ALL ABOUT
Sea Turtles

Common Name: Sea Turtles Scientific Name: Cheloniidae, Dermochelyidae

Gracing our oceans for more than 100 million years

From the shallow beds of the Indian Ocean to the sandy beaches of the Eastern Pacific, the sea turtle takes travelling to another level.

There are seven species of sea turtle in total and they have some great names! You might be familiar with green, leatherback and loggerhead turtles, but there are also; hawksbill, olive ridley, flatback and Kemp's ridley turtles.

They're all unique in their own way, but all are highly aquatic, which means they spend the vast majority of their time in the water. Also, they all share similar characteristics, with streamlined shells and flipper-like forelimbs that help them propel their bodies through the water.

Let's see if we can fish-out some more cool turtle facts...

- Some turtles have the ability to retract their head into their shell to protect themselves from predators, but sea turtles can't! Fortunately, they don't need to worry about this too much, as they spend most of their life underwater.

- They once shared the earth with dinosaurs! That's right. Over 100 million years ago, the likes of Tyrannosaurus Rex was roaming around with sea turtles, although, fortunately, it wasn't known for being a keen swimmer!

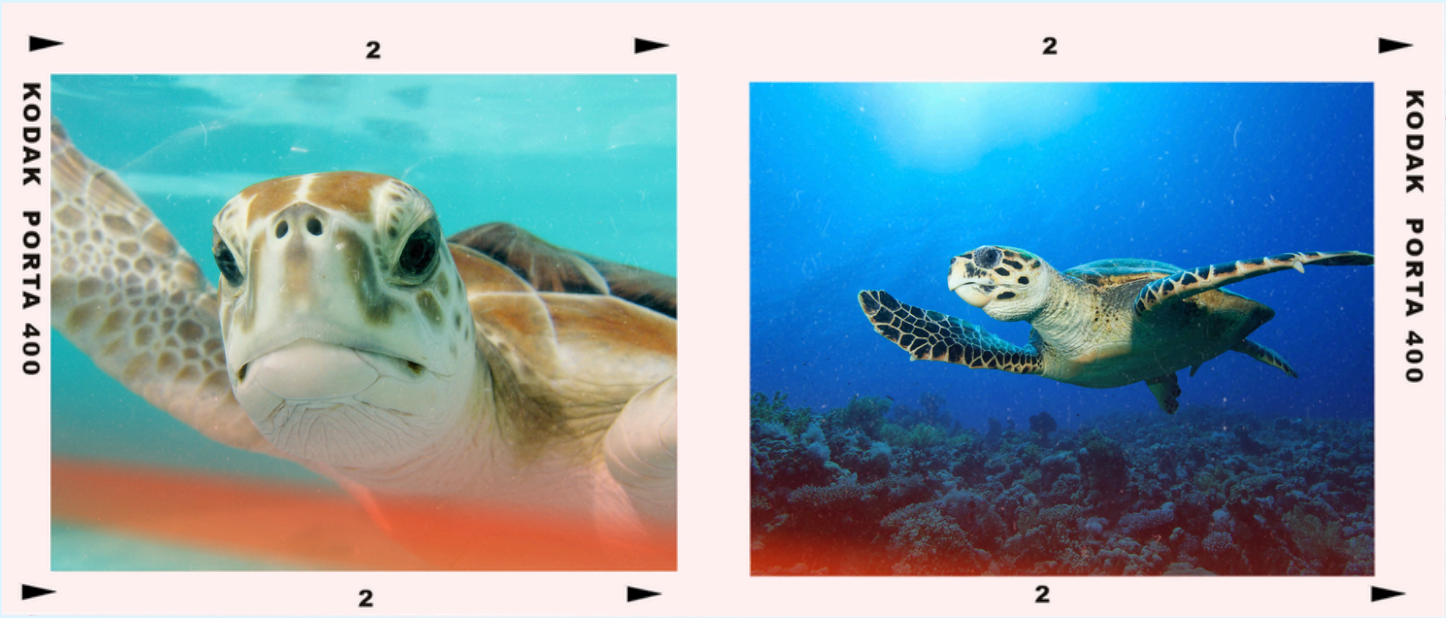
- Sea turtles don't have teeth. Instead, they use their beak-like mouth to grasp their food.

- Whilst we're on the subject of food, diets differ slightly across the seven species. Kemp's ridley turtles will only eat meat and are quite partial to crabs, whereas the loggerhead eats both meat and plant life. However, green turtles are the most unique. Their greenish colour comes from eating mostly seagrass and algae, which means they are what they eat!

- They come in all sizes! The Kemp's ridley is the smallest sea turtle, measuring around 70cm long whereas the leatherback can reach up to 180cm long and be over 10 times heavier.

- When it comes to reproducing, sea turtles are egg layers and females come ashore and lay their eggs in a nest they dig in the sand. This group of eggs is called a clutch and each nest can contain up to 125 eggs.

- Amazingly, females return to the same beach they once hatched on, to lay their own eggs! They are very sensitive to the earth's magnetic fields, which helps them navigate. We guess, there's no place like home!



These truly wonderful creatures aren't without their threats, though. As an example, sea turtles have, for years, been poached by humans and are even accidentally captured in fishing gear. Fortunately, organisations like the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) work to stop the decline of sea turtles and help to secure their environments. They've managed to live amongst dinosaurs and now humans. We wonder who else they'll be sharing the earth with, in 100 million years from now!

TAMAR VETS