

TRADITIONAL USE SUMMARY



Summary of traditional usage of turtles within the SPREP region
TRADITION REGARDING MARINE TURTLES IN THE SPREP REGION

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AMERICAN SAMOA

Grattan (1948; cited in Johannes 1986) states that the turtle was sacred in Samoa, and no fisherman could retain it for his own private or family use without the permission of the local chief. An offender would be punished either by a heavy fine of foodstuffs or by banishment from the village for a short time.

Sea turtles have always been considered a food delicacy, and the shell of the hawksbill was often made into jewellery, combs and fishing hooks. Tortoiseshell was also used in the head piece worn by a princess during important dance ceremonies. In folklore, sea turtles are believed to have the power to save fishermen who are lost at sea by bringing them to the shore (Tuato'o-Bartley, Morrell & Craig In Press).

COOK ISLANDS

Williamson (1933) describes that in many areas of Polynesia the turtle is a sacred animal, and when found should be taken to the head chief. In some cases it was regarded as a sin against the gods if this was not done.

FIJI

Thompson (1940) states that in the Lau Islands, turtle is a delicacy served only at important feasts for high ranking persons, and is considered the most chiefly food. The head of the turtle was formerly given only to the chief, but in accordance with Tongan custom, the back is eaten instead and the priest receives the head.

In Lau, the sea turtle is protected by special rules. Permission to fish for turtles must be granted by the master fisherman of the chiefs' party (Thompson 1940).

Anon. (1971; cited in Guinea 1992) describes the legend of turtle calling, which is still passed on from father to son among the Fijian people of Kadavu. The story is set in the village of Namuana, where a princess lived. She was the wife of the village chief, and they had a daughter. One day when the women were fishing, they went further out than usual and did not notice the canoe filled with fishermen approaching them. The fishermen seized the women, ignoring their cries, bound their hands and feet with vines, tossed them into the hold of the canoe and set off home. The gods of the sea were kind, however, and soon a great storm arose and the canoe was tossed about by the huge waves. As the canoe was foundering in the sea, the fishermen were surprised to see that the women had suddenly changed into turtles and to save their own lives, the men threw them into the sea. As they slipped over the side of the canoe, the weather changed and there were no more waves. The fishermen returned home and the women remained as turtles, living on the waters of the bay. It is their descendants today who rise when the maidens of their own village sing to them from the cliffs. When the women from Namuana village assemble on the rocks above the water and sing a melodious chant, the giant turtles rise to lie on the surface in order to listen to the strange chanting.

Guinea (1992) states that on the island of Koro it is the men who call the turtles.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Green turtles are considered a prized food to the native people of French Polynesia. In ancient times turtles were held "sacred for the gods" and were only eaten by kings, priests and marae (temple) keepers. Icons of turtles were associated with royalty, the supernatural and afterworld. Petroglyphs of turtles as sacred symbols were carved on certain boulders and limestone slabs incorporated into the marae. In the interior of Bora Bora a boulder known as "ofai honu" (turtle stone) contains many petroglyphs, and is believed to be the parent of the island and its chiefs (Balazs, 'Siu & Landret In Press).

Parsons (1962) states that at Pukapuka in the Tuamotu Group, the taking of a turtle calls for a public feast, for by island law it is the property of everyone.

FSM - FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Matthews (1982) states that only royalty can kill turtles, and the chief of the island must give permission for hunting to occur, or those involved will be punished.

Traditional laws are still enforced in the FSM. Smith (1991) describes the laws passed by the chiefs of Lamotrek, Satawal, Elato, Puluwat, Pulusuk, Tamatam and Pulap in 1986.

Eilers (1936; cited in Lessa 1983) states that when members of the Hamburg Sudsee-Expedition visited Ngulu atoll in 1909 they found that although there were many turtles, the eggs of all turtle species and the meat of the "genuine" (green?) turtle were not to be eaten, and that turtle catching was forbidden at certain times. This may have been due to the fact that chelonians are regarded as totems of descent groups. McCoy (1974) states an example from Satawal, where two clans have turtles as totems, and members of these clans as well as their spouses have to observe special taboos in addition to those of island-wide application. One such taboo forbids any pregnant woman or her spouse to eat turtles.

Eilers (1935; cited in Lessa 1983) states that turtles are also associated with gods. One example is in the Sonsorol Islands, where it is said that a god stands in the sea and watches over his sisters, turtles, and he descends from heaven as soon as he sees one. Another god, his sister, is a turtle that formerly lived in a house, but she demolished the building; and her father chased her into the water where she remains. She comes ashore only to lay eggs.

