

Status of leatherback turtles in Myanmar

No report on the leatherback turtle was received from Myanmar. However, leatherback turtles are listed as historically being a rare nesting species on the island and mainland beaches known as the “turtle banks” (Thorbjarnarson et al. 2000). No recent records of leatherback turtle nesting exist (Thorbjarnarson et al. 2000 and U. Cho Hla Aung 2002). In the past turtle eggs were harvested from beaches in the turtle banks and sold - 1.5 million olive ridley turtle eggs and 1.6 million green turtle eggs harvested annually (Maxwell, 1911). No data is available for the sale of leatherback turtle eggs.

Legal protection status for leatherback turtles

Taken from the Department of Fisheries information for the Myanmar National Report (<http://www.ioseaturtles.org/>).

- Sea turtle conservation programme started in Myanmar since 1905 under Burma Fisheries Act (III – 1905). Protection for the turtle hatching areas and turtle included and also trespassed on those areas without official consent was prohibited.
- In 1990, Myanmar Marine Fisheries Law (DoF); no person shall search for and collect any marine products without a License (Section 40). In Myanmar Marine Fisheries Law (1990), mentioned in Chapter 1, Section (2), Subsection (r) there are “Marine Products mean fishes obtained from the sea, aquatic organisms, excrete, scales, bones, skins, plants, non-living. The expression also includes Marine Turtle and eggs,
- In 1993, the Department of Fisheries declared the Notification No. II/93 for “Sea Turtle Conservation”.
- New regulations issued in 2005 by the Ministry of Fisheries prohibit the eating of turtle meat and eggs and require that turtles caught as bycatch in fishing nets be released, and trawlers must be equipped with devices to minimize the risk of turtle capture.

Education and awareness programs

Taken from the Department of Fisheries information for the Myanmar National Report (<http://www.ioseaturtles.org/>).

- DoF has distributed pamphlets to fishermen on the fishing areas, fishing gears and fishing season prohibited by notification and fishery laws.
- In Myanmar turtle conservation and management course was conducted for the first time from (21-12-2001) to (31-12-2001) at Gayet Gyi Conservation Station with the participation of 17 trainees.
- Also in the Inspector Course No. 6/2003 conducted by DoF, Myanmar at Institute of Fishing Technology (IFT) in Yangon sea turtle conservation and management was introduced.
- In Ayeyarwady Division, District and Township Officers and Staff of DoF held workshop on sea turtles to draw public awareness on 7 October 2004.
- Similarly during the fish replenishing ceremony on 7.10.2004 DoF also held talks about Sea Turtle Conservation for the Armed Forces, members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association and students in Patheingyi township, Ayeyarwady Division.
- On (30.12.2004), DoF has talks about Sea Turtle Conservation and Management for 37 number of teachers and students from Patheingyi University in Ayeyarwady Yangon University.

References

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- Maxwell FD (1911) Report on the turtle-banks of the Irrawaddy Division. In 'Reports on inland and sea fisheries in Thongwa, Myaungmya, and Bassein Districts and the turtle-banks of the Irrawaddy Division' pp. 1-57. (Government Printing Office: Rangoon)
- Thorbjarnarson JB, Platt SG, Khaing ST (2000) Sea Turtles in Myanmar: Past and Present. *Marine Turtle Newsletter* **88**, 10-11.