



## Where and when to see turtles

During May/early June keep a look out for mating pairs of green turtles off the north coast. In Cyprus, for both species nesting occurs from late May until early August and most sandy beaches there will be evidence of tracks and nesting pits from nesting turtles. Nests will hatch during the night from late July until late September. Regular turtle watching excursions are organised at Alagadi Beach (situated 10 miles east of Girne along the north coast road towards Esentepe, see map) .For more information on turtles and to arrange to come and see adults nesting or hatchlings being released. Please come at the beginning of your holiday as places are limited and are given on a first come first served basis. See map for the main nesting sites for marine turtles in Northern Cyprus.



## Beach & Turtle Code

Turtles lay on nearly all of the sandy beaches around the coast of Northern Cyprus so please take care when using any beaches. If you wish to watch turtles nesting, it is best to take part in an organised turtle watching excursion.

At night on the beach please adhere to the following code of conduct to reduce the level of disturbance:

- Always use minimal torch light, turtle watching is best on a moonlit night.
- Avoid approaching turtles until they are well under way with their nest excavation. The earlier in the nesting process, the easier the turtle is disturbed. When the turtle is laying (sitting still after a long period of throwing sand) you can approach her quietly and use minimal torchlight to observe both her and her eggs.
- You should refrain from touching the turtle.
- Bright lights will attract hatchlings away from the sea and increase mortality. If you are on the beach or using a beach hut at night, please avoid using bright lights.
- Do not have bonfires or barbecues on the beach during the main nesting or hatching season (May-October).
- Remember always take your litter home with you.

During the Day:

- Never drive vehicles on the beach.
- Place beach umbrellas close to the sea in the damp sand so as to avoid place the umbrella spike in a turtles nest.
- Always take you rubbish home with you.

All turtles in the Mediterranean are classified as endangered. Historically green turtle were hunted for eating. This practice is now forbidden in most Mediterranean countries and if carried out, it is now on a much smaller scale than it used to be. The main threats in Northern Cyprus to turtles are:

### Nest predation

Nests are predated by feral dogs and foxes. They dig up turtle nests and eat the eggs and hatchlings. Before nest protection was carried out around 30% of nest were lost to dog and fox predation.

### Incidental Capture

Turtles are often accidentally caught by fishermen either in nets or on long lines. If the turtle is unable to reach the surface to breathe it will drown. Every year dead turtles are found washed up on the shores of Northern Cyprus probably as a result of being accidentally caught by fishernen.

## Loss of Habitat

This is a major problem throughout the Mediterranean, with increasing pressures for the touristic development of coastal habitats. Luckily, until recently Northern Cyprus has managed to escape these pressures, however, there are some beaches that have been irreparably damaged but in comparison to many other countries it is minor. In addition to this nearly all of the most important nesting beaches are under official legal protection.

## Contacts

Turtle watching and protection -  
For up to date contact info see  
[www.cyprusturtles.org](http://www.cyprusturtles.org)



# North Cyprus



## Marine TURTLES



# Cyprus Turtles

There are seven species of marine turtle found throughout the world, three of these are found in the Mediterranean Sea. Only the green (*Chelonia mydas*) and loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nest on Mediterranean beaches. The other species found in Mediterranean waters is the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*). The leatherback turtle only feeds in the Mediterranean Sea, nesting on Atlantic Ocean beaches. It is estimated that 10% of the loggerhead and 30% of the green turtles nesting in the Mediterranean nest on the beaches of Northern Cyprus. It is estimated that in the Mediterranean, Northern Cyprus hosts the 3rd and 5th most important nesting beaches for the green turtle in the entire Mediterranean.



On arrival at their nesting grounds female loggerhead turtles will lay on average 2-3 clutches in a season, whereas green turtles will lay between 3-5 clutches. The life expectancy for marine turtles is estimated to be in the range of 60-100 years.

At night a female turtle will come onto the beach to dig her nest. Once she has dug a large pit using all her flippers, she will then dig an egg chamber using her hind flippers. She will then lay approximately 100 ping-pong ball sized eggs. After she has finished laying her eggs, she will cover them with sand and then return to the sea. After the eggs have been incubating in the sand for 50-60 days, the eggs will hatch, and then the hatchlings spend 2-4 days climbing up through the sand to the surface before quickly scampering down the beach to the sea. They have to escape predation by crabs and fish. Predation, especially at sea, is considerable and it is estimated that less than one hatchling in a thousand will survive until adulthood, when the whole process will begin again.



