

Endangered Nicaragua turtles lay eggs under army guard

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A basket with turtle eggs in a small stall in a market in Managua, Nicaragua on March 18, 2013

Some 2,500 endangered sea turtles have made their annual descent on Nicaragua's Pacific coast to nest, protected by soldiers deployed to stop locals from stealing their eggs, the army said Monday.

The first 1,400 Olive Ridley turtles arrived to nest Thursday at the

Chacocente Wildlife Refuge on the Central American country's southern coast, regional military commander Jose Larios told the Nuevo Diario newspaper.

They were followed by hundreds more on Friday and Saturday, said Larios, whose troops are guarding a 1,500-meter (one-mile) stretch of beach where the turtles lay their eggs.

Some 120,000 [sea turtles](#) of several species lay their eggs each year on the beaches of Chacocente and the nearby La Flor refuge.

The [army](#) has been deployed to protect them since 1992, fending off poachers who sell or eat the eggs.

Turtle eggs fetch \$1 a dozen for local poachers, but a plate of three costs about \$12 in restaurants that sell them as a prized delicacy, the government's chief environmental adviser Jaime Incer told AFP.

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