

TURTLES

There are two types of turtle found on planet Earth: land and sea. Here you can read all about the sea turtles that visit the BVI.



All turtles are reptiles, just like snakes and lizards. Of the eight different types of sea turtle found worldwide, three kinds are known to visit the B.V.I. annually - the Green, the Hawksbill, and the Leatherback..

Sea turtles don't come to the B.V.I. on vacation like people do, to bask in the sun on sandy beaches. They are aquatic animals that spend their entire lives in the ocean, feeding on things like sea grass, coral reef sponges or jellyfish; different turtle types have different dietary preferences. Only, the females make nightly visits to certain beaches to lay eggs in sandy nests, at specific times of the year.

A pregnant, adult female sea turtle will swim ashore and awkwardly pull herself up onto a beach that is wide, with few or no lights nearby. She will dig a hole in the sand that is several feet deep, deposit her fertilized eggs into the warm cavity and cover it over again. She will then re-enter the sea, knowing she will never see the babies hatch or help them grow up. The baby turtles will be independent from the moment they emerge from their shells, several weeks later, and head straight for the ocean as soon as they climb out of their nests.

Unfortunately, many baby hatchling turtles don't make it to the sea and adulthood, because of several factors. Turtle hatchlings are preyed upon by a myriad of animal predators like cats, dogs, mongooses, ghost crabs, snakes, and sea birds like gulls, who find the hatchlings make tasty treats. Another type of predator will assault the mother turtles, and even the babies in their nests before they hatch. That predator is man. Man has been known to 'harvest' adult turtles for their oil, shells, meat and blood, for food, medicine and decoration. People also believe that turtle eggs are good to eat as an aphrodisiac. The population is threatened, also, due to pollution and accidental drowning in deep sea fishing nets. Even garbage on the beach can trap the hatchlings, so they can't get to the sea before predators find them.