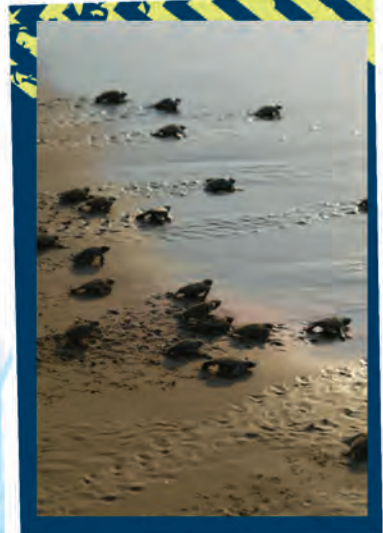
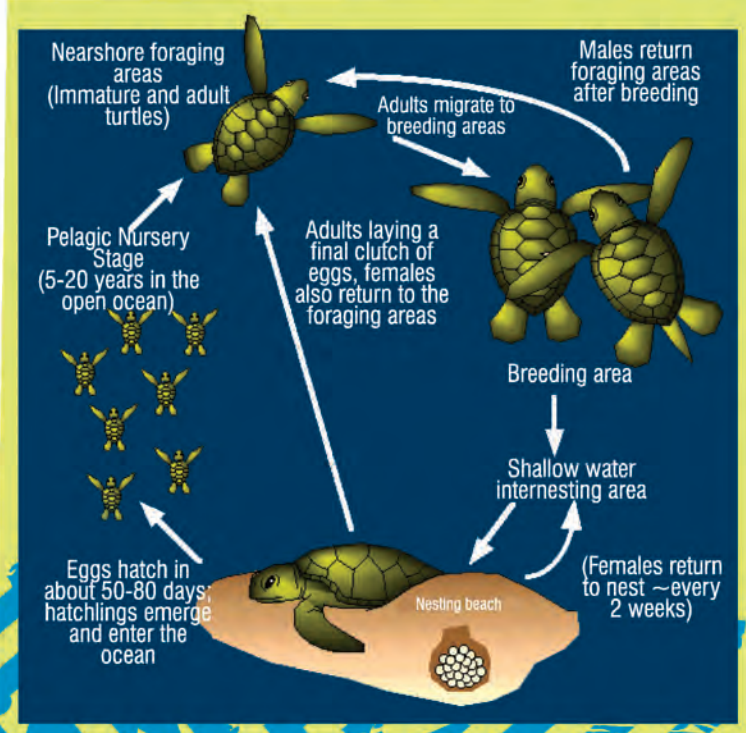
It is thought that marine turtles are 15 - 40 years old when they reach maturity. Female turtles make their migration between foraging areas and nesting beaches every 2-4 years for loggerhead turtles and 3-6 years for green turtles. Research using satellite technology has shown that some turtles remain in the waters surrounding Cyprus, while many others perform long distant migrations to foraging grounds off the coasts of Turkey, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.



## Conservation

In 1992, at the invitation of the Society for the Protection of Turtles in Northern Cyprus (SPOT) a team of volunteer students and staff from the UK began conducting surveys of the nesting beaches of Northern Cyprus. From these early begins, turtle conservation is one of the major conservation success stories in Northern Cyprus. Currently there are now three groups carrying out conservation activities on the beaches of Northern Cyprus. Most conservation activities carried out in Northern Cyprus involve protecting turtle nests. This protection can be protecting the nest where it was laid or in extreme cases it can involve relocating the nest to a safer location. Most relocations are carried out if the eggs are laid too close to the sea, and it is likely that they will be inundated by the sea during their incubation. All nests, whether in situ or relocated are covered with a wire screen to prevent predation by dogs and foxes, the biggest threat to turtle nests in Northern Cyprus.

## A Sea Turtles Life



For more information:  
**Tourism Promotion & Marketing Department**  
 Tel : +90 392 227 8153  
 Fax: +90 392 228 5625

### Tourism Offices Abroad

Tel: +90 212 227 34 90 - 116	Tel: +44 207 631 19 30
Fax: +90 212 227 34 93	Fax: +44 207 462 97 89
<b>Antalya</b>	<b>Berlin</b>
Tel: +90 242 243 39 56 / 57	Tel: +49 308 892 94 84
Fax: +90 242 243 39 58	Fax: +49 308 892 94 85



Text: Asst. Prof. Dr. Wayne J. FULLER