Safert (1919; cited in Lessa 1983) also describes that in Kosrae the turtle was the animal of Nosunsap, the greatest celestial deity, and that turtles that had been caught in the Nefalil district were first brought to a certain tree, and were finally taken to the god's taboo place. The cult of this god had eight priests, and for them the turtle was taboo. It is also believed that green turtles were singed on their back with coconut leaves in order to chase away the spirits of fishing.

Falalop has a special obligation to deliver green turtles to Mogmog; long ago the island of Losiep defeated Mogmog in a war. In order to retaliate, the people of Mogmog decided to give the king's daughter to the chief of Losiep. She exercised such high virtue and morality that she put her husband to shame. He retaliated against his enemies by overwhelming them with gifts of turtles. From that day on, he ordered that any turtles caught by people under his jurisdiction must be

consigned to Mogmog (Lessa 1983).

In Ulithi there is a complex ritual associated with the killing of turtles and the distribution of the meat and eggs. This act is entwined with the political system (Lessa 1983).

Lessa (1983) states that the people from Falalop are the main turtle catchers, and when they harvest turtles on those islands (Loslep, Pau, Bulubul; Gielap, Iar) they assemble them on the beach before sending them to Mogmog by canoe. During the voyage a dance called the hamath is performed by the men to the accompaniment of songs, while the women behind at the beach also dance and sing the hamath. When the canoes reach Mogmog the men drag the turtles up to a plot of land called the Rolong, the most hallowed spot in the atoll. Here, the king (from the Lamathakh lineage) kills the turtles one by one, clubbing them on the head with a stick from the *Pemphis acidula* tree. Before the killing, the king apologises to the god Iongolap for what he is about to do, and hopes that the spirit will not punish him. The second highest ranking chief on the atoll (from the Lamrui lineage) also addresses a prayer to Iongolap. After the clubbing, a man chosen by the king from his own lineage slits the throat of each turtle and pulls out the intestines. The reptiles are then hauled back to the nearby beach and roasted. They are then taken back to the Rolong. The meat is then distributed, beginning with the presentation of the head of the first turtle to the king, which is removed by a man of the king's lineage. Men from the Lamathakh lineage begin to carve out meat on one side of the turtle, while men from the Lamrui lineage compete against them by carving on the other side of the turtle. The meat and eggs belonging to the two lineages are placed in four receptacles. The front flippers are given to the people of the islands of Fais, Ngulu, Woleai and Yap. The hind flippers go to a particular Ulithian lineage. As compensation for catching and delivering the turtles, the men from Falalop are given equal portions of meat and eggs. A more formal gift is given to the chiefs of the two highest ranking lineages on Falalop, which consists of the blood of the turtle, the carapace and some of the foreflippers.

McCoy (1974) states that one of the oldest taboos decreed was that no turtle could be killed on Satawal. All turtles caught on West Fayu had to be slaughtered on the island and the meat brought to Satawal. All meat adhering to large bones had to be taken to Satawal uncooked. Once the canoes reached Satawal, the edible meat was divided among the people. After the turtle had been eaten, a man collected mud and leaves from the taro patch, placing them with a taro leaf in the middle of the path. No-one, after consuming turtle, could walk into the woods or in the direction of the taro patch without first stepping on the mud. Those men who helped pull the canoes onto the beach could not walk into the taro patch without first stepping into the basket containing the taro patch mud.

Hawksbill turtles are also sighted around Satawal, but were considered sacred to the people on Satawal in pre-Christian days, and were not disturbed either on the beach or in the water. The shell provided many items for the people such as fishing hooks and combs. All shell was thus procured from other islands. Occasionally people from other islands would harvest hawksbill on Satawal, but they were required to build a small house on the beach away from the other houses on the island, and they were required to carry out their operations out of sight of local inhabitants (McCoy 1974).

Tobin et al. (1957) indicate that there were no special regulations or

taboos reserving harvesting rights in Chuuk. Certain parts of the turtle would be offered to the chief on whose island or reef a turtle was captured. This traditional offering consisted of the head, certain strips of flesh from the belly and the sexual parts.

In Yap, rights to turtle depended upon ownership of fishing grounds, usually by high-ranking estates (tabinaw). Various rights were held by various estates; for example a fisherman finding a turtle in his fish weir was obliged to present it to the owner of sea turtles. It is also believed that burning the shell of the hawksbill turtle causes leprosy (Tobin et al. 1957).

On Ifaluk turtles are reserved for the ranking Kovalu clan to whose chief belongs the prerogative of butchering and distributing turtle (Tobin et al. 1957).

Tobin et al. (1957) states that in Ponape turtle meat was a favourite food to offer the Nanmwarki (highest ranking individuals on the island). The Nanmwarki and other people of high rank had the right to confiscate a turtle or its eggs from a fisherman who had not offered it to them. A person neglecting this custom may be exiled, have his house burned, be forced to make prolonged atonement feasts to the Nanmwarki, or even killed.

