

# LEATHERBACK TURTLES

WHAT TO DO WHEN COMING  
ACROSS TURTLE ACTIVITIES  
ON THE BEACH

Leatherback sea turtles are the largest sea turtles of the world and they are fascinating animals. Did you know that adult leatherbacks eat several hundred kilos of jelly fish every day? This has a positive impact on the fish stock, from which we ourselves benefit! Unfortunately, mostly due to human consumption leatherback turtles have become very rare, especially in the north-eastern Indian Ocean where you are right now. You can help to protect the leatherback turtles by following some simple instructions and sharing your observations with us!

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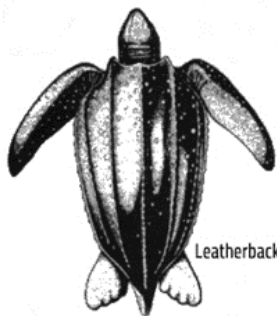
## General rules if you encounter a sea turtle on the beach

- Please never disturb a turtle on the beach in the way that it could interrupt its search for a nesting place or even the nesting process.
- Hatchlings must be able to reach the sea undisturbed, quickly, and easily.
- Do not use artificial light or fire on the beach at night since it heavily disturbs the orientation of nesting turtles and hatchlings. Rather give your eyes some time to adapt to darkness, you will be surprised what you can recognise even in pale starlight!
- If you are using flashlight, extinguish it immediately if you notice a sea turtle; never shine light on the turtle.



## I see a turtle 😊

## What to do?



Leatherback sea turtle



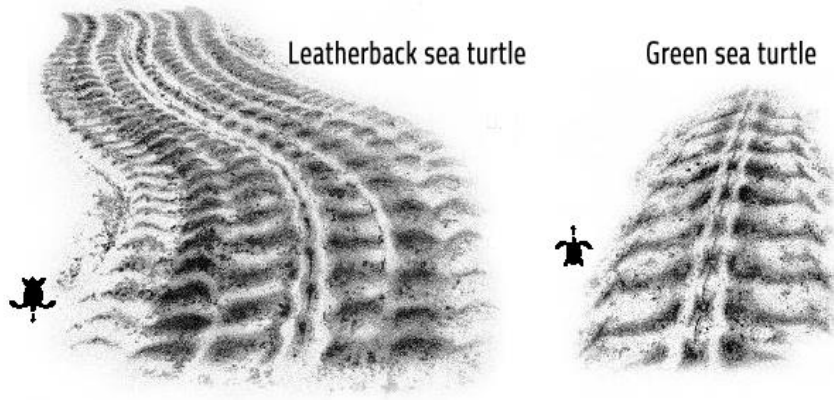
Green sea turtle



- If you notice a turtle on the beach, emerging from the sea, moving around in search for a nesting place, or digging/laying eggs, please remain quiet and retreat slowly to a distance of at least 10 metres. Do not approach the turtle!
- The leatherback turtle is very easy to discern from all other sea turtles:
  - It's huge! The carapace length is up to 2 m, while green turtles are rarely larger than 1.2 m.
  - Colour: Dark black with white dots. All other sea turtles are rather brownish in colour.
  - Back: Covered by skin, not by horn plates as in all other sea turtles. It has seven distinct longitudinal ridges.
- If the turtle has finished nesting and is definitely on the way to the sea, and only in this case, you may approach it for species identification or tag readout. Approach it only from the back so it can't see you.
- You would greatly help us if you check the turtle for tags while it returns to the sea. You usually find two tags on leatherback turtles on the hind flippers.
- You are a champion if you can provide us with at least one tag number. You can try to read it (maybe not easy while the turtle is moving), but the best is to take a photo of the tag. This is the only case in which it is excusable to use flash. Try until you are sure the tag number is readable on the photo (sometimes difficult because of reflections).

## I see a track ☺

## What to do?



- Take a photo of the track. It would be good to have a person in the picture for size comparison.
- Leatherback sea turtle tracks are generally about two metres wide; green sea turtle tracks are about one metre wide; tracks of other species are even narrower.
- Not all turtles that emerge from the ocean for nesting find a good place to lay their eggs. Sometimes they go back to the sea without nesting and may come again another night. Please don't try to find the nest, because you might accidentally destroy eggs.
- Unfortunately, many predators like to dig out and eat turtle eggs: monitor lizards, dogs, pigs, humans ... If you see signs of digging and/or tracks around the nest, please take photos.



**Please contact us:**

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I see baby turtles 😊

What to do?



- If you encounter turtle hatchlings, do not touch them or disturb their way to the sea.
- Leatherback turtle hatchling look pretty much like a tiny edition of their parents! Instead of plates like all other sea turtles, they have ridges on their back.
- Different from nesting turtles, hatchlings may come out during daylight (late afternoon). If you are lucky to encounter hatchlings during the day, please take pictures without using flashlight!
- If a hatchling is trapped in a hole, or by trash on the beach, you might help it to overcome this obstacle, but let it run the rest of the way alone. As hatchlings cross the beach, they are responding to environmental cues that are necessary for their orientation and survival.
- Another exception is if hatchlings run away from the sea: you can then bring them nearer to the water's edge but allow them to scramble in themselves.
- Feel free to frighten birds, crabs, dogs, pigs away, since they eat hatchlings.
- Please count the hatchlings you see; don't be afraid about miscounting, we know the hatchlings are quickly moving, but an approximate number already helps a lot.

**I see a dead turtle ☹️**

**What to do?**



- It is terrible to see a dead turtle on the beach, but we can still get a lot of important information from such sad incidences.
- Please take photos of the situation including close-ups of the remains, so we can identify if the turtle was poached for its meat or washed ashore.
- Even dead turtles still might have tags, so please check the flippers and take pictures.
- Leave everything in place and contact us immediately; we will do the next steps, e.g., informing the authorities.
- After all information has been recorded and reported, the carcass should be buried.

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