

SEA TURTLE HATCHLINGS BLINDED BY THE LIGHT



FLATBACK HATCHLING



FLATBACK
HATCHLING TRACKS

Hatchling sea turtles are thought to find the ocean using a number of different methods. These include :

- * crawling towards the lightest part of the horizon
- * crawling away from dark silhouettes (i.e. dunes and vegetation)
- * crawling down a slope,
- * crawling towards the sound or vibrations of the waves.

The most important of these is thought to be orientation towards light.

Sea turtles see 'white' light in the violet, blue, green end of the light spectrum (such as fluorescent light). They do not see yellow, orange or red light well.

If there is 'white' light visible onshore or offshore when hatchlings emerge from the sand, the hatchlings will often move towards the light instead of crawling straight down the beach towards the water. The consequences of this misorientation can include the following:

- * Sometimes the hatchlings either do not make it to the ocean at all or it takes a lot longer than it should do for them to get there. These misoriented hatchlings may end up dying in the dunes behind the beach or in built up areas.
- * The longer they spend on the beach the greater their chance of being eaten by crabs or birds.
- * Hatchlings that have spent time wandering around the beach will have less energy stores left to sustain them as they swim offshore to their nursery areas.
- * Hatchlings will climb back out of the water and crawl towards a light on the shore. Sometimes they will not make it back into the water at all.
- * Hatchlings in the water will sometimes gather around lights offshore (boats and platforms). When they concentrate around a light source in this way it makes it easier for sharks, fish and birds to capture and eat them.

