

Transcript

Sea Turtles: Threats from Intentional Harvest

David Godfrey: Well, through the ages sea turtles have been killed for just about everything you can think of. With green turtles in particular, that is the turtle that was on the menu, if you will. The meat, the fat of a green turtle I am told is a delicacy. I've never actually tried it, but it's rumored that Winston Churchill had to have green turtle soup every night before bed. It was a delicacy around the world. For example I have just a sample right here, turtle soup. This is an old can from back in Louisiana, where one of the turtle canneries was located. They were harvesting turtles in Louisiana, and also in the state of Florida. All along the Indian River Lagoon, and inter coastal waterways, there were turtle harvesting operations that fed the international demand for turtle products.

People have been harvesting Hawksbill's for their unbelievable shells. This is unfortunately a Hawksbill Turtle that's been turned into a wall hanging. You can see why the shell is so desirable. It's really beautiful. This particular product was probably confiscated when someone tried to illegally bring it back into the United States. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service loaned it to us for educational purposes, to let people know what to look out for, especially if you're traveling in the Caribbean. You can still find this stuff for sale today in markets around the Caribbean, where turtle protection laws aren't very well enforced. This is an example, we have other things like making leather out of the flippers.

This boot, especially the bottom part of the boot here is made out of actual sea turtle leather. Both flippers, around the neck, all of the outer soft tissue parts of a sea turtle can be turned into leather. This is a product that comes out of Mexico, and is very common. You can go and find turtle leather boots on sale. Leatherback Turtles are filled with oil, and in different parts of the world they make these creams, healthcare products and other things out of the oil from Leatherback Turtles. It's got qualities that people have desired for centuries.

They were making lamp oil and other things out of Leatherback oil during the discovery of the new world. Finally also with the Hawksbill shell, jewelry items made out of these shells. It's a continuing problem all over the Caribbean, and in Asia. These are probably the most rudimentary sorts of products that you can make out of these. I've seen things from Japan that truly are exquisite. In particular, beautifully ordained ladies hair pins. I mean, as a work of art it's incredible. But you're sacrificing the survival of an endangered species to continue at art form. At some point is it worth it?

David [end of video]: It's amazing, if there's any product from a turtle that someone could figure out a way to use they seem to be doing it.