

# WORLD TURTLE DAY

23 MAY

Started in 2000 by **American Tortoise Rescue** to increase knowledge, respect and encourage action to help tortoises survive and thrive.

It now includes:



Turtles



Tortoises



Terrapins

## WHAT MAKES TURTLES SPECIAL?



Of the seven species that occur worldwide, **five are found in South African waters.**

All five species that occur in our waters are listed on the **IUCN Red List.**

Turtles are found in the following oceans:

- Antarctic Ocean
- Arctic Ocean
- Atlantic Ocean
- Indian Ocean
- Pacific Ocean

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Green turtle



Hawksbill turtle



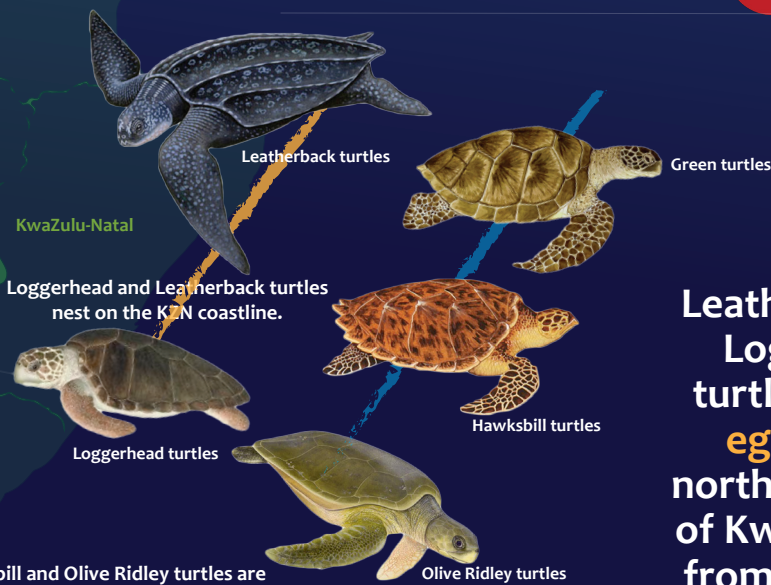
Leatherback turtle



Loggerhead turtle



Olive Ridley turtle



Loggerhead hatchlings



Leatherback hatchling

Leatherback and Loggerhead turtles **lay their eggs** on the northern beaches of KwaZulu-Natal from **October to February.**

Green, Hawksbill and Olive Ridley turtles are found in our waters, but do not nest on the coastline of South Africa.

# ABOUT TURTLES

They have a hard shell that protects them like a shield. This **upper shell** is called a 'carapace'.



Turtles also have a **lower shell** called a 'plastron'.



Tortoises and terrapins **can hide their heads inside their shells** when attacked by predators.

Instead of hiding in a shell, a turtle uses **speed and agility** to quickly escape predators like sharks.



Sea turtles have **special glands** which help **remove salt** from the water they drink. That is why they appear to be "crying".



Turtles are reptiles. They are **cold blooded**.

# ABOUT TURTLES

Turtles lay eggs.



Males spend most of their lives at sea while females return to the same beach where they hatched, to lay their eggs.



Loggerhead turtle

Nesting holes (60-80cm deep) are usually dug at night.



Leatherback turtle

Up to 120 eggs can be deposited at a time.

## (HOT CHICKS, COOL DUDES)

The temperature of the sand determines if the egg will develop into a male or female.

Higher temperatures (above 29°C) produce females.

Lower temperatures (20 – 24°C) produce males.



After 60 – 70 days the eggs hatch.



The hatchlings make their way to the top of the nest and scramble to the water trying to avoid predators.



Tiny hatchlings may be preyed upon by many predators including fish, seagulls and even ghost crabs.



They are carried vast distances in ocean currents and gyres.

1 / 1000

hatchlings will reach adulthood.

# THREATS TO TURTLES



Many turtles are caught as **bycatch** in the **nets of trawlers** or as bycatch in the **longline fishery**.



**Light pollution** can disorient turtle hatchlings, causing them to scurry inland rather than to the sea.



**Climate change** increases the **temperature of the sand**, causing more females to hatch than males.



**Plastic pollution.** Some turtles feed on jellyfish. Plastic in the water may be mistaken for a jellyfish.



Turtles may become **entangled in fishing line** discarded by fishermen.



**Coastal development** and **beach driving** in uncontrolled areas is destroying turtle nests.



Some turtles are **injured in collisions with boats**.

# HOW DO WE HELP TURTLES?



Only eat seafood from a **well managed resource**.



**Do not buy turtle shell souvenirs.** This encourages local people to kill turtles.



**Reduce** your carbon footprint.



**Reduce use of and recycle plastic.**



Encourage fishermen to **dispose of their fishing line in bins** provided or take it home.



Take part in or organise a **beach cleanup**.



**Report a stranded turtle**  
[www.saambr.org.za/animal-rescue/](http://www.saambr.org.za/animal-rescue/)

# FUN TURTLE FACTS



Archelon was a **giant turtle** of the late Cretaceous period.

The **earliest** known turtle-like animals date back **220 million years!**

Some turtles are known to live to **over 100 years.**



**Green turtles** prefer **sea grasses.**



**Loggerhead turtles** eat hard-shelled animals like **lobsters, crabs** and fish.



**Olive ridley turtles** eat **jellyfish, crustaceans & seaweed.**

**Hawksbill turtles** use their bird-like beak to cut through **soft coral, anemones** and **sea sponges.**

Amazingly, the enormous **Leatherback** turtle feeds mostly on **jellyfish.**



**Leatherback turtles** can grow to **2m in length** and can weigh **up to 900kg.**



INCORPORATING



Helping people to care for our ocean