



FLATBACK TURTLE (HATCHLING PICTURED)

NATATOR DEPRESSUS

DID YOU KNOW?

A turtle's shell is known as a carapace and it is covered by strong scales called scutes.

These scutes are made of keratin, just like our nails!

WHERE AT AQWA?

Rarely on exhibit.
Hatchlings may be cared for in our Turtle Pool rehabilitation centre.

SIZE: <100CM

DIET: SEA CUCUMBERS, SOFT CORALS, JELLYFISH

MAIN PREDATOR: SHARKS, LARGE FISH, CROCODILES,

HABITAT: INSHORE WATERS AND BAYS

FOUND: AUSTRALIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, INDONESIA

FLAT NOT GREEN

Flatback turtles get their name from their low-domed "flat" back. Their scientific name *Natator* (meaning 'swimmer') *depressus* (meaning 'low') was only given to them after 1988. Before this, scientists believed they were a subspecies of the green sea turtle!

Because of this late discovery, there is little research on flatback turtles and scientists are still to unlock many of their mysteries.

HOME GROWN

Flatback turtles only nest on the northern coast of Australia. They may travel to Papua New Guinea and Indonesia to feed, but return to the beach where they hatched in Australia when they are ready to nest. In Western Australia, they nest in our Pilbara and Kimberly regions.

SHELF SITTERS

Unlike other sea turtles, flatbacks don't have an oceanic life phase. Rather than cruise ocean currents amongst rafts of seaweed, they stay in the shallow waters of the continental shelf. They prefer inshore waters and bays where their feeding ground is the shallow, soft bottomed seabed.

HARDY HATCHLINGS

Flatback turtles lay less eggs per clutch than other turtles, but the eggs and hatchlings are bigger in return. Their larger bodies may give them a stronger start to life. Other unique features of flatback hatchlings are; blue eyes; black outlines on their scutes which may act as camouflage; and a serrated edge to their shell for protection.