



HAWKSBILL TURTLE

ERETMOCHELYS IMBRICATA

DID YOU KNOW?

Hawksbill turtles are the smallest species of sea turtle.

WHERE AT AQWA?

Visit AQWA's Turtle Pool to see if we are currently caring for any hawksbill turtles.

SIZE:<90CM

**DIET:SPONGES,
SEAGRASS, ALGAE,
SOFT CORALS**

**MAIN PREDATOR:
LARGE FISH,
SHARKS**

**HABITAT:CORAL
REEFS**

**FOUND: TROPICAL
OCEANS WORLD
WIDE**

LAYERED SCALES

Turtles are known for their 'shell' made of thick bony scales, with hawksbill turtles these scales overlap giving them their species name imbricata meaning; to arrange in an overlapping pattern. Their scales are strikingly coloured with streaks of yellow, amber and brown and were the original source of "tortoise shell", a semi precious material.

The common name 'hawksbill' comes from their beak-like mouth, which is long and hooked like the bill of a hawk.

IT'S ALL ABOUT SPONGES

The beak of a hawksbill turtle is longer and narrower than other turtles to reach sponges tucked into crevices between corals. As they are normally found near their food hawksbills have the most tropical range of all sea turtles. They avoid deep water, preferring coastlines where sponges are abundant and sandy nesting sites are within reach.

By eating sponges hawksbill turtles help to maintain the health of a coral reef. Sponges grow faster than corals and have few predators due to their toxic chemical defences. Without hawksbill turtles to keep sponges under control they would dominate reef communities and prevent corals from settling and growing.

Hawksbill turtles can eat sponges however hawksbill flesh is toxic to humans, if eaten it can lead to sickness and death.

HOME IN WA

Hawksbill turtles have feeding and nesting grounds along the north-west shelf of WA. Nesting occurs from October to January and our hawksbill population is one of the largest in the world.

Around Australia different populations of Hawksbill turtles nest at different times of the year. The peak nesting season is January-February in the Great Barrier Reef and July-October in Arnhem Land.