





EXPLORE!

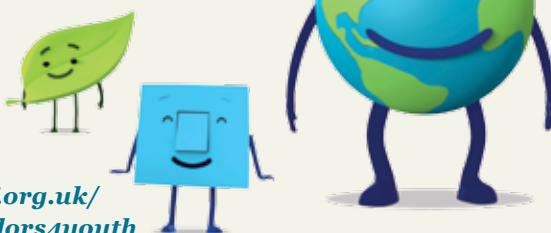
Welcome to “WWF Explore”, a free poster resource for youth groups and young people. Each issue features one key species with news, fascinating facts and great activities to help your group members earn a special badge. This edition looks at marine turtles, and how you can help safeguard their future.



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CALLING BUDDING GREEN CHAMPIONS!






Green Ambassadors for Youth – or GA4Y – is a fantastic programme to help 5-15s take the lead on green issues in their groups and their community. Our friendly Green Ambassador team – Leafy, Wheel, Switch, Crush, Smith and Tap – will help them get informed, get involved and get sharing on six topical green issues. Designed with the help of over 100 leaders, it offers six themed activity sets, a suite of posters to help you plan your green journey, and a badge scheme to reward young people for their achievements.



Sign up at wwf.org.uk/greenambassadors4youth

All our resources are accompanied by a badge. Find out more at wwf.org.uk/ygresources

DID YOU KNOW?

-  Marine turtles are amongst the oldest species on the planet. They've been around for about 100 million years – some of them were here when dinosaurs tramped the earth!
-  Turtles will swim entire oceans to get to the right breeding or feeding grounds, navigating back to their birth beaches.
-  Only one in every 1,000 hatchlings makes it to adulthood.
-  Six species are classed as threatened on the IUCN's Red List, some of them are critically endangered.
-  All seven species are critical in keeping marine ecosystems ticking over.



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TURTLES

Get the lowdown on why they're so remarkable, and so important to our planet.

GREEN

Dark black-brown turtles named after their greenish cartilage and internal fat deposits. Found in most tropical and subtropical regions, some as far north as British coastal areas. Females follow coastlines to lay up to 6 clutches of 70-110 eggs. They feed on algae and seagrasses.

Status - ENDANGERED



LOGGERHEAD

Large heads and powerful jaws, and a reddish-brown shell which collects barnacles - up to 100 species of animals and plants can live on just one turtle! Eat molluscs like conches and clams as well as crabs, urchins, sponges and jellyfish.

Status - ENDANGERED



HAWKSBILL

Long, oval shells, hawk-like beaks and two claws on their flippers. Females nest on secluded beaches in dunes or beach vegetation and lay up to 200 eggs in 2-5 clutches per season. Using their narrow beaks to reach inside crevices, they eat small invertebrates and love sponges, which grow on coral reefs.

Status - CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



OLIVE RIDLEY

Smaller ones have slight upturns on their shells. Wide-ranging in population and nest sites - from Angola on the west coast of Africa to Venezuela in South America. Current population of around 800,000 nesting females is a tiny remainder of a population ravaged by hunting for meat, leather and illegal egg harvesting. They eat crabs, shrimps, jellyfish, small invertebrates and fish eggs.

Status - VULNERABLE



KEMPS RIDLEY

The most endangered of all marine turtles with an almost round shell and a parrot-like beak. They have a restricted range, nesting only along a single stretch of coastline in the Gulf of Mexico, so have fallen foul of hunting, egg exploitation and habitat destruction. Only around 1,000 breeding females left. They nest every two years, laying 3 clutches of 90 eggs in a season.

Status - CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



LEATHERBACK

The largest marine turtle, reaching nearly 2m and up to 500kg and with a leathery, rather than hard shell, and long front flippers. They live in temperate and tropical waters, and can cross the Atlantic and Pacific oceans to breed. Females lay up to 120 eggs in 4-5 clutches every couple of years. They eat jellyfish, squid and other soft invertebrates.

Status - VULNERABLE

FLATBACK

Flat shells up to 1m long and varying from yellowy-green to grey. They feed on squid, molluscs, sea cucumbers and soft corals in Australasia's coastal waters. They only nest off northern Australia, on a number of small islands, which makes them vulnerable to habitat loss. They lay about 50 eggs four times in a season.

