



Green Sea Turtle Quick Fact Sheet

Common Name: Green sea turtle - named for the green color of the fat under its shell.

Scientific Name: *Chelonia mydas*

Description: They are easily distinguished from other sea turtles because they have a single pair of prefrontal scales (scales in front of its eyes), rather than two pairs as found on other sea turtles. Head is small and blunt with a serrated jaw. Carapace is bony without ridges and has large, non-overlapping, scutes (scales) present with only 4 lateral scutes. Body is nearly oval and is more depressed (flattened) compared to Pacific green turtles. All flippers have 1 visible claw. The carapace color varies from pale to very dark green and plain to very brilliant yellow, brown and green tones with radiating stripes. The plastron varies from white, dirty white or yellowish to dark grey-bluish-green. Hatchlings are dark-brown or nearly black with a white underneath and white flipper margins.

Size & Weight: Adults are 3 to 4 feet in carapace length (83-114 cm), largest of the Cheloniidae family. Adults weigh between 240 to 420 pounds (110-190 kg).

Diet: Changes significantly during its life. When less than 8 to 10 inches in length eat worms, young crustaceans, aquatic insects, grasses and algae. Once green turtles reach 8 to 10 inches in length, they mostly eat sea grass and algae, the only sea turtle that is strictly herbivorous as an adult. Their jaws are finely serrated which aids them in tearing vegetation.

Habitat: Mainly stay near the coastline and around islands and live in bays and protected shores, especially in areas with seagrass beds. Rarely are they observed in the open ocean.

Nesting: Nest at intervals of about 2 years. They lay 3 to 5 nests per season, approximately 12 to 14 days apart. Lays an average of 100 to 126 eggs per nest. Eggs incubate for about 60 days.

Range: Found in all temperate and tropical waters throughout the world.

Status: *U.S.* - Listed as Endangered (in danger of extinction within the foreseeable future). *International* - Listed as Endangered (facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future).

Threats to Survival: The greatest threat is from the commercial harvest for eggs and food. Other green turtle parts are used for leather and small turtles are sometimes stuffed for curios. Incidental catch in commercial shrimp trawling is an increasing source of mortality.

Population Estimate: 85,000 - 90,000 nesting females.