

Lights out, there are turtles about

MACKAY WHITSUNDAY ISAAC REGION



The majority of nesting and hatchling turtle activity occurs at night, making sea turtles vulnerable to disturbance and disorientation from artificial lights.

In the Mackay Whitsunday and Isaac region, the majority of nesting sea turtles on mainland beaches and inshore islands are Flatback turtles (*Natator depressus*). Green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and Loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) generally nest on offshore islands but occasionally nest on inshore islands and the mainland.

All sandy beaches in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region are considered to be possible turtle nesting sites.

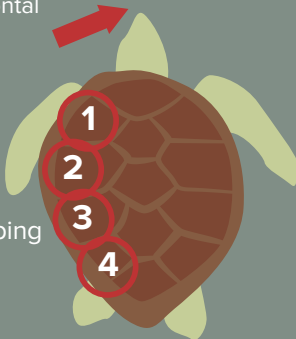
Green Turtle

(*Chelonia mydas*)

1 pair of prefrontal scales

4 pairs of coastal scales

Non-overlapping scales



Cream-white plastron (belly)

High domed carapace (shell)

Light to dark green with dark green mottling

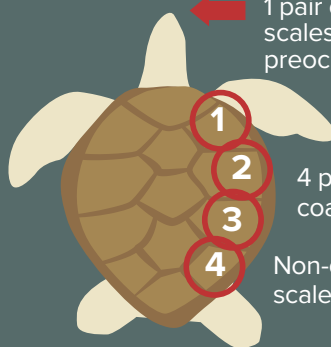
Flatback turtle

(*Natator depressus*)

1 pair of prefrontal scales and preocular scales

4 pairs of coastal scales

Non-overlapping scales



Cream-yellow plastron (belly)

Low domed carapace (shell) with upturned edges

Grey to olive

Female turtles migrate back to the general area of their birth to nest.

Turtles choose their nesting beach while still offshore. Turtles nest every couple of years and usually return to the same beach each time.

The Mackay and District Turtle Watch Association estimates that on average 100 turtles nest in this region every year. Turtles usually nest 3 times in a season, about 2 weeks apart, with Flatback turtles laying around 50 eggs each time, while Green turtles and Loggerhead turtles lay around 120 eggs each time.



At night, hatchlings find their way to the ocean by moving towards the lightest horizon they see. Under natural conditions, this light is over the ocean and hatchlings will quickly travel down the beach to the water.

Near well-lit towns, resorts and camping areas, hatchlings can easily become disoriented. The little hatchlings veer from their natural path and head towards the artificial light.

As dawn approaches, the contrast between artificial and natural light decreases, and hatchlings inland do not know where to go. Many will not make it due to predation, becoming trapped in vegetation or exhaustion.






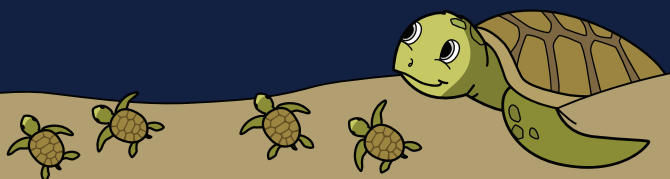
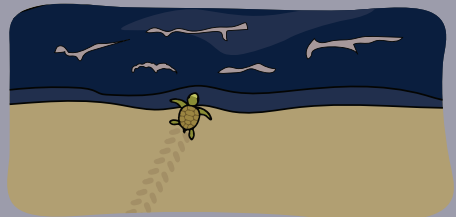
Even hatchlings that have made it to the sea can be lured back to the land by strong coastal lights.

Turtles need dark beaches!






You can help maximise nesting success and hatchling sea turtle survival!

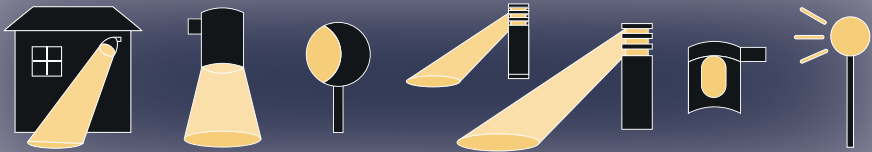
During the nesting season (mid-October to April), after sunset:

-  switch off unnecessary lights
-  close your curtains and blinds
-  when camping, shade lights to reduce the illuminated area and only use a small torch (less than 100 lumens) on the beach






Extra steps (or flipper strokes!)

-  use motion sensor lighting for external lights
-  face lights away from the beach and down to the ground
-  use fully shielded/enclosed light fixture
-  plant vegetation to create a light buffer
-  place security lighting on motion-sensitive switches to keep lights off when not needed.



Further information about local sea turtles in our region

-  mackayturtles.org.au/
-  MackayandDistrict
TurtleWatch
-  @mackay_turtle_watch;
#mackayturtles



Prepared by: Reef Catchments




The coastal priorities project is funded by the Australian Government's Reef Trust and Reef Catchments.

This is based on Mon Repos Conservation Park 'cut the glow' brochure designed by © State of Queensland 2021.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Environment and Science. BP0059 Sept 2021, available online at qld.gov.au/ParkBrochures

For further information on Mon Repos Conservation Park



-  qld.gov.au/MonRepos
-  [qldnationalparks](https://www.facebook.com/qldnationalparks)
-  @QldParks; #QldParks

*Printed on eco-friendly paper to
save energy and resources.*

