

Indonesian baby sea turtles make a break for freedom

6 January 2021



The shores of Mera Batiri National Park in Indonesia are nesting grounds for several species of turtle

Newly hatched, dozens of baby turtles flipped and flopped their way down a beach towards the crashing waves of the Indian Ocean, under the watchful gaze of conservationists at an Indonesian national park.

Small enough to fit into the palm of a hand, some ended up on their backs, wriggling their tiny flippers helplessly as they tried to get back on track.

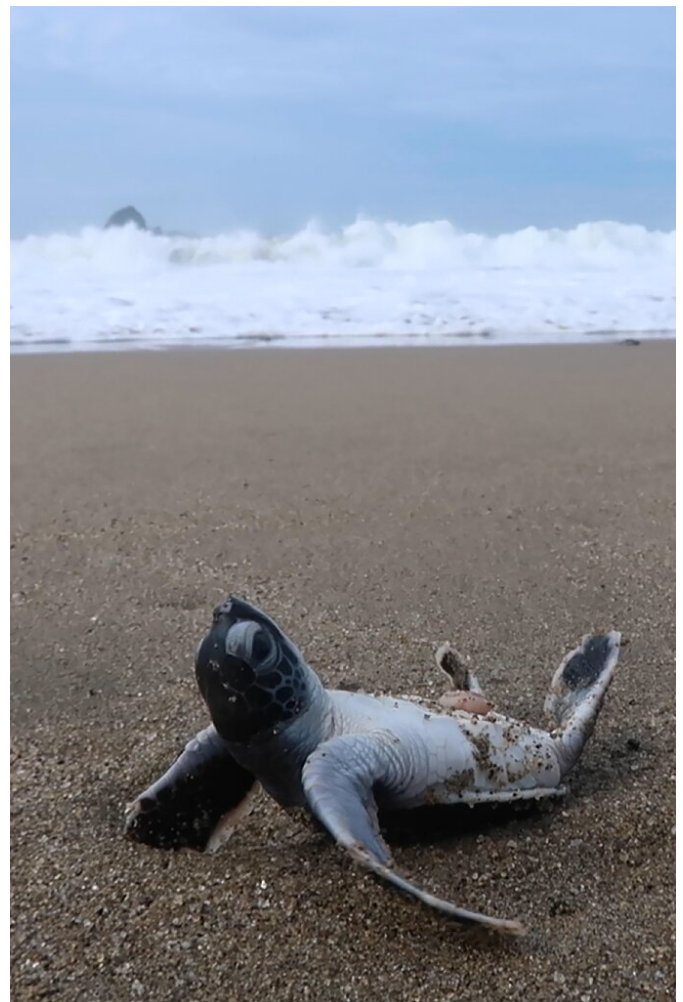
But the conservationists did not interfere, as they wanted the creatures to "map" their surroundings and then return to lay [eggs](#) decades later.

"Sea [turtles](#) mature at 25 years old, so if they're released today, we'll probably meet them again 25 years from now," said Ardhini Estu Wardana, a forest ranger at Meru Betiri National Park on the eastern edge of Java.

Its beaches are nesting grounds for several species of turtle.

The night before, a giant female—over a metre (3.3 feet) long—laid more than 160 eggs on the shore, sweeping mounds of sand over them to protect them from predators.

Turtles, under threat from poaching and [habitat destruction](#), are protected under Indonesian law.



Conservationists say that if the baby turtles "map" the area in which they hatch, they often return to lay eggs in the same place decades later



Six of the world's seven turtle species can be found in Indonesia

Their eggs are considered a delicacy and they are also slaughtered for their meat, skin and shells.

Six of the world's seven turtle species can be found in Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and home to a dizzying array of exotic wildlife.

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