

How Can We SAVE THE TURTLES So That Their Ecosystem Can Regenerate?

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Table of Contents:

Introduction to Hawksbill Turtles.....	Page 2
The Problems Facing Sea Turtles.....	Page 3
• The Great Pacific Garbage Patch.....	Page 4
Why Should We Care?.....	Page 5
Sea Turtle Solutions.....	Page 6
Bibliography.....	Page 7
About the Author.....	Page 8

Introducing the Hawksbill Sea Turtle

Hawksbills are named for their narrow, pointed beak. They also have a distinctive pattern of overlapping scales on their shells that form a jagged-look on the edges. Their beautiful and unique shells make them highly-valuable (sold for a high price). If you have seen something labeled as "tortoiseshell" it is from the backs of these creatures.

Hawksbills are found mainly throughout the world's tropical oceans, but mostly in coral reefs. Their diet is mostly sponges that they catch using their narrow pointed beaks, but they also eat sea anemones and jellyfish.

Sea turtles have been living dinosaurs (that are really cute) for the last 100 million years. They are a "fundamental link in marine ecosystems and help maintain the health of coral reefs and seagrass beds". (Source:worldwildlife.org)



Photo shows a baby Hawksbill Sea Turtle

Fun Fact!!! 6 of the 7 most rare sea turtles live in coral reefs

Problems Facing Sea Turtles



As you may have read, the Hawksbill's shell is highly-valuable in markets, and that's not good. Hmm I wonder how they got those shells??

There are five other big garbage patches around the world, but the GPGP is the biggest. That's a BIG problem!!



The image shows the relative size of the GPGP in the Pacific Ocean.

Timeline of the GPGP:

- 1997: Charles Moor discovers the GPGP in the Pacific Ocean while sailing his yacht home to Los Angeles
- 2015: A mega-expedition took place with 30 boats and 32 nets to try and clean up some of it
- 2020: Scientists and the whole world are trying to slow the flow of plastics entering the oceans to reduce the growth of the GPGP

Why Should We Care About Sea Turtles?

There are both environmental and economic reasons for why we should help save the sea turtles.

<u>What Could Happen?</u>	<u>Impact to Us</u>
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No turtle eggs to provide nutrients to dune plants	Erosion/ beaches can wash away
No turtles to eat jellyfish	More jellyfish stings and problems to fisheries
No/less sea turtles seen in oceans	Less tourism in many countries where there are currently sea turtles



Sea Turtle Solutions

There are many organizations focused on helping to make a difference for these beautiful animals and their ecosystems. If we keep on these mega expeditions, then we may clean up the patch. But then again, it's BIG! So, there needs to be more that we can do to help keep Sea Turtles healthy and strong.

Ways to Help Sea Turtles and Their Ecosystems:

- Don't throw trash that could tangle or be eaten by turtles in the ocean or on the beach
- If you live near an ocean, help with beach clean-ups
- Use reusable water bottles and shopping bags to reduce plastic
- Choose to buy seafood that has been caught in turtle-friendly ways
- Donate to Sea Turtle Conservation organizations
 - Sea Turtle Conservancy: www.conserveturtles.org
 - See Turtles: www.seeturtles.org
 - Turtle Foundation: www.turtle_foundation.org



Photo shows a Sea Turtle who thought a bag was food.

Reusable water bottle

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About The Author



Leo H. Kowalyk is 9 years old and LOVES video games. He also likes football and plays for the Stallions. Some of his friends include Nico, Easton, Alex, and Naga. He has a little sister named Zoey. He lives in Northville, Michigan, but was born in Ohio.