

Two species of sea turtles nest on Denis Island: the **Hawksbill Turtle** (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and the **Green Turtle** (*Chelonia mydas*).



Hawksbill Turtle



Green Turtle



Hawksbill Turtle



Green Turtle

Denis hosts one of the three largest nesting populations of Green Turtles remaining in the inner islands of Seychelles. It appears that the large sea grass beds surrounding the island are important foraging areas for this species, and the undisturbed beaches provide plenty of opportunity for females to come on land to nest.

## Turtle Sightings



The turtles do not only come to Denis Island to nest, the surrounding sea also serves as an important foraging ground for immature turtles of both species. The turtles come very close to shore, particularly along the east coast in the vicinity of **Belle Etoile**. When snorkeling at Belle Etoile, a turtle sighting is highly likely, but a snorkeling trip at House Reef just in front of the hotel is also often rewarded with a turtle sighting.

Denis is also known for its beautiful dive sites inhabited by both species of turtle. Hotel guests who snorkel and dive can become involved in our studies of the in-water turtle populations by entering their sightings on our research field form. Guests are also always welcome to join the conservation team with their daily turtle patrol on the beach, or with the translocation of turtle eggs in case they are laid too close to the sea. And even for guests who do not like to stick their head under the water it is easy to spot the turtles, as they often poke their head above the water to breathe. It is very likely to spot a turtle even if you are strolling just on the beach!

## Nesting Seasons



It is possible for guests to see turtles all year round. The young foraging turtles are present all throughout the year.

The nesting season for **Green turtle** is from ca. **May until September** but they do nest in lower numbers year-round.

The **Hawksbill** nesting season is more confined, between ca. **October and February**

The newborn turtles (ca. 120 per nest) hatch two months after the eggs are laid, so even when the actual nesting season has ended, there's still a chance to see the little hatchlings coming out. The hatchlings usually come out all at once, between sunset and early morning. When a nest comes close to its due date, it is checked daily by our conservation team for signs of hatching. As there are no non-native predators the team does not need to interfere by digging out nests before they hatch, so all nests come out naturally. If a nest has come out, the team does dig out the pit to check for un-hatched eggs and turtles that might be stuck under roots and need some help to emerge. Any little turtle found by the conservation team is shown to the hotel guests, so that they can have a closer look, take photos and afterwards release them on the beach.



Releasing baby turtles by the sea is an unforgettable moment!

## Join Us

Denis Island's conservation team takes part in the national turtle monitoring program (Turtle Action Group of Seychelles). Our team conducts a turtle track patrol every morning by walking the entire 6km-long beach to record all tracks of nesting turtles. Guests are very much welcome to join in! Not all turtle emergences do result in a nest, as the females are very picky and easily disturbed. If the turtle has in fact nested, we put up a marker (a coconut on a pole) informing guests of the species, the date of lay, the estimated date of emergence, and the approximate number of eggs. This way we all can keep an eye out for the little turtles to hatch!

## How many turtles have hatched on Denis?

In the 2015-16 hawksbill breeding season we had **151 Hawksbill turtle emergences** of which 80 were nests (in total ca 10,000 eggs), and over the whole year 2015 we had **278 Green turtle emergences** of which 123 were nests (ca 15,000 eggs).

## Interesting Facts



Worldwide, the Hawksbill Turtle is more endangered than the Green Turtle. The green turtle however, is very rare in the inner islands of Seychelles due to over-exploitation for meat in the past.



Green turtles are often shy, whilst the hawksbill turtles are often very inquisitive and approachable.



The average life span of turtles is between 80-100 years.



Green turtles are herbivorous and feed on algae, sea-grasses, and seaweed.



Hawksbills are carnivorous and feed primarily on sponges, anemones, squid and shrimp



Green turtles nest at night and the Hawksbill turtles during the day



Our **conservation team** takes measurements of nesting turtles, tag their flippers with a metal tag that is marked with a unique code. This enables them and other conservationists working elsewhere – to identify the turtle in future.



The sex of the baby turtles is determined by the temperature of the sand. Average nest temperatures **above 30 C result in mostly females** and lower **temperatures 24-28 C result in males**.

