

Sea Turtles

Leatherback Sea Turtles

The main procedure for evaluating the status of sea turtles is through surveys of reproduction activity at nesting beaches. Decline in nesting has been documented to be much greater than 80% in most of the populations of the Pacific, which has been considered the species' major stronghold. In other areas of its range, the observed declines are not as severe, with some populations showing trends towards increasing or stable nesting activity. Analysis of published estimates of global population sizes (Pritchard, 1982, Spotila et al., 1996), suggest a reduction of over 70% for the global population of adult females in less than one generation. The populations in the Pacific Ocean, the species' stronghold until recently, have declined drastically in the last decade, with current annual nesting female mortalities estimated at around 30% (Sarti et al., 1996, Spotila et al., 2000). In some areas, formerly abundant rookeries have almost disappeared. For the Atlantic Ocean, the available information demonstrates that the largest population is in the French Guyana but the trends there are unclear. Some of the Caribbean nesting populations appear to be increasing, but their sizes are very small when compared to those that nested in the Pacific coasts less than 10 years ago.

[INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES (IUCN)
RED LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES]

The leatherback turtle has survived for more than a hundred million years, but is now facing extinction. Recent estimates of numbers show that this species is declining precipitously throughout its range, particularly in the Pacific over the last twenty years: as few as 2,300 adult females now remain, making the Pacific leatherback the world's most endangered marine turtle population.

Although Atlantic populations are rather more stable, models predict that they, too, will decline due to the large numbers of adults being killed accidentally by fishing fleets. In the Atlantic, the fact that they are widely distributed during the migration process and that they do not dive very deep increase the risk of interaction of leatherback turtles with long-line fisheries.

[WORLD WILDLIFE FUND]

Why is this species important?

As a major jellyfish predator, the leatherback turtle provides natural ecological control of jellyfish populations. Overabundance of jellyfish may reduce fish populations as jellyfish can feed on fish larvae and reduce population growth of commercially important fish. Hence, the presence of leatherback turtles benefits fish, fisheries, and people.

[WORLD WILDLIFE FUND]

Hawksbill Sea Turtles

There has been an 80% reduction of the global population in the last 3 generations.

[IUCN RED LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES]

Like other marine turtles, hawksbills are threatened by the loss of nesting and feeding habitats, excessive egg-collection, fishery-related mortality, pollution, and coastal development. Despite their protection under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), as well as under many national laws, there is still a disturbingly large amount of trade in hawksbills products, and this probably constitutes the major threat to the species.

[WORLD WILDLIFE FUND]

Why is this species important?

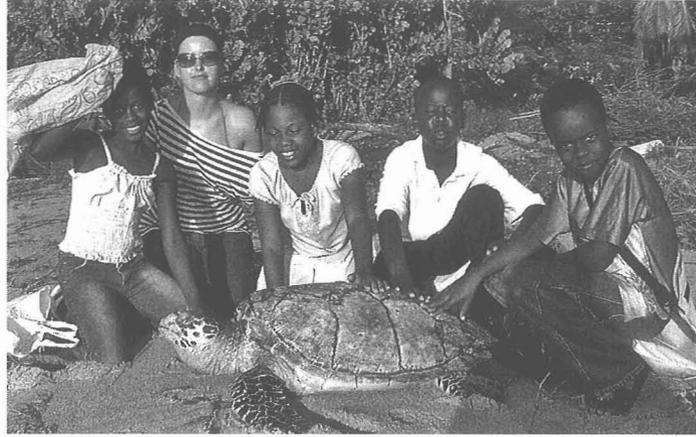
Hawksbill turtles also feed on invertebrates, with a predilection for sponges. When they dislodge pieces from the surface of the coral, this [sic] provides access to opportunistic reef fish to feed.

[WORLD WILDLIFE FUND]

Green Sea Turtles

Analysis of historic and recent published accounts indicate extensive subpopulation declines in all major ocean basins over the last three generations as a result of over exploitation of eggs and adult females at nesting beaches, juveniles and adults in foraging areas, and, to a lesser extent, incidental mortality relating to marine fisheries and degradation of marine and nesting habits. Analyses of subpopulation changes at 32 Index Sites distributed globally show a 48% to 67% decline in the number of mature females nesting annually over the last 3 generations.

