

# Status of leatherback turtles in Somalia

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## 1. The legal protection status for leatherback turtles

### 1.1) Overview

Somaliland - Protected.

Rest - protected under an old conservation act that is not implemented

### 1.2) Management agency responsible for marine turtle conservation in Somalia.

<b>Name of agency:</b>	Fisheries Department	Not Functional
<b>Type of agency:</b>	Ministry	(fisheries)

## 2. Nesting populations

### 2.1) Overview

According to Nini (1937 [cited in Frazier (1982)] green turtle nesting occurred along much of Somalia's Indian Ocean coast. While Márquez (1990) stated that occasional nesting for leatherback turtles occurred in Somalia, there have been no recent records and the species is currently thought not to nest in Somalia.

### 2.2) Seasonality of leatherback turtle nesting

Seasonality of nesting by leatherback turtles in Somalia is unknown

### 2.3) Genetic studies on nesting populations of leatherback turtles

There have been no studies on population genetics of leatherback turtles in Somalia

### 2.4) Biological parameters

No biological parameters for leatherback turtles have been quantified in Somalia.

### 2.5) Pivotal temperature studies

There have been no studies on pivotal temperatures or hatchling sex ratios of leatherback turtles in Somalia

### 2.6) Migration records of nesting leatherback turtles

There have been no recoveries of tags from leatherback turtles, however, turtle tag recoveries from loggerhead turtles tagged while nesting in South Africa have been recorded in fisheries by catch in Somalia (Frazier 1982).

### 2.7) Protection of nesting beaches (e.g. national parks)

There are no marine turtle nesting beaches that are protected. There is a protected zone around the Saardin Islands, and marine turtles are possibly turtles harvested here.

### 2.8) Use of hatcheries to protect marine turtle nests

There are no hatcheries used to protect marine turtle nests in Somalia

### 2.9) Threats to nesting marine turtles

The threats to marine turtles in Somalia are shown in Table 1.

### 2.10) Impacts of coastal development and/or sand mining on leatherback turtle nesting

There are no current impacts of coastal development, including sand mining, on leatherback turtles in Somalia,

Table 1. Summary of threats to nesting marine turtles in Somalia (not necessarily for leatherback turtles).

Threats at this site/area	Current occurrence	Historical occurrence & year of records
Exploitation of nesting females	Yes	Yes
Egg collection	Yes	Yes
Agricultural/urban/tourism development	No	No
Artificial lighting	No	No
Coastal erosion	No	No
Vehicles	No	No
Sand mining	No	No
Natural threats/predation	Storms	-

**2.11) Major existing threats to nesting leatherback turtles**

Marine turtles, including leatherback turtles have been used as an important food source by coastal peoples.

**2.12) Other biological studies on marine turtles**

There have been no other biological studies on marine turtles in Somalia

**2.13) Activities underway to improve the conservation of the nesting populations of marine turtles**

There have been periodic studies and projects such as through IUCN/ORI (Oceanographic Research Institute, Durban, South Africa).

**3. Foraging populations****3.1) Details of leatherback turtle census or tagging results such as tag recovery data**

There have been no leatherback turtle tagging projects in Somalia, nor have any leatherback turtles tagged elsewhere been caught in Somalia.

**3.2) Seasonality of leatherback turtles in coastal and offshore waters**

Unknown

**3.3) Approximate size range of leatherback turtles occurring in your country**

Unknown

**3.4) Information on the diet of leatherback turtles**

No information on the diet of leatherback turtles in Somalia is known

**3.5) Other biological studies conducted on leatherback turtles in foraging areas**

There have been no other biological studies on marine turtles in Somalia

**3.6) Threats to foraging populations of marine turtles in Somalia**

Fisheries bycatch is the main threat to marine turtles, including leatherback turtles in Somalia (Table 2). In particular foreign vessels (from neighbouring nations) fishing in Somalia's waters, artisanal gillnet fishery and the destruction of critical habitat by trawlers (Coffen-Smout 1998).

Table 2. Summary of the threats to foraging leatherback turtles in Somalia

Threats at this site/area	Current occurrence	Historical occurrence & year
Exploitation of live animals at sea	Yes	Yes
Incidental capture in fisheries "Targeted" using shark gill nets	Yes	Yes
Boat strikes	No	No
Plastics (at sea)	No	No
Industrial effluent	No	No
Inshore oil pollution	No	No
Natural threats/predation	None known	
Other (type in):	None known	

## 3.7) Fisheries bycatch of leatherback turtles and the fisheries involved

Type of fishery	Season of operation	Approx number of boats/operators	Impact – low, medium or high
Shark gill netting	All year - especially in March & November	Unknown but several hundred km of nets	Very high on all marine turtle species

3.8) Other activities being undertaken to improve the conservation of leatherback turtle foraging populations

No other activities are currently being undertaken

## 4. References

- Coffen-Smout SS (1998) Shell strength in the cockle *Cerastoderma edule L.* under simulated fishing impacts. *Fisheries Research* **56**, 639-650.
- Frazier JG (1982) Status of sea turtles in the central western Indian Ocean. In 'The Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles'. (Ed. KA Bjorndal) pp. 385-389. (Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington, D.C).
- Márquez MR (1990) Sea turtles of the world. An annotated and illustrated catalogue of sea turtle species known to date. *FAO Fisheries Synopsis* **11**, 81.