

PRESENTS

GREEN SEA TURTLE

Chelonia mydas

The green sea turtle is a hard-shelled species belonging to the Cheloniidae family. The largest species of this family, its name alludes to the shell's color patterns which can include light green to dark, almost black, tones. This sea turtle has played an important role as a food source to many coastal communities worldwide, which has resulted in a drastic decrease in its population. This continues to be a threat as turtle meat and eggs hold cultural relevance in many communities.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia
Pylum: Chordata
Class: Reptilia
Order: Testudines
Family: Cheloniidae
Genus: *Chelonia*
Species: *C. mydas*



Vision: Adapted to shallow habitats where they can identify algae and sea grass, and prey like small invertebrates.

Distribution: Mainly tropical waters, but can be found in subtropical waters as well. This species can migrate long distances.

Diet: Juveniles are omnivores. Adults feed mainly on algae and sea grass but can eat sea worms, snails and jelly fish.

Reproduction: They reach sexual maturity at 15 years of age or when their shell is approximately 77.3 cm.

Predators: At sea, sharks and orcas are their main predator. Raccoons, coyotes, feral dogs, birds and crabs prey on the eggs and hatchlings.

CONSERVATION TIMELINE



1971: An indefinite ban of commercial fishing for marine turtles was established in Mexico.



1975: All marine turtle species were included in CITES.



1990: Mexico bans all capture and commercial activities of sea turtles.



1992: The Intersecretarial Commission for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles was established.



1999: Regulations for sea turtle capture for research purposes is published.



2006: Mexico's Wildlife General Law prohibits all extractive activities related to sea turtles and byproducts.



2007: The NOM-029-PESC-2006 regulates drift nets and fishing hooks to minimize incidental catches of sea turtles.



2010: All sea turtle species in Mexico are included in its protected species list, NOM-059-SEMARNAT- 2010, as endangered.



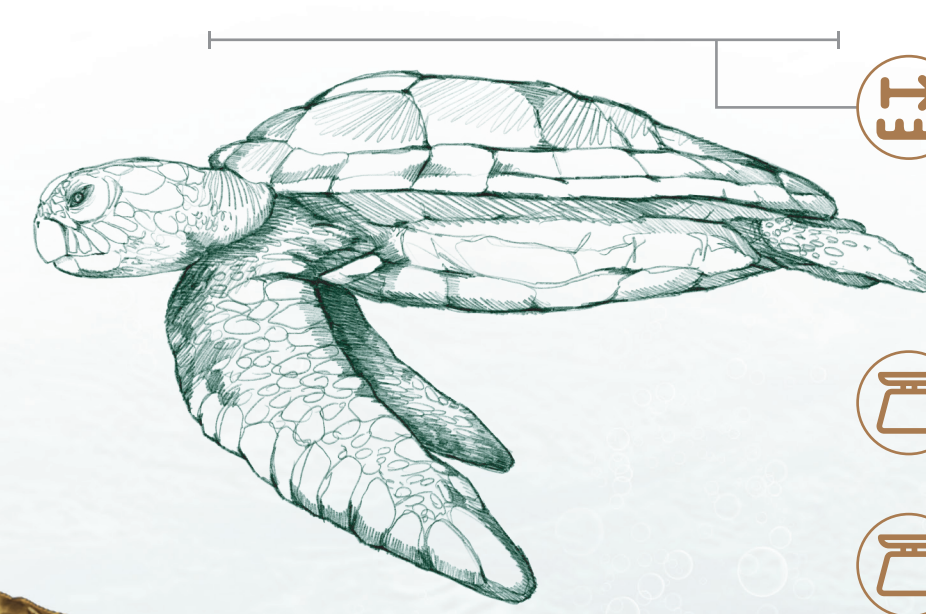
2013: Protection, recovery and management actions are listed in Mexico's NOM-162-SEMARNAT-2012.



2018: The Green Turtle's PACE is published in Mexico and public consultation process to modify NPA regulations in nesting beaches begins.

ANATOMY

Scientists continue debating on whether *Chelonia mydas agassizii* is a subspecies or not, but genetic analysis have yet to confirm this.

