

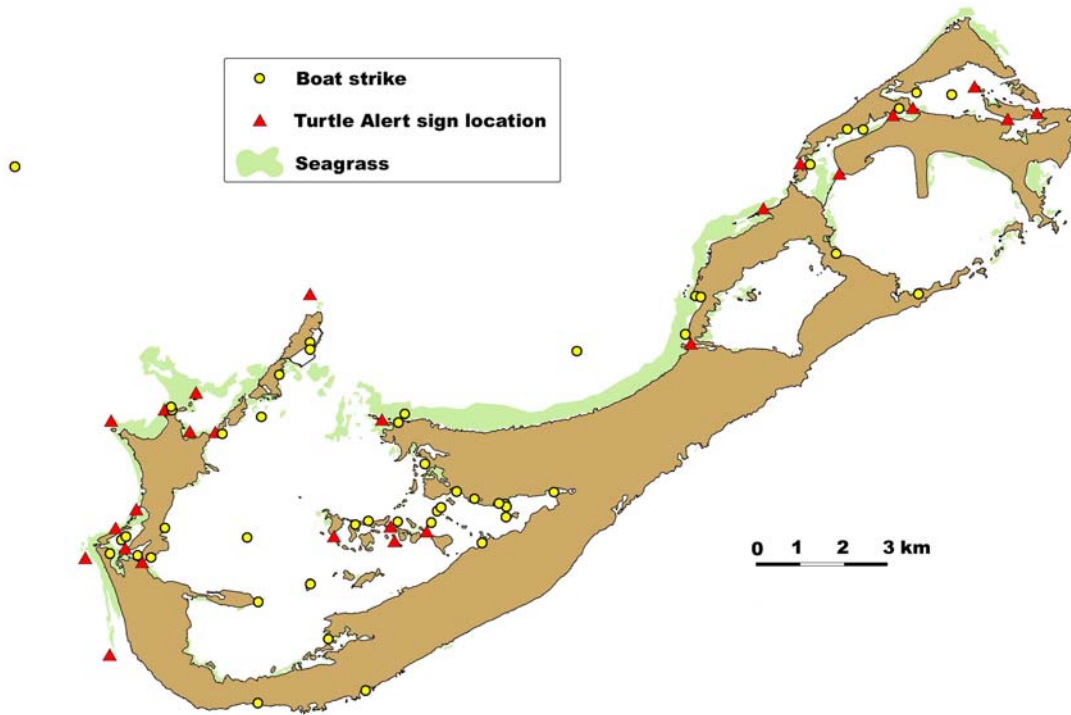
With summer well under-way, the Department of Conservation Services (DCS) and Bermuda Zoological Society (BZS) urges everyone to take the time to do all we can to reduce our impact on turtles living around Bermuda. The two most commonly encountered sea turtles in our local waters are the green and hawksbill, the latter having been listed by the World Conservation Union as ‘Critically Endangered’ world-wide. Since 1972, all turtles in Bermuda have enjoyed complete legislative protection which prohibits direct harvesting and intentional harm; however, accidental and incidental causes still contribute to local mortality. The Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo, a division of the Department of Conservation Services, has been keeping records on all the stranded turtles (those found dead, sick or injured) that have been brought in or reported by members of the public since 1983. Over the past 26 years a total of 424 turtles have been admitted, many due to human actions and activities. Entanglements in monofilament fishing line, discarded nets, rope and string, as well as boat collisions or propeller injuries are two very common causes of turtle strandings. If there is any good news, it is that these occurrences are largely preventable. DCS urges the public to take the time to consider the following actions:

- If you are boating, please pay attention while in locations frequented by turtles - for example, over seagrass meadows - and drive slowly when you are within 100m of the shoreline, or in an area where turtle warning signs are posted. Wearing polarized sun glasses will also help to make turtles resting at the surface more visible to boaters.
- If you are out fishing, please discard unwanted fishing line properly rather than throw it into the ocean, and make an effort to recover any line that is broken off or has become entangled in the marine environment when you encounter it.
- Try to avoid the use of helium balloons and do not pollute the ocean, especially with plastic bags, since both of these can be mistaken for food by turtles. When turtles ingest these materials they can lead to serious health complications.

A little bit of extra effort can go a long way to reducing that annual admission rate of stranded turtles into BAMZ as well as the number of turtle deaths around Bermuda.



‘Turtle Alert’ sign advising boaters to slow down



Map illustrating where cautionary 'Turtle Alert' signs have been posted. Also marked are the stranding locations of turtles struck by boats

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Green turtle that was hit and killed by a boat

Photo credit: Jennifer Gray



Green turtle that drowned because it became entangled in a discarded net
Photo credit: Marshall DeCouto



Strangulation and drowning of a juvenile green turtle caused by entanglement in monofilament fishing line (A) and receptacle for discarded monofilament fishing line at a shoreline location in Bermuda (B).

Photo credits: Jennifer Gray & Mark Outerbridge

Mark Outerbridge
Bermuda Turtle Project Coordinator