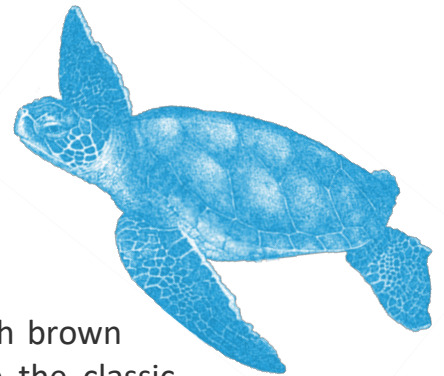


Hawksbill Turtle Facts



About

You can tell me apart from other sea turtle species by my pointed, bird-like beak—it's how I got my name! I'm a medium-sized turtle, and can reach up to three feet long and weigh 300 pounds. On average, though, we weigh less than 200 pounds and only reach about 2.5 feet.



We are known for our spectacularly-colored shells—our rich brown plates splashed with yellow, orange and black streaks are the classic “tortoiseshell” pattern. As much as we love our shells, humans love them even more, leading to serious overexploitation of our population. For many years, humans hunted us for our shells to make jewelry, combs and more, causing our population to drop to the point that we are now critically endangered. And although legal trade for our shells finally ended in 1993, there is still a rampant illegal trade, especially in east Asia. To top it off, we are also at risk due to accidental entanglement in fishing gear and habitat loss. Serious work needs to be done to make sure our populations are protected for generations to come!

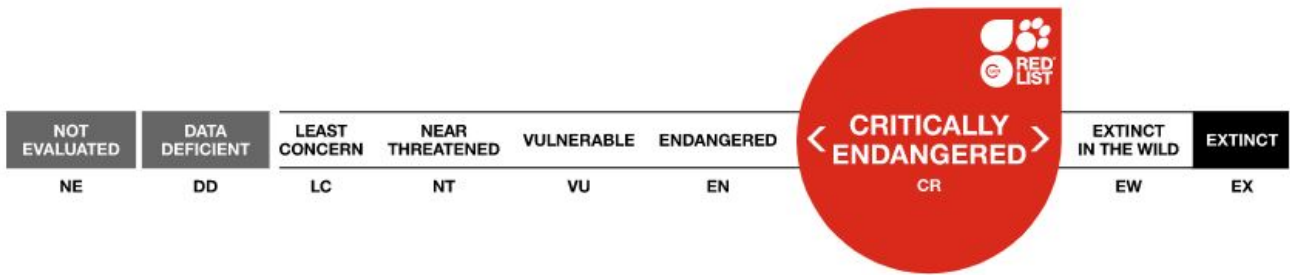
I eat mainly one thing—sponges! I use my sharp beak to pull out sponges from tight spaces. Because of this, I accumulated toxic compounds produced by the sponge in my body. It doesn't bother me, but it would make you sick if you ate me (which, why would you do that anyway!?).

Every two to three years, I will migrate back to my natal beach, or the beach where I was born, to lay my eggs. Unlike other turtles, like the olive ridley, I prefer to nest on my own rather than in large groups of other turtles. I will lay up to six nests, one every two-weeks, sometime between April and November. Each nest has about

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140 eggs, which will hatch after about two months. Then, the tiny turtles will dart to the ocean while trying to avoid predators like sea birds.



Status and Conservation

Hawksbill sea turtles are classified by IUCN as “Critically Endangered”, a crisis category reserved for species that, among other things, are characterized by having sustained “an observed, estimated, inferred or suspected reduction of at least 80% over the last 10 years or three generations, whichever is the longer.”

Fast Facts

I only live for 50 or less years, in shallow, rocky habitats and coral reefs. I love the tropical and subtropical waters in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. My favourite food is sponges! But I’ll also eat jellyfish, algae, urchins and small crustaceans.

Thank you for your Donation!

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