[IUCN RED LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES]



This species is widely distributed in tropical and subtropical waters, but is under threat everywhere from over-harvesting of both eggs and adults, and from accidental mortality in the nets and long-lines of fishing fleets.

Equally as worrying are the high numbers, in some areas, of green turtles suffering from debilitating and potentially lethal tumours. The cause of these tumours is unknown but there is suspicion that increasing chemical pollution levels might make turtles more vulnerable.

Green turtles are widely harvested for meat in many countries.

[WORLD WILDLIFE FUND]

Why is this species important?

Marine turtles fulfil [sic] important roles in marine ecosystems. Seagrasses and algae are the green turtles' preferred snacks, and also happen to be amongst the most productive ecosystems on the planet. Green turtles both help to maintain the seagrass beds and make them more productive. Without grazing by green turtles, the seagrass blades grow tall and get choked by sediments that obscure the light and promote disease.

Additionally, seagrass consumed by green turtles is quickly digested and becomes available as recycled nutrients to the many species of plants and animals that live in the seagrass ecosystem. Seagrass beds also function as nurseries for several species of invertebrates and fish, many of which are of considerable value to commercial fisheries and therefore important to human food security.

[WORLD WILDLIFE FUND]

YWF-KIDO FOUNDATION

is a non-profit corporation (NGO) registered in Grenada, West Indies.

Our Mission

Working in partnership with local communities, youth groups and CBOs (Community Based Organizations), we seek to establish the vital links between social and economic development and environmental protection. We are working towards a balance in human resource development, community empowerment, environmental preservation and biodiversity conservation, through education, training, and conservation activities.

Our Activities

1. Sea Turtle (Leatherbacks and Hawksbills) Nesting and Hatching, Monitoring and Tagging Program: protecting nesting mothers, their nests, and their eggs from unsustainable practices such as poaching and data collection (WIDECAST: Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network; UWI: The University of the West Indies; TNC: The Nature Conservancy).
2. Sea Turtle (Hawksbills, Loggerheads and Greens) In-Water Rescue/Tagging/Release Program: data collection (WIDECAST; UWI).
3. Restoration and conservation of threatened coastal habitats in Carriacou through the planting of mangroves in selected sites (UNDP: United Nations Development Programme; GEF's SGP: Global Environmental Facility's Small Grants Programme).
4. Training of local persons in nesting sea turtle monitoring activities and mangrove protection/restoration techniques (WIDECAST; UNDP; GEF's; SGP; TNC).
5. Primary and secondary schools sessions, including field trips and video projections on sea turtle and whale conservation awareness, the importance of protecting mangroves, and biodiversity in the local ecosystems in the context of global environmental problems. We also focus on personal development (UNDP; GEF's SGP; WSPA: World Society for the Protection of Animals; IFAW: International Fund for Animal Welfare).
6. Summer camps for local children aged 10-14 focused on sea turtle and whale conservation awareness, the importance of protecting mangroves, biodiversity in the local ecosystems, and personal development (UNDP; GEF's SGP; British High Commission; IFAW).



7. Community meetings and happenings (such as Whale Awareness Days), including video projections on sea turtle and whale conservation awareness, the importance of protecting mangroves, and biodiversity in the local ecosystems (UNDP; GEF's SGP; WSPA; IFAW).
8. Production of radio eco-ads, Public Service Announcements, and songs on sea turtles, mangroves, beaches, biodiversity and whales, read and sung by local children (UNDP; GEF's SGP; WSPA). See: www.scriptflip.com/podcasts/whales.html
9. Puppet theater original productions (including stage construction, puppet making, script writing on environmental and social issues, building portable frames, and a mini puppet theatre for children, with children's participation) and original KIDO Eco-Cartoons.
10. Promotion of community-based ecotourism initiatives such as mangrove tours and observation of sea turtle nesting activities, and the formation of Nature Trails and interpretive sites, booths, and panels (ECCEA: Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness; EU: European Union).