

# Green turtles return to Malaysia but future bleak

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Residents carry an endangered green turtle to the shore near Puerto Princesa city in the western Palawan island of the Philippines in 2007. Green turtles are returning to Malaysia in their hundreds after being nearly wiped out, but experts warned Thursday that the species is still headed for oblivion if habitat loss is not stopped.

Green turtles are returning to Malaysia in their hundreds after being nearly wiped out, but experts warned Thursday that the species is still headed for oblivion if habitat loss is not stopped.

Thousands of turtles used to land every year on Malaysian beaches, but their numbers plummeted in the 1980s due to rampant coastal development and the plundering of eggs from their sandy nests.

However, landings have increased in the past few years in the eastern

resort strip of Cherating, and some 350 -- mostly green turtles but also some hawksbills -- now arrive there each year, officials said.

Mohamad Mat Saman, fisheries department director in central Pahang state, said that initiatives such as new hatcheries and efforts to promote conservation had led to the improvement.

"This year up until June we had 200 turtles coming to lay their eggs," he told AFP.

"About 70 percent of them had previously landed in Cherating and we believe others were born here. All turtles which land are tagged."

"We received support from the locals and fishermen who collect [turtle eggs](#) and hand them to the sanctuary," he said.

Mohamad said that authorities have proposed introducing a new law to ban turtle egg consumption in Pahang state by the end of this year.

Turtle nesting sites are dotted along peninsular Malaysia's east coast, but the leatherbacks which were once common have now virtually disappeared.

Elizabeth John from [conservation](#) group Traffic said that while some turtle populations now appear stable, their numbers have dropped dramatically since the 1970s.

"[Habitat loss](#) is a major threat to green turtles and all other marine turtles that nest on Malaysian beaches. Infrastructure development along the coast near key nesting sites has impacted populations," she said.

"The local trade and consumption of turtle eggs is another threat to green turtles," she added.

John said green turtles are facing "the double whammy of losing their homes and their young", much as leatherback turtles did during the past few decades.

"It's heartening to see green turtles still returning to nest on Malaysian shores, but if we fail to address the threats that face them, we will be pushing them go down the same path towards destruction," she said.

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