

Marine Turtle: These Amazing Animals

The marine turtle is an ancient creature, dating back tens of millions of years. They are spread all around the world's oceans, except for the Polar Regions. Their life expectancy is still being speculated, but scientists suggest they can live up to 80 years. There are seven species of sea turtle: Flatback, Green, Hawksbill, Kemp's Ridley, Leatherback, Loggerhead, and Olive Ridley.

The Flatback turtle nests only in Australia, and because of its restricted distribution, they are very susceptible to overexploitation and to changes in its habitat. The Leatherback turtle is one of the most endangered animals on Earth. They are much larger than the other species of turtle, and can dive deeper, probably due to its soft shell, and migrate farthest than the others. The Olive Ridley is the most abundant on the sea, but their nesting places are in great danger.

All these seven types of marine turtles have different physiques, diets, and ways of diving and of breathing, each and every aspect counting to their vulnerability to changes in general. Most of them travel long distances to look for food or to get to their nesting grounds. They are excellent navigators, using the Earth magnetic field for orientation. Also, they have a great sense of time and locations, which accounts for their returning to the same nesting grounds their whole life. The female only nests every two to three years, and its hatchlings have a hard time trying to survive: one out of a thousand hatchlings survive to adulthood. Furthermore, their gender depends on the temperature of the sand. The sea turtle's diet consists of mollusks, crabs, squids, sponges, sea grass, jellyfish, and shrimps, varying according to the species.

Like marine fish, they are suffering greatly from the climate changes and human interference. Of all those seven species, six are on the list of endangered species. The first reason is that they are often bycatch, which is a significant treat, since they get stuck to fishing lines and nets. In second comes illegal egg harvesting and losing their nesting habitat. The third reason is the marine debris, which is frequently mistaken by food. For example, for the sea turtle plastic looks like squids or like their favorite food, jellyfish, and once eaten, such debris gets stuck inside the turtle's body. Another factor of significant impact is that they are considered an aphrodisiac, exotic food. Although several countries have forbidden turtle hunting and egg harvesting, they are still being caught worldwide. Its meat, eggs, and shell are being traded in the black market. The habit is so widespread that several campaigns have been launched to stop people from eating marine turtle.

The impact of marine turtles' decrease in number can be seen everywhere. Entire ecosystems are under treat. Coral reefs health depends on them to control the growth of algae. They are also one of the few animals that have sea grass for food. However, some damage control is being done. Several locations have been declared sanctuaries for the ocean life. For example, the Hawaii Islands, which are one of the green sea turtle's nesting ground. This shows that a combined effort has positive results, and we shouldn't give up our hopes.

About the Author

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