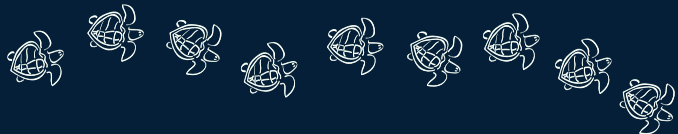




Unfortunately, much of the lighting in urban areas comes from street lights, car park lighting, and commercial lighting. Human safety and the scale of some lighting problems require action by local councils. Write to your council requesting that lights be made turtle-friendly and ask local conservation groups to get involved.



What should be done with hatchlings found wandering away from the ocean?

If hatchlings are seen crawling away from the ocean towards artificial light, they should be collected in a bucket or similar container. Then, as soon as possible, they should be taken to a section of the beach with no artificial light and allowed to walk into the ocean on their own.

In all cases notify your local wildlife agency.

Sea turtle nesting seasons vary around the world. For details on when this occurs in your local area, contact your state government wildlife agency.



For more information about sea turtles contact:

Sea Turtle Foundation Ltd
PO Box 1190, Townsville
QLD 4810
Australia

email: info@seaturtlefoundation.org
web: www.seaturtlefoundation.org



Front page photos: Justin McCaul
Inside page photo: Mark Hallam
Design: Imaginocean Productions



Sea Turtles
and Lights



Many tropical beaches host nesting sea turtles. During nesting seasons, female sea turtles crawl from the ocean to dig nests in the sand and deposit their eggs. About 60 days after eggs are laid hatchlings break from their shells and make their way to the sand surface. Just after dark and all together they erupt from the sand and scramble toward the brightest horizon, which is usually the ocean as it reflects moonlight. Moving quickly from the nest to the ocean is critical for their survival.

The Problem With Lights

On beaches where artificial light is brighter than natural light, hatchlings become confused and will crawl towards this light rather than the ocean. If they do this hatchlings can be eaten by predators, die from exhaustion or dry out in the morning sun.

Artificial lighting also affects nesting females. Brightly lit beaches are avoided as nesting sites, and females trying to return to the ocean can become confused.

You Can Help

Both urban and industrial light can disorient nesting sea turtles and hatchlings. Because light travels great distances the best way to check whether your lighting is disturbing nesting or hatchling sea turtles is to walk the adjacent beach at night and look for light several hundred metres either way. Any light you can see is likely to adversely affect sea turtles.

Minimising light next to nesting beaches can be done simply by lowering, shielding, recessing, redirecting or switching off light sources.

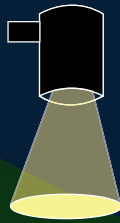
Here are some things to try during the nesting season (generally October–February in Australia) :

- Fit curtains or blinds to beach front windows and keep them closed after dark.



- Keep outside beachfront lights turned off, or to a minimum.

- If lights are needed for safety, fit shrouds and direct the light downwards onto the ground.



Downlight



Globe shielded with opaque material on three sides



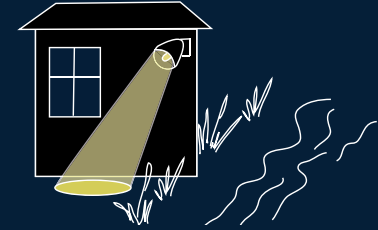
Bulb shielded on three sides

- Use down-lights close to the ground rather than up-lights.

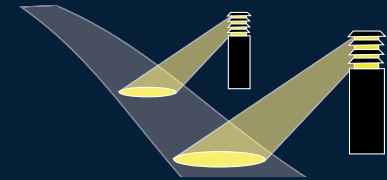
- Decorative lights should remain off.

- Place security lighting on motion-sensitive switches set at minimum duration to keep lights off when not needed.

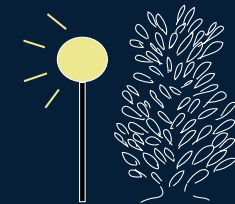
- Rotate adjustable lights away from the beach. They may need additional shielding to prevent reflection from buildings and vegetation.



- On pathways use low profile lighting or low bollards with 180° shields on the beach side.



- Plant vegetation between the light and the beach.



- Industry can fit low pressure sodium lights.