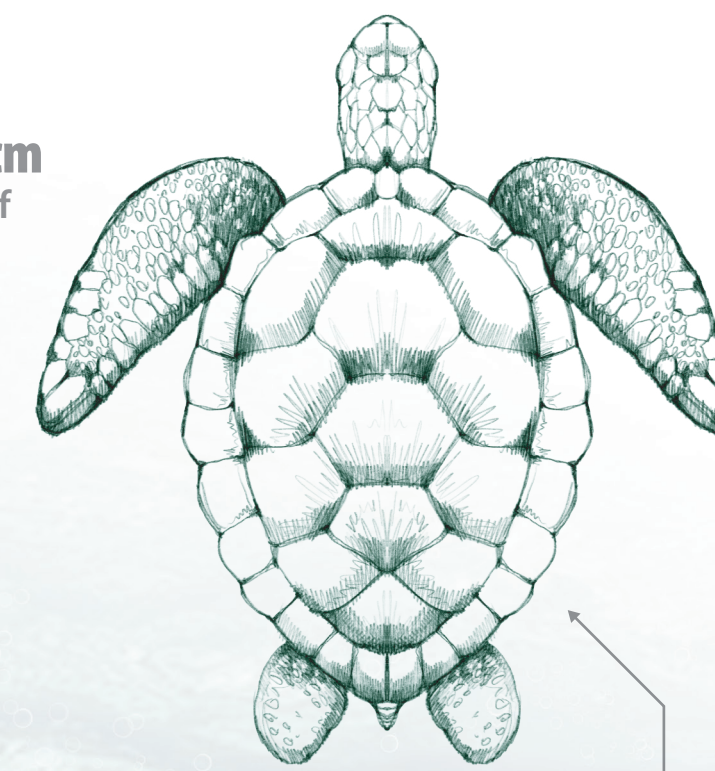


Size:
70.5 - 96 cm
with an average of 77.5 cm.

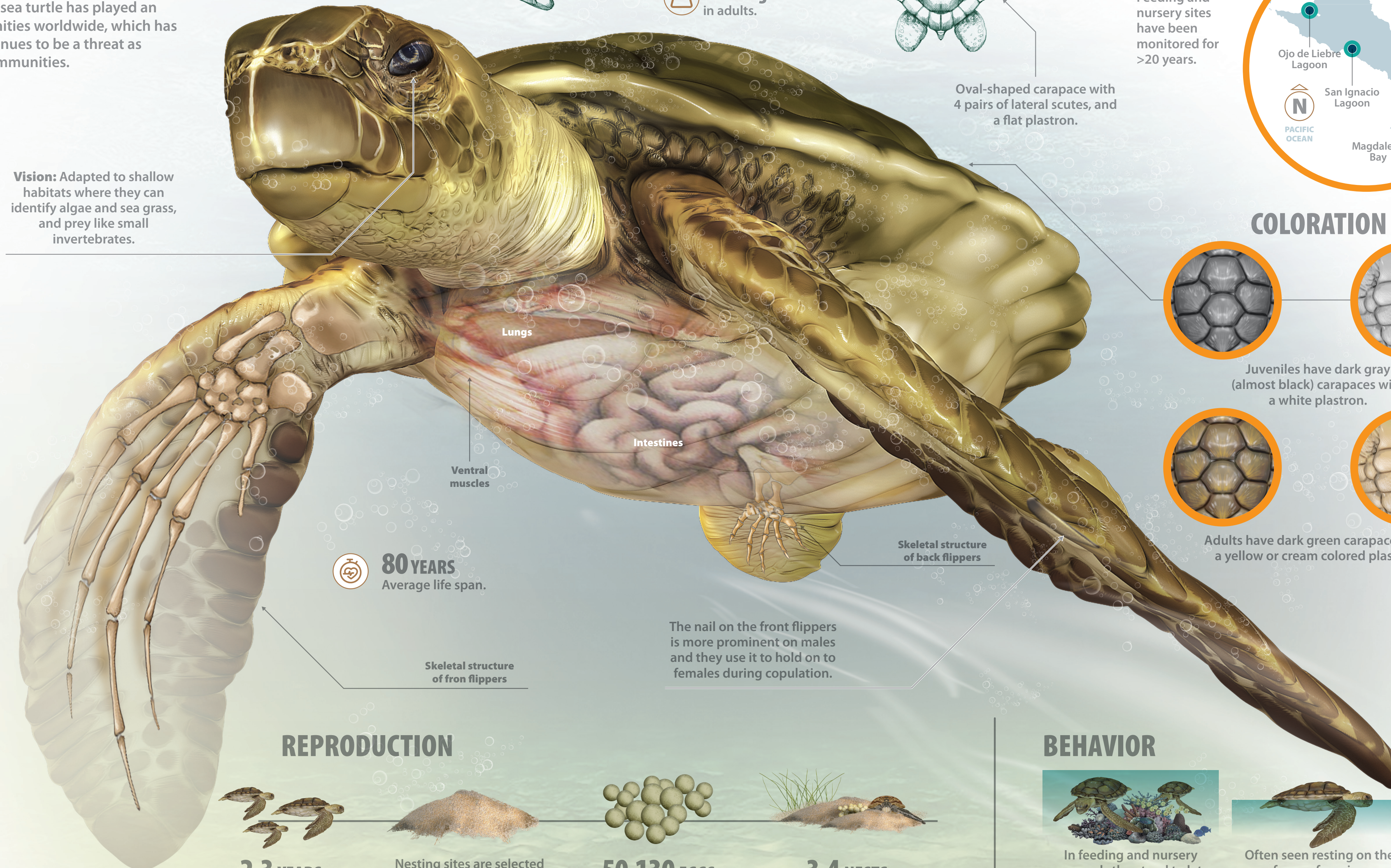
Average weight:
36.4 kg
in juveniles.

