

Mon Repos Conservation Park
Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia



Cut the Glow

to help turtles go



Marine turtles are in trouble,
they need our help to survive.

Lights and turtles

Marine turtles can appear to reproduce abundantly, as female turtles can lay hundreds of eggs over one nesting season. But turtles grow slowly, take decades to reach sexual maturity, and have on average a four year break between breeding seasons. Hatchlings have a low chance of survival with only about 1 in 1000 reaching maturity.

All these factors make turtles vulnerable to human disturbance which can reduce the number of hatchlings that survive to maturity and decrease turtle populations. Artificial light is a disturbance that interferes with the natural habits and instincts of turtles. You can make a difference by cutting the glow of lights affecting beaches in your local area.

Artificial lights

The majority of both nesting and hatchling turtle activity occurs at night. Disturbances and danger from predators, both on land and at sea, is lowest under the cover of darkness. This makes turtles vulnerable to disturbance and disorientation from artificial lights.

Artificial light disturbance can be from a single light directly opposite a nesting beach or from the collective glow of lights from a coastal community.

Creatures of habit

Female turtles migrate back to the general area of their birth to nest. Turtles choose their nesting beach while still offshore, before coming on land to lay their eggs. They usually remain loyal to that selected beach every nesting year.

Bright lights and the glow from coastal communities may make turtles search for a darker beach. This can be a problem, as not all beaches are created equal! Some beaches are open to the elements with erosion affecting nests, some are not good incubators for turtle eggs, while others are rockier, which makes it harder for turtles to dig their nest and causes them to waste valuable energy with each attempt.

Where's the horizon?

At night, hatchlings find their way from their nest on the beach to the sea by moving towards the lightest horizon they see. Under natural conditions, this light is over the ocean and hatchlings will quickly travel down the beach to the water.

Near towns, resorts and camping areas, artificial lights can affect a turtle's ability to see the natural horizon. Hatchlings can easily become disoriented, veer from their natural path and head towards the artificial light.

Even hatchlings that have made it to the sea can be lured back to the land by strong coastal lights.

As dawn approaches, the contrast between artificial and natural light decreases, and hatchlings who have been attracted inland do not know where to go. Many will not make it—becoming trapped in vegetation or exhausted from wasting energy during their wanderings. Hatchlings caught on shore may overheat and die or become the next meal of a hungry bird.

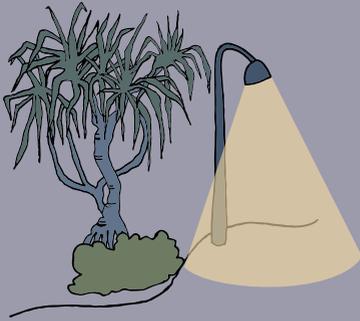


You can make a difference



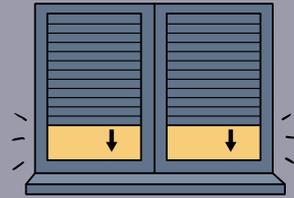
Turtles need dark beaches! They can't change their behaviour towards light, so it's up to us to help maximise nesting success and hatchling survival.

During the breeding season (mid-October to April)—whether you are a resident, visitor or business—you can help cut the glow of lights affecting beaches in your local area.



From 7.30pm:

- switch off unnecessary lights
- close your curtains and blinds
- use motion sensor lights for external lights
- position your lights so they face away from the beach
- plant vegetation to create a light buffer
- when camping, shade lights to reduce the illuminated area
- if necessary, only use a small torch (less than 100 lumens) on the beach.



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Further information



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