

Movement patterns of endangered turtle vary from Pacific to Atlantic

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This is a photograph of an Eastern Pacific leatherback turtle. Credit: George L. Shillinger

The movement patterns of critically endangered leatherback turtles vary greatly depending on whether the animals live in the North Atlantic or the Eastern Pacific, with implications for feeding behavior and population recovery, according to research published May 16 in the open access journal *PLoS ONE*.

The authors, led by Helen Bailey of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, found that turtles in the Atlantic had two travel modes, low and high speed, associated with foraging and transit, respectively. The Pacific turtles, on the other hand, only had one mode of travel at speeds that indicated transit rather than foraging.

The researchers write that these results suggest that the Pacific turtles rarely achieve high foraging success and therefore must spend longer periods of time searching for prey, which may hinder their [population recovery](#) relative to turtles in the Atlantic.

More information: Bailey H, Fossette S, Bograd SJ, Shillinger GL, Swithenbank AM, et al. (2012) Movement Patterns for a Critically Endangered Species, the Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Linked to Foraging Success and Population Status. PLoS ONE 7(5): e36401. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0036401](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0036401)

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