

Hawaiian Green Turtle

Nesting

Green turtles are a long-lived, charismatic species that occur throughout the Hawaiian Archipelago. The following nesting information answers some of the most commonly asked questions about green turtles in Hawaii.

Q: Where do green turtles nest?

A: Green turtles worldwide lay their eggs on tropical and subtropical beaches. Like all species of sea turtles, green turtles return to the nesting area where they were hatched to reproduce when they reach adulthood (maturity). In Hawaii, over 90% of green turtle nesting takes place at French Frigate Shoals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Limited nesting also occurs on other islands and atolls of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and in low, but increasing, numbers at some locations in the main Hawaiian Islands.

Q: How many eggs are in a green turtle nest and when do they hatch?

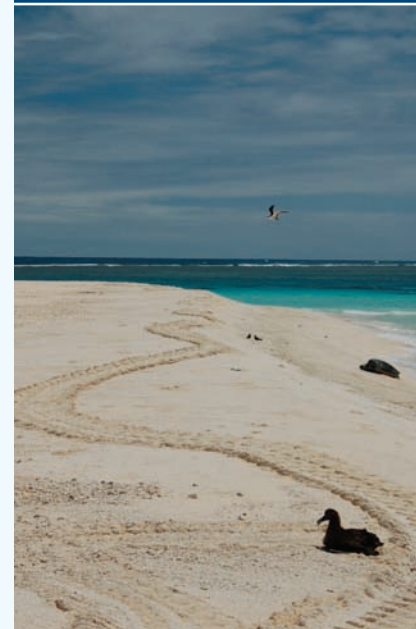
A: One clutch (nest of eggs) laid by a Hawaiian green turtle may contain 60 to 120 eggs, with an average of 100 eggs. Incubation takes approximately 60 days and hatchlings emerge from their nest at night.

Q: How many nests do green turtles lay each nesting season?

A: On average, a female turtle will lay three to five nests in a season and each nest is laid approximately two weeks apart. She will migrate to nest every two to five years.

Q: Why don't we see small, baby turtles in Hawaii?

A: Once hatchlings (baby turtles) enter the ocean, they embark upon an oceanic offshore journey called the 'lost years' that can last up to a decade. No one knows exactly where they go or how they survive during this time. Eventually they return to Hawaii's nearshore reef habitats as small juveniles, about 14 inches (35 cm) in shell length. From that point forward they live, feed, grow, mature and migrate within the Hawaiian Archipelago for the remainder of their life.



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