

# Eggs from endangered sea turtle stolen from Thai beach

January 6 2020, by Busaba Sivasomboon

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A community in southern Thailand has offered a reward for catching whoever stole dozens of unhatched eggs of an endangered turtle species.

The Pacific Leatherback turtle eggs were stolen before dawn Sunday from a [beach](#) in the southern province of Phang-nga, said Pratom Rassamee, head of the provincial Marine and Coastal Resources office.

"This theft is a grave incident for both marine biologists like me and local residents near the beach," said Thon Thamrongnawasawat, one of Thailand's top marine biologists. "We believe around 50 or more precious eggs are gone."

Outraged [local residents](#) donated 50,000 baht (\$1,660) for a reward to catch the thieves, and the sum was matched by provincial authorities, bringing the total to 100,000 baht (\$3,320).

The eggs are protected by law, and stealing or possessing them is punishable by a [prison term](#) of three to 15 years and a fine of 300,000 to 1.5 million baht (\$9,950-\$49,760).

"Police are hunting those thieves down," Pratom said by phone. "The animal is loved by people living around here."

He said footage from [security cameras](#) along the road might offer some clues to the thieves' identity.

The Pacific Leatherback is the world's largest sea turtle but is also critically endangered, and its nests had not been seen in Thailand for five years until January 2019. They are disappearing because of attacks by predators, excessive fishing, egg poaching by humans for food and increasingly unsuitable natural environments.

"That's why so many people are upset," Pratom said. "I hope police can bring those thieves to justice. They have to know that those turtle [eggs](#) are not food, and they mean a lot both Thailand and the world."

The area around Thai Muang Beach, where the nest was discovered, has long been known as a egg-laying area and hosts a turtle sanctuary run by the government's Phang-nga Coastal Fisheries Research and Development Center.

The regional national park office offers a reward of up to 20,000 baht (\$660) for anyone discovering a new turtle nest on the beaches of Phang-nga and neighboring Phuket in order to facilitate their protection.

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