Hijikata (1941; cited in Johannes 1986) indicates that at Satawal island, people who even touched green turtles which were caught at the island were confined for a specified time to the village and the seashore. Pots, knives, baskets and dishes which had touched the turtles were also taboo and had to be placed where people would not come in contact with them. Green turtles caught at other islands were not subject to these taboos as long as they were brought back to Satawal alive. The fishermen were not permitted to "shed blood in the sea". A green turtle is taboo to pregnant women, women who had given birth 2 years before, and babies (until they could walk). Hijikata (1941; cited in Johannes 1986) also states that people catching turtles on Pikelot and West Fayu offer a prayer to the god of the island.

GUAM

No information is available.

KIRIBATI

According to the Gilbertese version of creation (Sabatier 1977, cited in Onorio 1979), "Te Tabakea" the turtle was the ancestor and the first beings in connection with Banaba. Tabakea was buried beneath Banaba during the creation, hence the general hump shape of the island.

Turtles are considered as one of the totem creatures worshipped by the groups "Teborauea and Tabakea". No member of a sibling may eat the totem creature worshipped. The creature is held to be flesh of his flesh. It is also avoided by pregnant women, nursing mothers and adults at time of war, as it is supposed to cause cowardice on account of its crawling habit (Onorio 1979).

Hedley (1897; cited in Zann 1985) stated that on Arorae island turtles could only be eaten by priests. Grimble (1933; cited in Zann 1985) stated that turtles were regarded as cowardly animals in the Gilbert Islands and were therefore never eaten in times of war and crisis. T

were also taboo to pregnant women, lest their cowardly ways affect the unborn child.

Grimble (1933; cited in Zann 1985) lists many prohibitions of the I-Kiribati pertaining to clan totems. Turtles were, in some cases, clan totems, and no clan member may eat its totem. It is also usual for a man not to eat his mother's and wife's totems. A man's totem is believed to be flesh of his flesh, and to eat it would be a type of incest. If eaten, it is believed that the spirit of the animal will return and strangle the man while he is sleeping. During periods of warfare and of personal strife a man did not eat turtle. Pregnant women could also not eat turtle because it was believed that the child would crawl like a turtle and be cowardly.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

The original inhabitants had many traditions and taboos associated with the capture of turtles and the collection of eggs, which had the effect of limiting the harvest. Many of the taboos have disappeared as a result of social developments (Johannes 1986).

A turtle legend describing why there are turtles at Bikar is described by Tobin (Undated); "A young girl named Nemejowe lived on Makin Atoll in the Gilbert Islands with her parents. One day before her parents left the house, her mother put out the mats to sun and air. She told Nemejowe to watch them so that they would not be ruined by rain. After her parents left, Nemejowe fell asleep, and while she slept the rain ruined the mats. Nemejowe's parents returned and her mother was very angry at the sight of her ruined mats. She uttered a curse, and the daughter left the house and sat on a sand spit and cried. Her grandmother, Lijabake appeared in the shape of a sea turtle, and asked what was wrong. Nemejowe told her, and then became a seabird, and flew away above Lijabake. They travelled to several atolls and settled on Bikar, which is the reason for the large number of turtles on Bikar Atoll."

Tobin et al. (1957) describe how the harvest of turtles in the Marshall Islands usually took place on special islands with the chief opening the season. Stylised and elaborate rituals were connected with these first food gathering expeditions of the year, where both turtles and their eggs were taken. Upon arriving at the island the chief was the first person to step ashore, followed by the other members of the trip. Everyone assembled on the beach before proceeding in and cut a leaf of coconut frond. The people walked in single file, following the chief, stepping in the footprints of the person in front, so that only one set of footprints would appear. The women held mats over their heads while on the island so they could only see the ground well enough to gather eggs and other items. Strict silence was observed. Often medicine was made by the chief from the leaves of a small rare plant, and was drunk by everyone to prevent anal bleeding and diarrhoea which may result from an unaccustomed meal of turtle and bird eggs. After the eggs were gathered, the group assembled in a special place, and the chief threw four eggs in each direction as an offering. These "sacrificial eggs" were then collected and eaten by the leader of the party. The remaining eggs were then divided up and eaten by the others.

NAURU

No information is available.

NEW CALEDONIA

Turtles were traditionally used as food in wedding ceremonies. In the Loyalty Islands, rules governed the capture of turtles and the distribution of turtle meat. Any turtles taken had to be brought before the Grand Chief of the tribe that owns the islands or near where the turtles were taken (Pritchard 1987).

Pritchard (1981) states that on Lifou Island only the chief can eat turtle meat, although he can authorize certain clans to eat the meat about once a year.

