

Straws and Turtles Factsheet

Add your thoughts and questions about this factsheet below.

Like the sharks, turtles have been swimming in our oceans since before the dinosaurs. But turtles have been around even longer, around 100 million years. And like the sharks, the advent of humans has been their greatest challenge.

There are seven different species of marine (or sea) turtles: Flatback Turtle, Green Turtle, Loggerhead Turtle, Olive Ridley, Leatherback, Hawksbill Turtle, and Kemps Ridley. Australia is home to six of these species, with only the Olive Ridley not being a visitor to Australian waters.



Marine turtles face many threats from human behaviour, including habitat loss and degradation, hunting and egg collection, trade in shells and marine debris.

Marine debris could be considered the greatest threat to marine turtles. Some turtles - such as leatherbacks - are prone to mistaking plastic bags for the jellyfish that are their favourite food.

Ingesting plastic waste can have all kinds of impacts on turtles:

- Plastic bags can get caught in their digestive tracts, and the ingested plastic creates a build-up of gas in the turtle's system causing them to float. This means they struggle to dive under water to feed, to avoid predators and it leaves them more vulnerable to being hit by boats.

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- Eating plastic also fills up a turtle with stuff that is not nutritious. This means that although they are full, they are not getting the nourishment they need and they can die from starvation.
- Plastic also contains chemicals that can be harmful to turtle health.

Another problem with plastic waste in our oceans is plastic straws. Straws have been known to get stuck up turtles' noses and interfere with their breathing. They are very painful to remove. Straws are also eaten by turtles who mistake them for food.

Look at the image below. All this plastic came out of one single turtle:

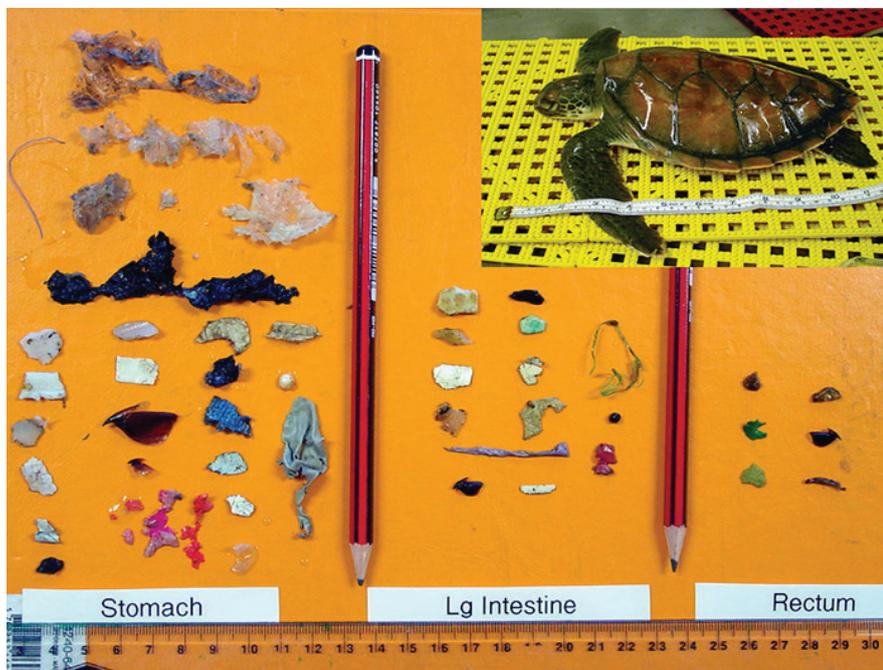


Image source: CSIRO - <https://www.csiro.au/en/News/News-releases/2018/How-much-plastic-does-it-take-to-kill-a-turtle>

Reference list

- http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/marine_turtles/
- <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/marine-species/marine-turtles>
- <http://www.nationalgeographic.com.au/animals/why-life-is-so-tough-for-sea-turtles.aspx>