126 kg
in adults.

The head is medium in size with **2 prefrontal scales**.



Oval-shaped carapace with 4 pairs of lateral scutes, and a flat plastron.



80 YEARS
Average life span.

The nail on the front flippers is more prominent on males and they use it to hold on to females during copulation.

REPRODUCTION

2-3 YEARS
Time interval in which adults complete a migration between feeding and reproduction sites.

Nesting sites are selected depending on sand texture and beach topography.

50-130 EGGS
can be laid by females in a nest (average of 75).

3-4 NESTS
in a single season every 12 to 15 days.

BEHAVIOR

In feeding and nursery grounds they tend to let currents guide their movements.

Often seen resting on the surface or foraging on algae and sea grass meadows.

DISTRIBUTION

Green turtles prefer tropical waters but they can live in subtropical waters. In Mexico, they can be found in coastal lagoons where they feed and use as nurseries.



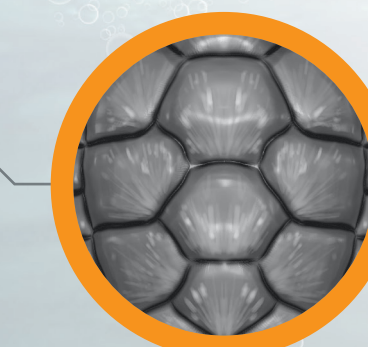
22 BEACHES
where monitoring takes place.

BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

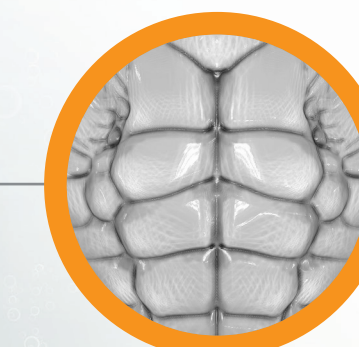
Feeding and nursery sites have been monitored for >20 years.



COLORATION



Juveniles have dark gray (almost black) carapaces with a white plastron.

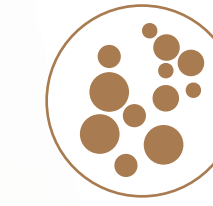


Adults have dark green carapaces with a yellow or cream colored plastron.

THREATS



Poaching is its biggest threat, as meat and eggs are consumed by humans.



Nest destruction, beach deterioration and/or loss as coastal development.



Temperature changes during incubation affect the female:male ratio.

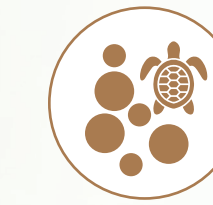


Bycatch and entanglement in fishing nets.

ECOLOGICAL ROLE



Controls algae and sea grass populations.



Eggs are important source of food for terrestrial animals, and juveniles for fish and birds.



Adults transport nutrients between reproduction and feeding grounds.

Credits: Dr. Gustavo Hinojosa Arango, Catedrático CONACYT.

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