NIUE

No information is available.

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Fritz (1904) describes how turtles are captured by hand, and females, sometimes tied up to lure other turtles. The animal is stabbed and its blood is drunk directly from the wound. The turtle is then put on its back in a ditch and a fire lit over it until the meat is cooked. The broth accumulates in the shell and is drunk.

PALAU

One of the most popular carvings on Palauan storyboards is the Ngemelis legend of the turtle egg-laying cycle. Ngemelis Island was a popular refuge for turtles whose shells and meat were prized collections only the wealthy could afford. When a young man from Peleliu and a young woman from Koror arranged a romantic rendezvous on the island, they discovered that the egg-laying cycle corresponds to the phases of the moon (Anon. 1983).

Carlos (1992) states that turtles are traditionally a kingly food, belonging to the chiefs. Every Rur (chiefly title) was entitled to a certain part of the turtle meat. When a turtle was slaughtered each claimed his part of the meat. The catching, slaughtering and dividing of meat and eggs was ceremonially done in the past. Now turtle meat is an important part of the diet in the outer islands.

Johannes (1981) states that the god on the island of Ngerur owned the islands' turtles, and no turtles could be caught while on the island, no eggs could be dug. In some other areas Palauans were not meant to kill a nesting turtle until after it had laid several batches of eggs until it had reached the water after nesting.

Tobin et al. (1957) indicates that any man was permitted to hunt turtles in Palau. When a man killed a turtle he would take it to his house and call the women members of his clan to come and eat the meat. The women would gather and bring their own taro and feast on the meat. After the feast was over, the women would take some meat home for their husbands and family. On occasion, turtle meat was used in treating a sick person by determining which spirit (Chelid) was causing the illness. A turtle would then be caught, killed and taken to the place in the forest where this spirit was known to dwell. At this place, the members of the sick persons' household would eat the turtle meat and plead with the spirit to make the sick person well.

Several decades ago a religion called Modekngai was started in Palau. One of the ceremonial practices of this group involved burning turtle

meat as an offering to their god on special days (Tobin et al. 1957).

There was a local restriction observed on Airai, where a person who killed or captured a turtle on Ngerduais beach was obliged to take the meat to the house of the Ngar Kikelang family, as they were the family of the god of Airai (Tobin et al. 1957).

Jewellery and utensils such as "toluk" (a special bowl) were traditionally made from tortoiseshell.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Turtle shell was apparently used in the making of fish hooks only in the Torres Strait area, but it was used in many places for personal jewellery (Pernetta & Hill 1981).

In Turu village, Manus Province, there is a strong traditional link between the leatherback turtle and two clans. The people believe that the leatherback belongs to these clans and that it will not return to nest if this ownership is not recognised. Only members of these clans can use the stick technique to predict the return of the nesting females. When the female returns it is killed and each clan gets half (Quinn & Kojis 1985).

In many coastal areas, turtles are or were traditionally eaten in feasts, for example bride price repayments, funerals, the building of a new canoe, the opening of a new haus boi, and the birth of a new child. Feasts are also held for non-traditional occasions relating to business, political and religious activities. When turtles are required for a feast, the chief or leader organises the hunters and canoes to go out and catch them. Guests from other villages must bring exchange presents such as sago and dogs teeth, according to the number of turtles which are provided (Spring 1981).

In most places the right to fish certain reefs and beaches is controlled by individuals or clans. This system relies heavily on traditional authority and respect within the village (Spring 1981b).

Social restrictions were also placed upon those involved with turtle hunting. Spring (1981) states that turtle hunters cannot sleep with their wives during the preparatory period. They must organise their personal effects and dress neatly and not indulge in any gossip or b thoughts, or pry into other peoples belongings. Silence is usually observed in the hunt with inly the leader giving orders. If a man's wife is pregnant, he cannot participate in the hunt or go near the hunting party. There are also many restrictions placed upon the hunters' wives. For example, they cannot sweep or work until the men return; they must sit down in their houses and not walk about, and children cannot play or make a noise until the hunt is over.

People or clans who believe themselves related to turtles or those of the Seventh Day Adventist faith cannot eat turtle meat. All villagers are also prohibited from eating turtle meat during the yam planting season in the East Sepik Province. In the Trobriand Islands, if a person has eaten turtle meat, they cannot go near the yam gardens for 3 days or else the garden magic will be affected. Magic men who have powers over turtles do not eat turtle meat for fear of losing their magic powers (Spring 1981).

Spring (1981) states that in the past hawksbill shell was used to make

everyday items such as spoons and knives, as well as traditional items such as belts, bracelets, earrings, limesticks and brideprice items.

