



The Leatherback Turtle: Biology and Conservation

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Weighing as much as 2,000 pounds and reaching lengths of over seven feet, leatherback turtles are the world's largest reptile. These unusual sea turtles have a thick, pliable shell that helps them to withstand great depths—they can swim more than one thousand meters below the surface in search of food. And what food source sustains these goliaths? Their diet consists almost exclusively of jellyfish, a meal they crisscross the oceans to find.

Leatherbacks have been declining in recent decades, and some predict they will be gone by the end of this century. Why? Because of two primary factors: human redevelopment of nesting beaches and commercial fishing. There are only twenty-nine index beaches in the world where these turtles nest, and there is immense pressure to develop most of them into homes or resorts. At the same time, longline and gill net fisheries continue to overwhelm waters frequented by leatherbacks.

In *The Leatherback Turtle*, James R. Spotila and Pilar Santidrián Tomillo bring together the world's leading experts to produce a volume that reveals the biology of the leatherback while putting a spotlight on the conservation problems and solutions related to the species. The book leaves us with options: embark on the conservation strategy laid out within its pages and save one of nature's most splendid creations, or watch yet another magnificent species disappear.

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