

Marine Turtles



Having travelled the sea over 100 million years, marine turtles have outlived almost all of the prehistoric animals with which they once shared the planet; survived the extinction of the dinosaurs. However...



Tagging is one of many ways to monitor marine turtles

Status

Today three of the seven existing species are **critically endangered** with extinction, three are **endangered** and the status of the seventh species remains unknown. There are two main species nesting in Seychelles – **hawksbill** and **green turtles** which are endangered. Marine turtles are protected by law in Seychelles. However, poaching remains a major threat.



Ghost crabs eating turtle eggs washed away by waves

Threats

There are many threats to marine turtles. **Eggs** can be washed away from waves. **Hatchlings** are favourite food for ghost crabs, birds and big fish. **Adult turtles** are faced with many human associated threats, for example meat, egg and shell exploitation, bycatch (accidentally caught) by long-line fishing industry; and **loss of nesting sites** and **pollution**.

Conservation

Marine turtle monitoring and conservation is carried out on many islands such as Cousin and Cousine. Cousin Island has the longest marine turtle monitoring programme in Seychelles (since 1972).



Did you know?

- It is estimated that 1 out of 1,000 marine turtle hatchlings will actually survive
- A female marine turtle always come back to same beach where she was born to lay her eggs.

A Life Cycle

Once they are in the sea, they swim for days without eating. They grow very slowly in the ocean and take many years to reach maturity



When ready, a female turtle crawls out of the sea and uses her front flippers to drag herself up the beach to a nest site.



She digs out a body pit with her front flippers and then excavates a vertical egg chamber (between 30 and 60 cm deep) with her hind flippers.

Then she will lay a clutch of about 100-180 leathery-shelled eggs in size a golf ball.

After laying eggs, she uses her hind flippers to fill the egg chamber with sand and returns back to the sea.

Nest temperature during incubation **determines** the **sex** of the **hatchlings**, cool temperature will produce males and warm temperature produce females



Once ready, the hatchlings emerge in group, usually at night and head towards the sea



It takes about 60 days for eggs to hatch and two or more days for the hatchlings to get to the surface.