Spring (1980) describes the traditional methods of catching turtles. A special net, *Aoso walona*, was often used, and certain rituals accompanied the use of this net; the owner of the net could not sleep with his wife for one year before the hunt, neither could he speak or eat with her; before the hunt, the owner of the net had to bathe in the sea from a certain point, as it was believed that while bathing, the owner was calling turtles and it would bring good luck on the hunt; the owner's wife had to bathe before the hunt and she had to tie on a grass skirt after bathing and leave it on until the net had been brought back to the village; and when the hunt was over, the hunters called out to the people in the village.

There are several different restrictions on eating turtle meat dependent on the village (Spring 1980). People or clans who believe themselves related to turtles cannot eat turtle meat (East Sepik, Trobriand Islands, Manus Province). It is prohibited for all villagers to eat turtle meat during the yam planting season in East Sepik. In the Trobriands, if a person has eaten turtle meat, he/she cannot go near a yam garden for three days. In the Northern Province the people believe that if a pregnant woman eats turtle meat she will give birth to a child with flippers instead of arms and legs. In the Arawe Province pregnant women do not eat hawksbill meat as they believe it will decrease their child bearing ability. The people of Kui Village in the Morobe Province do not eat leatherback meat as they believe it will weaken their endurance in such things as climbing mountains or hills or doing hard work. In Bai Village, Morobe Province the animals (pigs, dogs) are stopped from eating any part of the turtle as the people believe that if the animals eat turtle, when the time comes they will go and have their litters in the bush away from the village, and so all the bones and turtle scraps are carefully burnt.

There are a number of magic men who believe that they possess powers over turtles. These men do not eat turtle meat as they believe they lose their magic powers if they do. In Turubu Village the magic power can be passed from person to person, but once someone has the knowledge he can no longer eat turtle meat. If he does, his arms and legs will swell up and sores will erupt on his body. When turtles are needed a magic man cuts a special vine which contains a magic for turtles and he makes a sing-sing to the vine on the beach. When he finishes this sing-sing he puts the vine away and then works another sing-sing during which the turtles come up out of the water (Spring 1980).

PITCAIRN

No information is available.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Leary & Laumani (1989) state that most of the customs or taboos regarding turtles are no longer kept. For people living in Poro it is still taboo to spear turtles off Ramos Island. Some areas spoke of taboos for women to eat certain parts of turtles and there were some reports of turtle calling. People of the Seventh Day Adventist faith will not eat turtle meat.

Vaughan (1981a) states that turtles are consumed at feasts, and that communal hunting parties are organised when catching turtles.

Vaughan (1981b) describes the custom taboos as follows: "In Kolias there were local laws governing the number of turtles taken, but are no longer in effect; in Mbaniata it was taboo to eat leatherback eggs except those taken from a butchered female; in Ghaomam all eggs are checked before excavating the nest and if they are too developed they are carefully reburied; and in Lavaleva it is taboo to disturb hatchlings or keep them as pets."

In Mbaniata leatherback eggs were totally protected by village elders and only a few mature leatherback turtles could be killed each year. This tradition died out a long time ago. Other areas such as Kolias used to regulate the turtle catch but no longer do. The people of Lavaleva and Choiseul protect hatchlings and will not allow children to keep them as pets (Vaughan 1981a).

TOKELAU

Marine turtles in Tokelau are classified as "sacred fish", and are owned collectively by the entire village and cannot be taken for personal use. The turtle must be ceremonially shared with everyone or they are punished. All eggs collected must be given to the Council of Elders for distribution among the village (Balazs 1983).

Certain portions of the turtle, such as the head, were kept for the chief, but there were no other restrictions regarding distribution of meat. However, some people belonging to the Seventh Day Adventist faith do not eat turtle meat for religious reasons. Some restrictions were placed on the fishermen, such as a man whose wife was pregnant could not join in the turtle hunt, as it was believed he would frighten away the turtles (Balazs 1983).

In Tokelau everyone is allowed to eat turtle if they wish, but certain portions such as the head were reserved for the chief. When a turtle was captured, it was carried to the village meeting ground for ceremonial prayers of thanks offered to the god Tui Tokelau. The turtle was put on display for all to view and was later killed and cut up by a specially appointed man who divided it among the people (Balazs 1983).

There are several other beliefs regarding turtles, as described by Balazs (1983). Uneaten turtle bone scraps from the shares received by each family are usually thrown into the ocean as it is believed to attract turtles to the atoll. Also, when a particular red sunset known as "hila fonu" is observed, it means that a turtle is likely to come ashore in the evening.

TONGA

Thompson (1940) indicates that according to Tongan custom, the priest receives the head of the turtle, and the chief receives the back.

