

## **HARBOR ISLAND SEA TURTLE PROJECT**

### **BASIC FACTS ABOUT SEA TURTLES**

The Loggerhead sea turtle is a threatened species, which is one step down from endangered.

Females lay eggs every 3 years or so, and up to 5 nests per season.

Females are approximately 18-20 years old when they lay their first nest and can live up to 100 years.

The female returns to the beach of her birth to lay her eggs.

The female leaves the ocean at night and spends approximately 2 hours digging a nest, depositing her eggs, covering them and returning to the sea.

The female lays approximately 100 eggs in a nest.

It takes anywhere from 45 to 75 days for the eggs to incubate.

Sex of the hatchlings is determined by the temperature of the sand during the gestation period. The colder sand produces males and the warmer sand, females.

Instinct makes hatchlings scramble toward the brightest light which should be the moonlight on the water.

Approximately 1 out of 1000 hatchlings will survive to adulthood.

Sea turtles excrete salt absorbed in sea water from their eyes, which is why they seem to cry.

Sea turtles are found in semi-tropical and tropical seas throughout the world. Adults of most species inhabit shallow coastal waters. Some species migrate great distances from winter feeding grounds to summer nesting areas.

Sea turtles long, paddle-like flippers are adapted to locomotion in the water. Sea turtles are strong swimmers and divers. To conserve oxygen, their hearts can slow to one beat every nine minutes enabling them to swim or sleep under water. Sea turtles come up to the surface to breath. They can remain underwater for approximately an hour.

They have been on Earth for millions of years with little serious threat to the species ... until recently. Current major threats include development of nesting

beaches, commercial fisheries, and pollution.

Once a male sea turtle hatches and enters the ocean, it will probably not crawl on land again.

Usually you can tell a nest is about to hatch when a depression appears in the sand above the nest. Some hatchlings hatch and begin to move around inside the nest. The movement causes the temperature to rise which makes the other eggs begin to hatch.

Hatchlings are about two inches long and charcoal in color.

Some turtles (and their eggs) carry salmonella so use gloves or wash your hands after handling either.