



Sea turtles in the Cayman Islands

May to November is Turtle Nesting Season

The state of sea turtles in the Cayman Islands is critical. While sea turtles spend the majority of their lives in the ocean, from May to November female turtles make their way on shore to lay their eggs. On the beach, nesting turtles, turtle nests and baby turtles are extremely vulnerable. **DoE is appealing to beachfront property owners and residents to aid in the recovery of endangered sea turtle populations by following these guidelines:**

- **Reduce beach lighting:** turn off, redirect, or shield any lights that can be seen from the beach (contact us for more information). Lights near the beach can lead baby turtles away from the sea and result in their death. Lighting may also deter nesting females from coming ashore.
- **Remain quiet and stay at a distance** if you see a nesting turtle. Flashlights, loud noises, or getting too close might cause the turtle to abandon her nesting attempt.
- **Remove obstacles** such as beach chairs and recreational equipment from the beach at night.
- **Do not drive on the beach**—this can crush turtle nests. Contact DoE before using beach cleaning machines or heavy equipment.
- **Protect beach vegetation.** Vegetation blocks light from buildings, stabilizes the beach, and encourages turtles to nest.
- **Do not have bonfires** on the beach in the summer—use a designated BBQ pit.
- **Do not rake or cover turtle tracks.** Department of Environment staff use the tracks to find and protect nests.
- **Call DoE if you find a turtle track, nest, or baby turtle.**
- **Remember that sea turtles are protected under Cayman Islands Law** and turtle poachers face steep fines and imprisonment. If you see persons harming or taking sea turtles or their eggs call DoE Enforcement or the police (911).
- **Please contact DoE** if you would like more information or are interested in volunteering for the Marine Turtle Beach Monitoring Programme. Your efforts to help sea turtle conservation are greatly appreciated.

**DoE Turtle Hotline:
938-NEST (938-6378)**

DoE General: 949-8469 Emergencies: 916-4271 or 911 Email: DoE@gov.ky

Identifying Sea Turtle Tracks

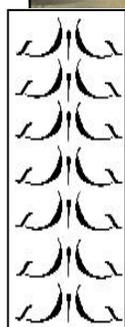
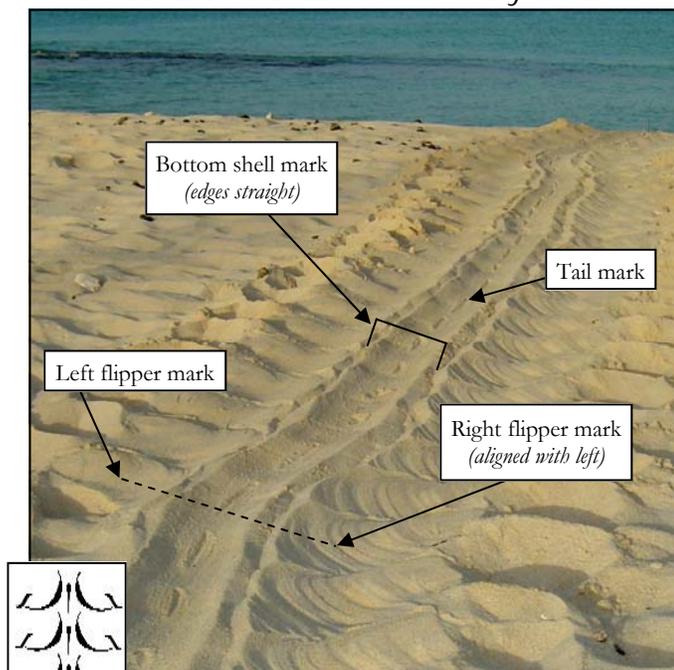
Sea turtles emerge from the sea at night, lay their eggs in the sand, and then return to the water. Turtle tracks are usually about 2 to 3 feet wide and resemble vehicle tire marks. The center of the track is flat from the smooth bottom shell of the turtle and flipper markings are present on either side. Once the turtle has laid her eggs she will cover them with sand before returning to the ocean. Nests are usually near vegetation, though they are sometimes on the open beach. Large holes in the sand or signs of disturbed vegetation such as sand thrown on bushes may suggest nesting. All signs of nesting should be reported to the Department of Environment and nests left undisturbed.

If you find a suspected turtle track or nest please call Department of Environment (DoE).

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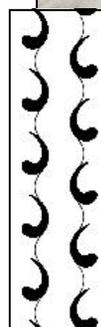
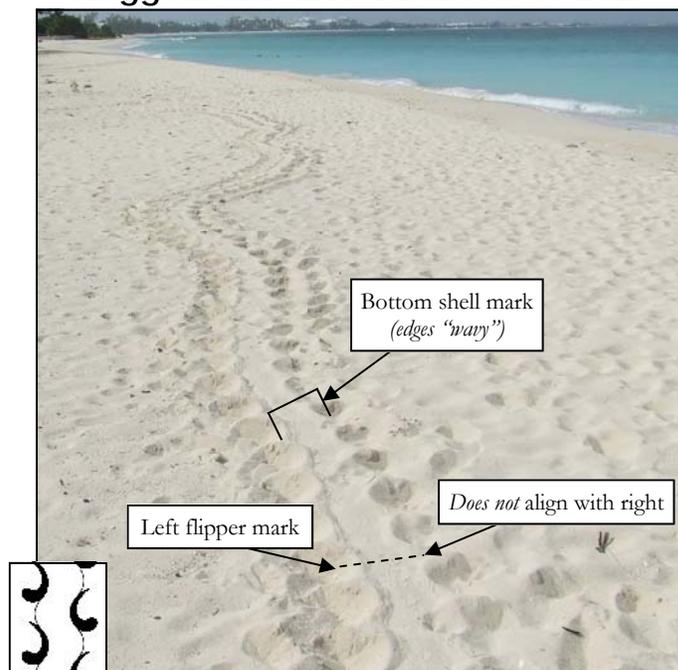
Green turtle track. Photo: Gary Redfern



Green turtle track ID:

- ◆ Approximately **3 ft wide**
- ◆ Right and left flipper marks aligned (turtle moves limbs simultaneously, like swimming breast stroke)
- ◆ Edges of the middle section of the track are straight
- ◆ Nests is a large hole and mound of sand

Loggerhead turtle track. Photo: DoE



Loggerhead track ID:

- ◆ Approximately **2 ft wide**
- ◆ Flipper marks curved and not aligned (turtle moves limbs alternately)
- ◆ Edges of the middle section of the track are wavy
- ◆ Nest is a small area of disturbed sand