TUVALU

In past times the flesh of the green turtle was taboo to everyone except kings and priests. Turtles were eaten only by men (Hedley 1996). Traditionally, turtles are an important part of family functions and feasts. The head was reserved for the island chief, but is now reserved for the Island Pastor (Kaay & Semese 1993). Zann (1985) states that on certain atolls turtle meat was prohibited to commoners because of its rarity.

In Tuvalu turtles are taboo to pregnant women (Grimble 1933; cited in Zann 1985).

VANUATU

Turtles are traditionally "called" in Vanuatu. With this practice, pregnant women are not allowed near the area during the calls. These calls are made by families of the deceased to release or send the turtles to the sea surface (Vanuatu Environment Unit 1992).

Dickinson (1983) states that turtles are an important custom on Tanna Island, as some families are believed to be descended from turtles. Certain men may take turtles in taboo areas, and the cooking of turtles is restricted to certain people. If turtle eggs are found on Tanna, "turtle man" must be told.

WALLIS AND FUTUNA

No information is available.

WESTERN SAMOA

Turtle meat is eaten predominantly by village chiefs on special occasions (Witzell & Banner 1980).

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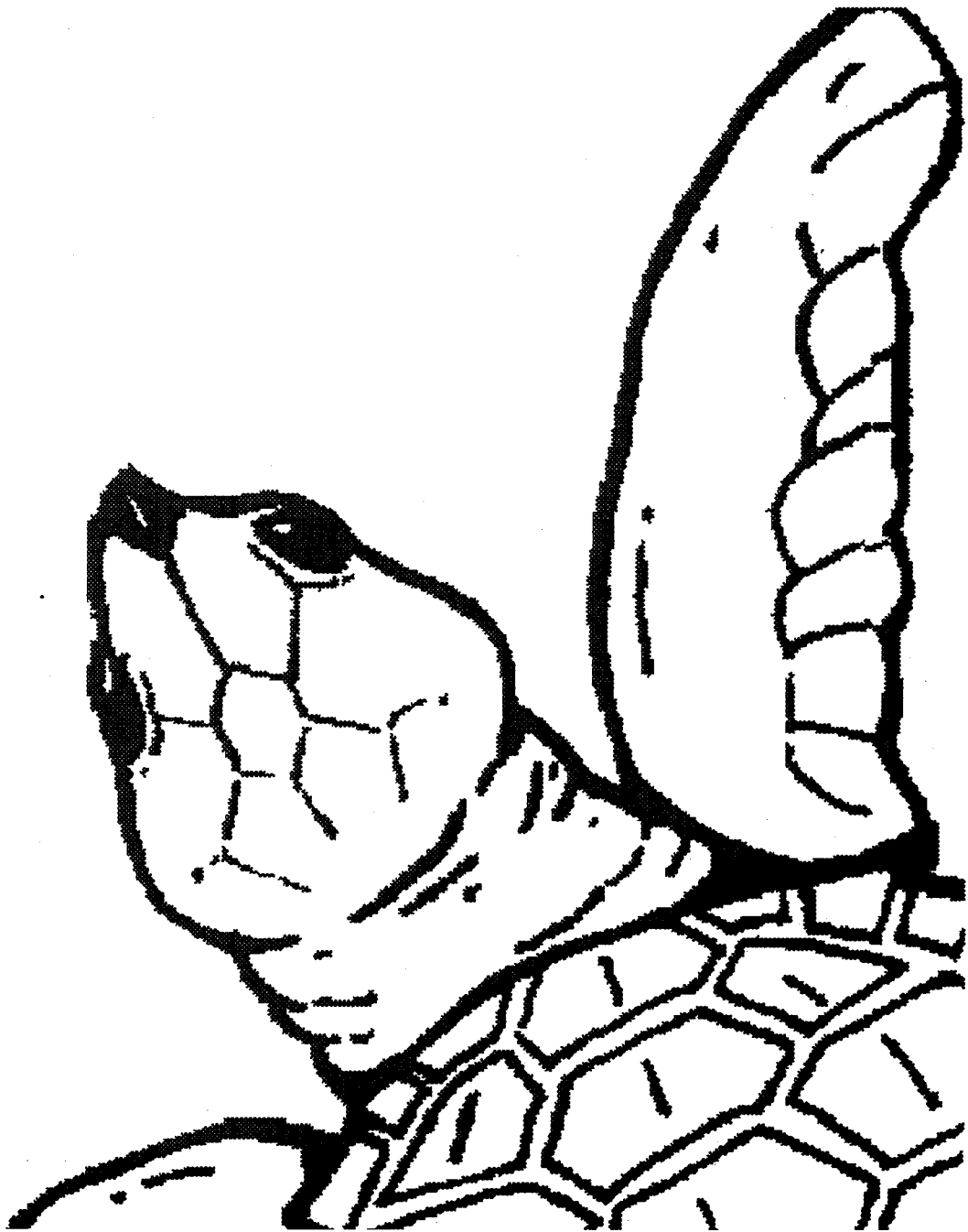
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LEGISLATION SUMMARY



LEGISLATION REGARDING MARINE TURTLES IN THE SPREP REGION

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US Endangered Species Act

This Act specifies that marine turtle species and their eggs are protected. *Eretmochelys imbricata* is listed as Endangered, and is therefore totally protected, where as *Chelonia mydas* is listed only as Threatened. In some cases, *C. mydas* may be taken by residents for traditional use. Under the Act, the sale of all turtle products is prohibited.

