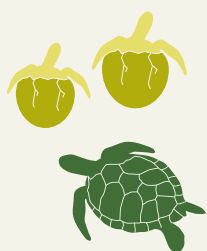




FACTSHEET

2013

LARGEST  
OF ALL THE  
HARDSHELL  
TURTLES FOUND  
IN THE WORLD



GREEN TURTLES  
RETURN TO NEST ON  
THE SAME BEACH  
EVERY YEAR,  
FROM WHERE THEY  
HAD BEGUN THEIR  
LIFE AS HATCHLINGS

## Icons at risk

# The Green Turtle

Green turtle populations in the East Atlantic are left with no choice but to feed in waters exposed to oil spills, which can lead to serious health issues such as liver, kidney and brain damage.



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## The species at a glance

**Physical characteristics:** Largest among the hard shell marine turtles weighing between 65 to 204 kgs. Named 'green' after its fat, not carapace, which is olive brown with gray and black streaks.

**Life cycle:** The average life span is estimated between 45 and 59 years. Slow growth rate, reaching sexual maturity between 26 to 40 years. Females produce an average of 110 eggs which incubate in approximately 60 days.

**Conservation Status:** It is classified as *Endangered* on the IUCN red List, and listed on Appendix I of CITES and Appendices I and II of the Convention on Migratory Species.

**Diet:** Unlike other marine turtles, it is almost exclusively herbivorous, grazing on sea grasses and algae.

**Habitat and Range:** Found in tropical, subtropical and, to a lesser extent, in temperate waters. It ranges throughout the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans including smaller seas such as the Arabian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. Truly an international animal, green turtles swim and feed in the coastal waters of at least 140 countries, laying nests in about 80 of them.

**Behaviour:** Solitary creatures, but occasionally form feeding aggregations in shallow waters in seagrass or algae.

## An iconic species

The green turtle is considered the most valuable reptile in the world and amongst the best recognized of all sea turtle species. It has gained popularity in modern cultures around the world, with their images appearing regularly in magazines, books, tourism brochures and even merchandise! Once viewed mainly as a resource to be exploited for its meat and eggs, the green turtle today holds the limelight in the global conservation movement.

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## FORCED TO FEED IN OILED WATERS, GREEN TURTLES SUFFER SERIOUS HEALTH ISSUES

### Threats

Once found in abundance across oceans, the green turtle population is on the decline. Although the number of individuals are still high, they are facing increasing threats such as habitat degradation, illegal trade of meat and shell, exploitation of eggs, incidental bycatch in fishing activities, climate change and water pollution. Particularly in the waters of the eastern Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean sea, green turtles are severely impacted by the effects of oil exploration such as oil spills and pollution.

### Impact of oil spills

Unlike other marine mammals and reptiles, it has been observed that green turtles do not avoid oiled waters. Despite increased pollution in their feeding grounds, they continue to feed on contaminated seagrass and algae from regions exposed to oil spills. This can severely impact the health of the species, leading to damage of the liver, kidney and brain. Inhalation of volatile petroleum compounds or dispersants cause irritation and injury to the respiratory tract, which can lead to inflammation or pneumonia. Ingestion of petroleum compounds causes injury to the gastrointestinal tract and affects the animal's ability to digest food. In the long run, exposure to such pollutants lowers reproductive success and therefore threatens survival. Impacts of oil spill and pollution on nesting beaches leads to decreased survival of hatchlings and developmental defects.



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### Protecting marine turtles

WWF works to protect marine turtles throughout the world by:

- Protecting critical nesting and feeding sites
- Reducing bycatch by working with fishermen to find solutions, such as alternative fishing gear (circle hooks and TEDs for example)
- By working with authorities and coastal communities to reduce poaching and illegal trade
- Addressing the impacts of climate change.

### What you can do

WWF is calling on governments and companies to stop oil exploration activities in oceans that are home to iconic marine species. We want to build public support in making our voice heard and create a movement in support of the green turtle and other such endangered species, which are being directly impacted by fossil fuel extraction. Pledge your support to the Seize Your Power campaign, and let the governments and oil companies know, you do not want energy at the cost of losing the green turtle.



To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.  
[www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)



Seize Your Power is WWF's global campaign that calls on government and financial institutions worldwide to act immediately to invest money in renewable energy projects and phase out investments in fossil fuels.  
Sign the pledge: [www.panda.org/syp](http://www.panda.org/syp)