



Hawksbill Turtle photo: Sandra Voegeli

Enhanced Protection for Marine Turtles

On Monday October 1, 2008 the Bahamas Government issued a Press Release which proposes **new regulations** to enhance the protection of marine turtles in The Bahamas. BREEF is in support the proposed enhanced protection and joins The Bahamas Sea Turtle Conservation Group, The Nature Conservancy, The Bahamas Humane Society, Friends of the Environment, and the Bahamas National Trust in the call for a **total ban on the harvest** of sea turtles in The Bahamas.

Send your comments by email to fisheries@bahamas.gov.bs or to breef@breef.org

10 Reasons to support the enhanced protections for marine turtles in The Bahamas

1. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) considers all marine turtles to be **threatened or endangered** globally.
2. Sea turtles, especially green turtles feed on seagrass helping to maintain healthy, functioning seagrass beds; an important habitat for conch.
3. Sea Turtles are one of the Earth's last ancient reptiles; it is therefore important to maintain this important aspect of biological history.
4. Sea turtles are protected by CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora): Many other countries have already **banned** the harvesting of turtles.
5. The presence of marine turtles in our waters will attract tourists to the Bahamas, supporting eco-tourism ventures and the dive industry.
6. Marine Turtles are a transboundary species - they migrate long distances as they carry out their life cycle. As such, the harvest or the protection of turtles in The Bahamas will impact populations not only in the Bahamas but in other regions as well.
7. Marine Turtles mature very slowly. Many species do not become reproductive for decades. This makes it difficult for populations to recover from fishing pressure and other threats.
8. Because they grow slowly and have many predators when they are small, very few hatchlings survive to reach adulthood; this makes adult and large juvenile turtles especially valuable to the population.
9. Marine Turtles lay their eggs on beaches, many of which are impacted by coastal development. Coastal Development may limit the ability of turtles to find suitable nesting sites, thus, affecting their ability to reproduce successfully.
10. Marine turtles are impacted by **marine debris**, each year many turtles die after ingesting plastic bags discarded in our oceans which they mistake for food. Reduce the impact of plastic bags on marine life by using reusable grocery bags.

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