CITES - The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

This convention controls international trade in endangered species, their products and parts. Species threatened with extinction are listed in CITES Appendix 1 and are subject to strict trade regulation. All sea turtles are listed on Appendix 1. In November 1994 CITES adopted new guidelines for Marine Turtle Ranching, however, SPREP's current policy remains unchanged and Marine Turtle Ranching is not supported by SPREP.

AMERICAN SAMOA

American Samoa is covered by the US ratification of CITES. The US Endangered Species Act also applies.

Rose Atoll was declared a Federal Wildlife Refuge in 1973.

COOK ISLANDS

The Cook Islands are not a party to CITES. There are no legislative controls on turtle exploitation (Groombridge & Luxmoore 1989).

FIJI

Fiji is not a party to CITES.

Fisheries Act January 1942

no person may harpoon a turtle unless the harpoon has at least one barb which projects no less than 3/8" (9.5mm) from the surface of the shaft, measured at right angles to the shaft

Amended by Regulations 1966

- * turtle eggs may not be dug up, used or destroyed
- * no turtle with a shell length of less than 18" (457mm) may be killed, taken or molested
- * no turtle may be killed, taken or molested during the months of January, February, November and December

Fisheries Regulation 1978 Cap.158 Part V, para 20

- * turtle eggs of any species are totally protected
- * it is prohibited to take or kill any turtle with shell length <18"
- * turtles may not be hunted or killed between November and February
- * it is prohibited to have in their possession, to sell or export any turtle shell <18" in length

Fisheries Regulation 1978 Cap.158 Part V, para 23

- * turtle flesh may not be exported

Fisheries Regulation Amendment 1991 Cap.158 Part V, para 23

- * turtle shell may not be exported unless the shell is worked into

jewellery or processed into a form approved by the Permanent Secretary for Primary Industries and Cooperatives

Thompson (1940) states that the sea turtle was a chiefly animal in Lau, and permission to fish for turtles had to be granted by the master fisherman of the chiefs' party.

In 1995 Fiji placed a ban on the commercial harvest and sale of all sea turtles for one year (March 1995 - March 1996). Ceremonial or traditional harvest require permission from the Government of Fiji. The Government of Fiji is currently considering extending this ban.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Although French Polynesia is an Overseas Territory of France it is not included on the French acceptance of CITES.

Deliberation No. 71-209, December 1971

- * prohibits the capture of sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) with shells of less than 65cm in length
- * prohibits the capture on land of turtles from 1 November to 31 January
- * prohibits the capture at sea of turtles from 1 June to 31 January
- * prohibits the sale of sea turtles for commercial purposes
- * prohibits the collection of turtle eggs on land
- * the capture of sea turtles of all sizes may be permitted for purposes of scientific research
- * some turtles may be taken in accordance with quotas set by the Government
- * turtles must not be held longer than 10 days in containers which are not sheltered from the sun
- * during transportation turtles must be handled in a way which causes no unnecessary suffering and must in particular be shielded from the sun
- * the slaughter of turtles must be performed under the strictest hygienic conditions

Scilly Atoll was declared a protected area in 1971, and the family living there is appointed to watch over it (Anon. 1979).

FSM - FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

The FSM is not a party to CITES. Up until 1986 the US Endangered Species Act applied to the Trust Territory, but special exemptions were made to allow a subsistence take.

FSM National Code (Title 23, Section 105)

- * no sea turtles shall be taken or killed while on shore, nor shall their eggs be taken
- * no hawksbill turtle shall be taken or killed except whose shell is at least 27" long; no green turtle shall be killed or taken unless the shell is at least 34" long
- * no turtles shall be taken or killed from 1 June - 31 Aug, or 1 Dec - 31 Jan
- * notwithstanding the above, the taking of sea turtles and their eggs

shall be allowed for scientific purposes when specifically authorised by the High Commissioner

- * violators face jail terms not exceeding 6 months, fines of not more than US\$100, or both

Chuuk State Code uses FSM's turtle laws in state controlled areas (Smith 1992).

