

# Sea Turtles *through the Lens*

Any person who has encountered a sea turtle in the wild or at a rescue center can tell you just how moving such an encounter can be. These captivating creatures have survived millions of years on Earth but are now widely threatened, struggling for survival against human-induced threats. Their story has evoked many powerful narrative and visual works of art in recent years.

The following images represent that body of craftsmanship, capturing—through the camera lens and through personal accounts of the photographic experience—the unique character of each of the seven species of sea turtle.



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## ▲ Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

*“Just weeks before my book Ocean Duets went to press in 2006, I was finally able to photograph my turtle pair during an assignment in Tahiti. There, the Le Méridien Bora Bora Resort encompasses a large open lagoon where the hotel staff cares for immature turtles before releasing them into the wild. When these two young turtles swam into my camera frame, it made for a very happy ending to my turtle quest.”* —Michele Benoy-Westmorland





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### ▲ Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*)

*"Each year, to help the Kemp's ridley turtle population that nests along the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. National Park Service incubates the turtles' eggs laid on Padre Island National Seashore in Texas and later releases the hatchlings into the Gulf. In July 2005, I was at the Texas seashore photographing for a National Geographic story about the coastline of the United States (July 2006) and stayed longer just to photograph this wonderful event."* —Tyrone Turner

### ➤ Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

*"In most places on Earth, it is rare to see a leatherback nest in broad daylight. On Grande Rivière beach on Trinidad's north coast, however, there are so many nesting turtles that they can be seen nearly every morning during the nesting season. To be face to face with a 1,500-pound turtle is a moving and truly primordial experience. This photograph, taken one morning in May 2007, hopes to capture that feeling and show a perspective that few people ever see."*

—Brian J. Hutchinson



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➤ **Flatback**  
(*Natator depressus*)

*“Numerous birds of prey such as white-bellied sea eagles and brahminy kites soar above the nesting beach at Bare Sand Island in the Northern Territory of Australia in search of hatchling turtles. This little flatback hatchling was lucky to escape the predators on its journey down the beach as we chanced upon it during our turtle research in August 2004.”*

—Andrea Whiting



© ANDREA WHITING



◀ **Loggerhead**  
(*Caretta caretta*)

*“Sea turtles are most often seen by humans not in the turtles’ natural habitats, but in rescue facilities, such as this Projeto TAMAR visitor center in Praia de Forte in Bahia, Brazil. Turtles are brought here after being rescued from fishing gear injuries, ingestion of debris, or other threats. At the TAMAR visitor centers, however, only turtles raised in captivity are exposed to the public for environmental education purposes. This photograph, taken with the lens half submerged, portrays one of the most important aspects of such facilities: the opportunity for visitors to make an emotional connection to sea turtles as they learn about conservation.”*

—Enrico Marcovaldi

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## ◀ Olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

*"In September 1995, while on assignment for National Geographic to document the incredible synchronized mass nesting of olive ridley turtles at Costa Rica's Ostional Wildlife Refuge, I witnessed tens—perhaps hundreds—of thousands of turtles sweeping onto the shore to bury their eggs in the sand. This event, known as an arribada, which is Spanish for "arrival," occurs each month on only nine beaches around the world and exclusively with olive ridleys."* —Steve Winter

## ∨ Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricate*)

*"Swimming along a wall in waters near Indonesia's Komodo National Park, I saw these two hawksbill turtles move toward each other, then take positions on the reef wall. They touched noses, inspected each other, and then left, swimming in opposite directions."* —Norbert Wu

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