

# Marine turtles



Above: Green turtle swimming over coral

Marine (sea) turtles are often called the ancient mariners of the sea. They have been swimming in the sea for more than 150 million years, first appearing during the age of the dinosaurs.

Six of the world's seven species of marine turtle (loggerhead, olive ridley, leatherback, hawksbill, flatback and green turtles) live in the Great Barrier Reef. Four of these species are found in the southern Great Barrier Reef, three of which nest on the Keppel Islands (loggerheads, flatbacks and greens).

All known breeding sites of the flatback turtle are within Australia. Breeding is centred in the southern Great Barrier Reef around Peak, Wild Duck, Curtis and Facing Islands. However, low density nesting by flatbacks occurs on many mainland beaches and offshore islands north of Gladstone.



Learn more about marine turtles of the Great Barrier Reef



Right: Hawksbill turtle feeding

Green turtles are mostly herbivorous (plant eaters) as adults, eating algae, seagrass, mangrove fruit and jellyfish. Flatback turtles inhabit subtidal soft-bottomed habitats and feed on things such as soft corals, sea pens and jellyfish. Sponges make up a major part of the hawksbill's diet, although they also feed on seagrasses, algae, sea cucumbers, soft corals and shellfish. The pointed jaws are well adapted to prising food from crevices in and around coral.

Marine turtles have developed the ability to hold their breath for long periods, over an hour in some instances, and to dive to great depths (greater than 1000 metres for the leatherback). Hibernating turtles have been known to remain submerged in a dormant state for period up to a week or more.

Please report sick, injured, stranded or deceased marine turtles to the Queensland Department of Environment and Science by calling their free 24-hour hotline on 1300 130 372.



Photo: M. Simons & Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation



From top: Closeup of green turtle; loggerhead turtle; hawksbill turtle swimming over staghorn coral

