

SEA TURTLES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



Sea turtles are ancient mariners that have existed for over 100 million years. They spend their lives at sea. Only female adults come ashore to nest in the sand.

LOGGERHEAD (*Caretta caretta*)

Origin of name: Large head with powerful jaws



Colour of hatchling: Light to dark grey

Colour of adult: Reddish-brown on top, yellow-orange underside

GREEN TURTLE (*Chelonia mydas*)

Origin of name: Green colour fatty tissue under its shell



Colour of hatchling: Black on top, white underside

Colour of adult: Varies from brown to olive or grey with colourful streaks on top, yellowish underside

LEATHERBACK (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

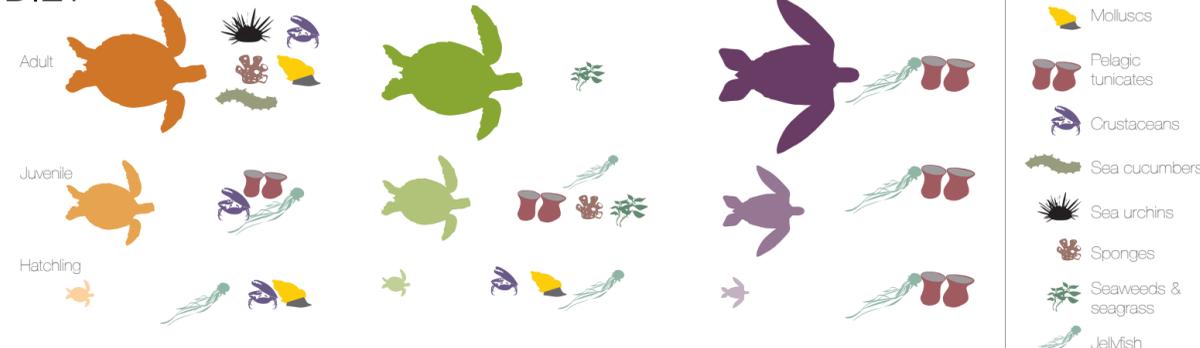
Origin of name: Shell is made of tough, oily and rubbery skin



Colour of hatchling: Black with white stripes on top and flipper edges

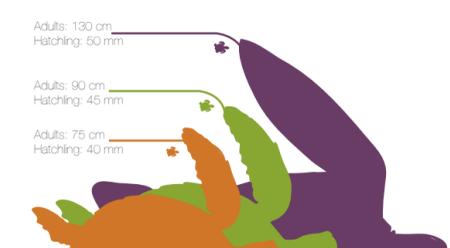
Colour of adult: Black with white spots on top, whitish underside

DIET

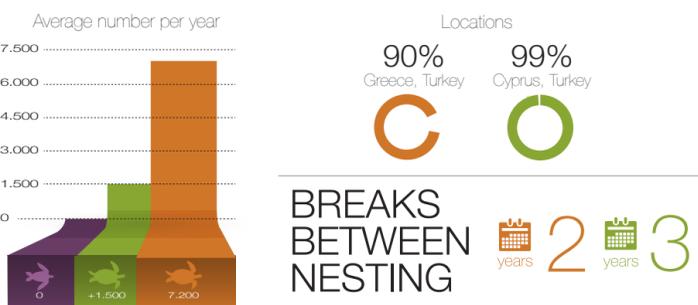


AVERAGE SIZE

Comparison of the average size of turtles as hatchlings and as full grown adults.



DOCUMENTED NESTS



NESTING SITES

- ◆ **LOGGERHEAD (>50 NESTS)**
- ◆ **LOGGERHEAD (20-50 NESTS)**
- **GREEN (>50 NESTS)**
- **GREEN & LOGGERHEAD (>50 NESTS)**



NATURAL PREDATORS DURING LIFECYCLE

EGGS
Foxes, lizards, jackals, weasels



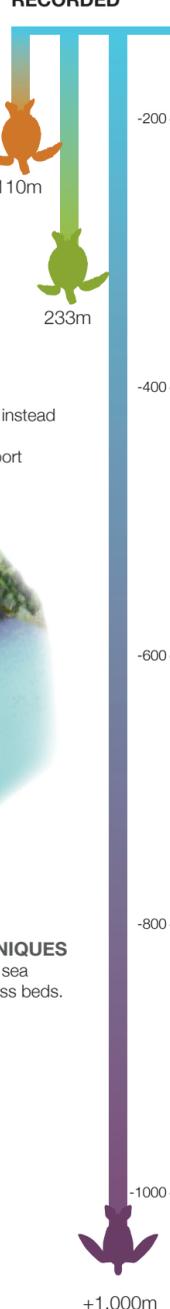
HATCHLINGS
Seagulls, cormorants, crabs, lizards, snakes



JUVENILES & ADULTS
Fish, sharks and occasionally seals



MAXIMUM DIVING DEPTH RECORDED



THREATS FROM HUMAN ACTIVITIES

CLIMATE CHANGE
Will lead to sea level rise that will eventually destroy nests. Rising sand temperatures may lead to nests producing only females or no hatchlings at all. Sex is determined by the nest temperature. Cooler nests (<28°C) produce only males, warmer ones (>30°C) only females.



UNPLANNED & UNCONTROLLED COASTAL DEVELOPMENT
Leads to the destruction of nesting beaches.



LIGHT POLLUTION
Disorients hatchlings inland instead of to the sea. Adults too are disoriented causing them to abort emerging to nest.

OIL SPILLS
Affect sea turtles and their habitats at all stages of life, causing direct mortality, increased embryo mortality and developmental defects.

INCIDENTAL CATCH
over **132,000** turtles are captured annually unintentionally by fishing gear, causing at least **44,000** deaths.

"GHOST FISHING"
When lost, abandoned or deliberately discarded fishing gear traps sea turtles and other marine creatures.

EXPLOITATION
Of eggs or turtles for consumption or artefacts. Not frequent in the Mediterranean.

MARINE DEBRIS
Kills thousands of sea turtles and other marine creatures when they become entangled or mistake it for food. On nesting beaches, garbage becomes a deadly trap for hatchlings, making them more vulnerable to predators. Toxic substances contained in plastics are passed up the food chain. Predators – like sea turtles – are worst affected.

DESTRUCTIVE FISHING TECHNIQUES
Damage or entirely destroy important sea turtle feeding habitats such as seagrass beds.



INTENTIONAL KILLING
During fishing activities is a relatively widespread practice in the Mediterranean.



References
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• Casale P. (2008). Incidental catch of marine turtles in the Mediterranean Sea: captures, mortality, priorities. WWF Italy, Rome.
• ICRAM, "Sea Turtles of the Mediterranean and Black Seas", 2001.

Founded in 1988, MEDASSET is an international environmental NGO registered as a charity and limited liability company in the UK and a Permanent Observer-Member to the Bern Convention, Council of Europe. MEDASSET is working closely with MEDASSET Greece - a not-for-profit organisation established in 1993 in Greece, which is a partner to the UN's Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP). Both organisations are active in the study and conservation of sea turtles and their habitats throughout the Mediterranean. Common goals are achieved through scientific research, environmental education, lobbying relevant decision makers, and raising public awareness.

To operate effectively and save sea turtles in the Mediterranean, we rely on your generosity. Visit our webpage and join us today!
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MEDASSET
Mediterranean Association
to Save the Sea Turtles

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