


# The turtle threat

**Leatherback turtles have been around for 220 million years. But their future is at risk...**

 One animal that lived when dinosaurs walked the Earth and is still around today is the leatherback turtle. The oceans were once home to millions of these giants, but now numbers are only a quarter of what they were 20 years ago.

The biggest threat to turtles is people. Turtles have always been hunted for their meat, skin and shells. But so many more are being killed accidentally – either by drowning in fishing nets, being caught on longlines used for tuna fishing, or from suffocating after swallowing plastic bags, which they mistake for their favourite food, jellyfish. Also, many of the beaches where they lay their eggs are now tourist resorts, and their eggs are stolen by poachers, as well.

## Swimming in safer seas

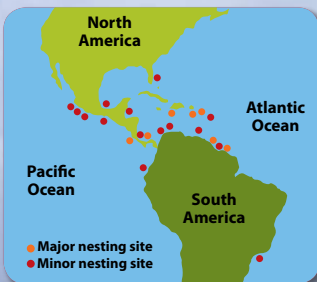
The good news is that leatherback turtles are now protected by law, and a lot of work is being done to help them. Protecting the beaches where they lay their eggs, and teaching people about the risks of longline fishing, and dropping litter near the sea will all make a big difference. Hopefully, with everyone's help, these ancient reptiles will be around for millions of years to come!



**Less beaches for tourism means safer nesting for leatherback turtles**

## Fast turtle facts...

- The leatherback is the world's largest turtle. The biggest ever recorded was found in Wales – it was 256cm long and 916kg!
- They have a pink spot on the top of their heads. Each one is unique, like a fingerprint!
- Turtles cry when on land. Well, in a way... they have a gland in their eye that helps get rid of excess salt by producing tears. Ahh!



**The red and orange dots show the turtles' nesting beaches in North, Central and South America**

Main turtle © Frans Lanting. Hatching turtle WWF-Canon / Roger Leguen.



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## Save the leatherback turtle

Go to one of these websites to find out how you can help protect the turtles...

- [www.turtleprotection.org](http://www.turtleprotection.org)
- [www.wwf.org.uk](http://www.wwf.org.uk)
- [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org)

