Turtle Life Cycle
What is a life cycle?

• The different stages an animal or plant goes through during its life.

• What stages might this include?
  - Birth or germination
  - Development
  - Reproduction
Mammals

Most mammals have very similar life cycles, with the individuals going through similar stages of development:

- Female gives birth to young
- Young looks like a miniature version of the adult
- Female provides milk for the young to grow and develop
- Adults take care of the young
- Reproduce
Reptiles

What do you think might be different about the life cycle of reptiles, when compared with the life cycle of mammals? What might be the same?

- Most reptiles lay eggs
- Young looks like a miniature version of the adult

Generally, no parental care is given – the eggs/young are left to look after themselves.
Which group do sea turtles belong to? REPTILES

What does this tell us about their life cycle?

- Sexual reproduction
- No parental care
- Lay eggs

Young are miniature versions of adults.
There are seven different species of sea turtle:

- Flatback turtle
- Loggerhead turtle
- Leatherback turtle
- Hawksbill turtle
- Olive ridley turtle
- Kemp’s ridley turtle
...and the GREEN TURTLE!
Green turtle

Why are they called green turtles? → Because their fat is green in colour!

Female green turtles can lay between 100 and 150 eggs per clutch, and usually lay several clutches per breeding season.

Some populations of green turtle migrate thousands of kilometres to feed and breed. Part of the Brazilian population migrates 2,250 kilometres to breed near Ascension Island in the South Atlantic!

Green turtles can live a very long time! Scientists are not sure exactly how long, but it is thought that it could be up to 100 years or more.
Green turtle life cycle

Starts off as an egg
Green turtle life cycle

Egg Stage

- Eggs are incubated in the nest for 45 to 70 days
- The temperature affects the gender of the young:
  - Lower temperatures produce males
  - Higher temperatures produce females
  - Middle temperatures produce males and females

Threats

- Eggs being taken by humans for food
- Feral/wild pigs and domestic dogs digging up the nest
- The nest getting flooded
Starts off as an egg

Hatchling emerges from egg

Hatchling makes its way to the sea

Green turtle life cycle
Green turtle life cycle

Hatchling stage

- Hatchlings look like miniature adults
- Hatchlings get no parental care
- Hatchlings head towards the lighter horizon, which will be over the sea

Threats

- Predators – gulls and crabs on the beach, and fish and sharks once the hatchlings reach the sea
- Artificial lighting – hatchlings head towards that instead of the sea
Starts off as an egg

Green turtle life cycle

Hatchling emerges from egg

Hatchling makes its way to the sea

Hatchling grows into a juvenile and then into an adult
Juvenile stage

Where do juveniles go?

• Nobody really knows! Scientists have yet to figure out exactly where they go between the hatchling and juvenile stages – it’s a mystery!

• End up in feeding areas – exact location not known

Threats

• Eating plastic bags – the turtles think the bags are jellyfish

• Fishing nets and lines
Green turtle life cycle

- Starts off as an egg
- Hatchling emerges from egg
- Hatchling makes its way to the sea
- Hatchling grows into a juvenile and then into an adult

When the turtles reach sexual maturity they mate and reproduce
**Adult stage**

- Can start having children from 26 – 40 years old
- Migrate from feeding grounds to breeding grounds
- Breeding ground is the beach where they hatched
- Males and females mate just offshore
- Males return to feeding grounds

**Threats**

- Getting caught in fishing lines and drowning
- Sharks
Green turtle life cycle

Starts off as an egg

Female turtles crawl onto the beach to lay their own eggs

Hatchling emerges from egg

Hatchling grows and travels to the sea

When the turtles reach sexual maturity they mate and reproduce

Hatchling grows into a juvenile and then into an adult
Egg laying

- Female crawls onto the beach at night to lay eggs
- Female uses its back flippers to dig a nest
- Female may come up onto the beach up to nine times per nesting season to lay eggs
- Once several clutches of eggs have been laid, female returns to feeding grounds

Threats

- Beach pollution
- Noise and
Green turtle life cycle

- Starts off as an egg
- Female turtles crawl onto the beach to lay their own eggs
- Hatchling emerges from egg
- Hatchling travels to the sea
- Hatchling grows into a juvenile and then into an adult
- When the turtles reach sexual maturity they mate and reproduce

When the turtles reach sexual maturity they mate and reproduce.