Foreign & Commonwealth
Office


**MARINE CONSERVATION
SOCIETY**
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