

Name _____

Swimming with the Turtles

Imagine swimming through refreshing ocean waves with a graceful prehistoric animal. Many people hope to do just this when they snorkel off the shores of the tropical islands where green sea turtles make their home.

The Hawaiian sea turtle (or “Hono”) is a symbol of peace and good luck to the Hawaiian people. Out of respect for this ancient creature, laws have been enacted to protect them. It is illegal to touch or harass them.

Green sea turtles have smooth shells with shades of black, brown, gray, green, or yellow. The soft bottom shell is yellowish-white. So why are they called green sea turtles? The largest of all hard-shelled sea turtles, green sea turtles feed exclusively on plants, such as seaweed and algae. Scientists believe their diet contributes to their green fat, for which they are named. They are the only herbivorous marine turtle.

Habitats of green sea turtles include nesting beaches, the open ocean, and coastal areas for feeding. Females return to the same beaches where they were born to lay their eggs. Hatchlings swim to offshore areas for feeding for several years. Once they reach a certain age, they return to coastal areas to live as adult sea turtles.

Green sea turtles are not overly fearful of people, although they can swim up to 35 miles per hour to escape perceived danger. They are endangered in many areas of the world due to the harvesting of eggs and adult turtles. Turtles also face the danger of becoming accidentally trapped in gillnets and other fishing gear. They are subject to a disease that causes tumors that interfere with the animals’ swimming, vision, feeding, and ability to escape from predators.

Ongoing research and legislation seek to ensure that green sea turtles will remain part of the tropical ecosystem for many years to come.

Text Questions

- Which context clue from the text helps define the meaning of *herbivorous*?
 - Laws have been enacted to protect green sea turtles.
 - They return to coastal areas to live as adult sea turtles.
 - Green sea turtles feed exclusively on plants.
 - Hatchlings swim to offshore areas for feeding for several years.
- Which pair of words from the text best describes the author’s opinion of green sea turtles?
 - tropical, endangered
 - harass, escape
 - fearful, prehistoric
 - graceful, respected
- What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
 - Treat green sea turtles with respect.
 - Green sea turtles are endangered.
 - It describes details about the turtles’ habitat.
 - It describes the life cycle of a green sea turtle.
- Which of the following is not an example of a threat to green sea turtles?
 - Green sea turtles can swim up to 35 miles per hour to escape perceived danger.
 - People harvest turtle eggs and adult turtles.
 - Green sea turtles can become trapped in gillnets and other fishing gear.
 - Green sea turtles are subject to a disease that causes tumors.
- What can people do to protect sea turtles and other endangered species?