Status - IUCN DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ON THIS SPECIES



THREATS

Habitat loss

Uncontrolled coastal development has helped destroy important nesting beaches for all turtles. When humans build sea walls and jetties, we change long-shore drift patterns, causing coastlines and beaches to erode and disappear. Lights from new roads and buildings near beaches and coastlines attract new turtle hatchlings and disorient them away from the sea. More coastal development means less room for breeding turtles - hawksbills like to nest under vegetation, but if beaches are cleared for building, their nest sites can disappear altogether.

Hunting and poaching

Each year, 50,000 marine turtles are killed illegally in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. Take green turtles - they're targeted for their meat, eggs and the special green body fat, called calipee, which is the main ingredient in turtle soup: over 30,000 are poached every year off the US coast of California. Turtle eggs are taken from nests to sell as snacks and are even considered an aphrodisiac in some countries.

Illegal wildlife trade

Tortoiseshell, calipee and leather from all turtle species are still popular in many parts of the world. In Japan, people have coveted hawksbill turtle shell, known as bekko, for hundreds of years and still do, even though it became illegal in 1994.

Fishing bycatch

All too often, turtles become enmeshed in fishing nets, trapped on longlines or caught in traps and pots. Some 200,000 loggerhead turtles were accidentally caught in longlines in 2000 - it's the main cause of their decline. Circle hooks, with inward-turning hooks, can reduce the number of turtles caught by a massive 80%, but only a tiny number of fishing vessels actually use them. Turtle deaths have been reduced by the wider use of excluder devices in shrimp trawlers - basically escape hatches in the back of nets.

Pollution and marine waste

Marine turtles which eat jellyfish can't tell the difference between a real meal and plastic rubbish, and will choke to death when they try to eat them. Fishing lines and nets thrown overboard can trap and drown turtles. Oil spills and other chemical pollution can be fatal to turtles that swim in affected waters.

Destined for extinction?

With all these threats facing them, it's hardly surprising marine turtles are at crisis point. In addition, many eggs don't hatch, any hatchlings which do emerge are vulnerable and huge numbers don't survive, and most turtle species take some years to get to breeding age.

ACTIVITIES

Complete any 3 activities with your group and they can earn a WWF Explore Turtle Badge. Download an order form from wwf.org.uk/explore



TURTLE TRIVIA

Find out who knows the most about turtles. First, come up with some trivia questions to ask the players, then form into two teams, in lines. Ask the two players at the front a question – they have to raise their hands before their opponent. If the player gets it right, they win a point and move to the back. If not, the other player gets a chance. If neither know, they both head to the back and you move on to the next question. The team with the most points wins!

TURTLE POLLUTANT TRAY GAME

Collect together some of the kinds of rubbish which can harm turtles and other marine wildlife as they navigate the oceans – plastic bags, bottles, bottle tops, fishing line, netting, rope etc. Arrange them on a tray, and ask your friends to study it before covering it over. Now ask them to write down everything on the tray. The one who remembers the most wins!

BEACH DASH!

A great activity to do in the dark! Split the group into three teams – turtle hatchlings, sea waves and beach hotels but don't tell the hatchlings which are which. The sea waves and beach hotels have torches and stand at opposite ends of the room to each other, using their torches to encourage the hatchlings towards them. The hatchlings have to 'swim' on their tummies towards the lights. The leader counts up at the end to see how many hatchlings have swum the right way (ie to the sea) and survived.

DESIGN A BAG FOR LIFE

Marine turtles can't tell the difference between an old carrier bag and a jellyfish – and can die as a result. As a group, design your own cloth bag for life, and ask your group leader to get them printed.

MAKE YOUR OWN BOTTLE OCEAN

Half-fill an old clear plastic bottle with tap-water, and then add a little blue food colouring to make the sea. Add some small plastic toy sea-creatures you can fit through the spout – as well as some stones and sand. Use a funnel to top it up with sunflower oil and screw the top on tight – use some duct tape so you don't open it by mistake! Turn the bottle on its side and watch the oil and water separate gradually to reveal your mini turtle paradise.

HELP WWF HELP TURTLES

Each year, some 250,000 turtles drown after getting tangled in discarded fishing gear. Adopting a marine turtle will help us:

- reduce illegal fishing
- promote sustainable fishing practices
- expand and create marine protected areas and help set up turtle sanctuaries
- help local communities conserve and manage the natural environment
- achieve government agreements to ban commercial harvesting of marine turtles
- help fund other essential work around the world

A small amount can make a big difference – just £5 per month could buy a pair of binoculars for policing marine protected areas. And £10 could buy disposable cameras to help locals gather information about turtle habits in their areas.

Go to wwf.org.uk/turtleadopt to find out more.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

wwf.org.uk

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