



ANCIENT MARINERS

*From the ocean's distant depths,
the ancient mariners return...*



Mon Repos supports the largest concentration of nesting marine turtles on the Eastern Australian mainland and is the most significant Loggerhead turtle nesting population in the South Pacific Ocean.



Turtles swimming at Lady Musgrave Island

Four types of turtle - **loggerhead**, **green**, **flatback** and **leatherback** - have been known to nest here, but it's predominantly the loggerhead that lays its eggs here. The **nesting season** runs from early November through to the end of March. From mid-January to March, the young begin to emerge and make their way to the ocean.

Dr Col Limpus is the Principal Conservation Officer with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and one of the world's leading experts on marine turtles. In 1968, Dr Limpus began a quest to follow the loggerhead turtles during their lifetime. Over almost a decade, a group of volunteers helped him tag the shells of 130,000 baby loggerheads. In 2005, the first of those hatchlings, now adults, returned to Mon Repos Beach to breed and more are expected to arrive.



Mon Repos visitor information centre



Baby Turtle hatching from its egg

Loggerhead turtles are **endangered** for many reasons and Mon Repos is crucial to their survival. Laying turtles need to nest in safe areas above the high tide line. If the high tide covers the nest, the young will drown. This is why rangers **relocate** any clutches laid too low on the beach within 2 hours of being laid, to a safer nesting site. It's also a way of keeping track of how many eggs are laid, and how many actually hatch.



Bundaberg Region Tourism

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To lay their eggs the turtles have to crawl all the way up the beach to a spot above the high tide line. **Digging out the nest** with their back flippers takes quite some time and spectators have to remain still until the turtle settles into her egg laying. At this stage the turtle will accept people watching her with minimal lights and movement. The turtle then covers the nest with sand to conceal it from predators. Foxes and other animals pose a threat as they will smell out and dig up the nests and dingoes and goannas will also raid them.



Visitors to Mon Repos experience a turtle laying



Above : Relocation of turtle eggs.



The journey begins!

Hatching turtles are temporarily gathered into a small plastic cage while visitors are present to ensure they don't get underfoot. When they have all emerged from the nest, they are then released. When turtles hatch, they have a natural instinct to head towards the lowest natural light, which would normally be the horizon. Artificial lights all distract them so Mon Repos beach is closed between 6pm and 6am during turtle season and local lighting is kept to a minimum.

Once they hit the water, the hatchlings swim non-stop for several days to reach the ocean currents. Only **1 in 1000** lives long enough to breed. This is why the work at Mon Repos is so important.

For more information about the turtle experience at Mon Repos, call the Mon Repos Office of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, 07 4159 1652.

To view the turtles in season at Mon Repos and experience this miracle for yourself, you must make a **booking** at any of the Bundaberg Region Visitor Information Centres or call them on 07 4153 8888.

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