Kosrae State Code Section 13.523 is identical to the FSM turtle laws, except that there is no limit to the size of green turtles which may be taken, turtle eggs are not protected, and turtles on shore are not protected outside the designated times.

Yap State Code (Title 18, section 1005) states that turtle meat and turtle eggs shall not be sold commercially by any wholesale or retail store licensed to do business in the State.

Additional laws also occur in the FSM. Smith (1991) states that the taking of turtle eggs is completely banned on Lamotrek, Satawal and Elato islands including the small islets in the precinct. If someone disobeyed this policy, he had to give 300 fathoms of coconut fibre rope as punishment. If the violator was from Satawal, the fine went to either Lamotrek or Elato. If the person was from Lamotrek it went to the other two. The taking or transporting of turtles from any of these three islands by any means other than traditional canoe is prohibited.

Matthews (1982) describes a time when the chief of Ulithi Atoll banned the use of the seas for three weeks after someone had killed and eaten a green turtle without the chief's permission. As well as the ocean being off-limits, the island people had to make 60 lava-lavas. This punishment was enforced because only royalty can kill green turtles.

GUAM

Guam is covered by the US ratification of CITES, and the US Endangered Species Act is followed.

The main turtle nesting area in Guam occurs within the US Naval Facility. This area can only be accessed if the person signs in and out of the facility, and they may be searched at any time by naval personnel (Micuda 1984b).

A marine turtle was taken in 1983, and a fine of \$200 (US) was the punishment. This is the first federal prosecution, and to date is the highest fine yet paid on Guam for a turtle take (Micuda 1984a).

KIRIBATI

Kiribati is not a party to CITES.

Wildlife Conservation Ordinance 1975

- * The taking of any wild turtle on land is prohibited except under licence
- * The taking of *C. mydas* is prohibited in some areas
- * The possession of turtles, their products or eggs which have been illegally acquired is prohibited

MARSHALL ISLANDS

The Marshall Islands are not a party to CITES. Until November 1986, the US Endangered Species Act applied in the Marshall Islands. The islands now have their own legislation, modelled on the Trust Territory Code (Groombridge & Luxmoore 1989).

Marine Resources Act, Section 3 (Title 33, Chapter 1)

- * no sea turtles shall be taken or intentionally killed while on shore, nor shall their eggs be taken
- * no hawksbill turtle shall be taken or killed except whose shell is at least 27" when measured over the top of the carapace shell lengthwise; no green turtle shall be taken or killed except whose shell is at least 34" when measured over the top of the carapace shell lengthwise
- * no sea turtle of any size shall be taken or killed from 1 June - 31 August inclusive, nor from 1 December - 31 January inclusive
- * notwithstanding any provisions of this section to the contrary, taking of sea turtles and their eggs shall be allowed for scientific purposes when specifically authorised by Cabinet

Taongi and Bikar Islands were set aside in 1958 as preserved natural areas (Fosberg 1969). It is illegal to enter these islands for the purpose of taking turtles, and it is illegal to take or kill any turtle or molest the eggs on either of these islands without the permission of the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory. Anyone convicted of these violations will be subject to imprisonment of up to 12 months in jail or a fine of US\$500 or both (White 1957).

NAURU

Nauru is not a party to CITES. There is no legislation specifically governing the harvest of marine turtles.

NEW CALEDONIA

New Caledonia is an Overseas Territory of France and is included in its approval of CITES.

Ordinance No.220, 1977

- * the capture of all species of turtle is prohibited from 1 November to 31 March, inclusive. This may be waived under special dispensation for the purposes of traditional feasts and ceremonies
- * collection of turtle eggs is totally prohibited. The sale of mounted turtles and turtle shells is prohibited (Amendment 1978)

Deliberation No.17, 1985

- * prohibits the destruction of sea turtle nests and the removal, possession and sale of turtle eggs
- * prohibits the import, export, sale and purchase for commercial purposes of live or dead turtles and all turtle products. The collection of turtle eggs and export of turtle products may be permitted for the purposes of scientific research and conservation
- * the capture of all sea turtles is prohibited between 1 November and 31 March except under special permits issued for traditional

ceremonies

NIUE

By its affiliation with New Zealand, Niue is a signatory to CITES.

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are a signatory to CITES, and the US Endangered Species Act applies.

There is a restricted season for taking green turtles. They may be caught from 1 September - 30 November, but a permit is required. The limit is one turtle per fisherman (Sablan 1985).

PALAU

Palau was a signatory to CITES under the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands until 1994 when Palau became a Republic. The Republic of Palau is currently not party to CITES. It is unclear whether the US Endangered Species Act still applies in Palau, with a clause regarding subsistence use for *Chelonia mydas*.

- * *E. imbricata* is totally protected, being listed as Endangered
- * *C. mydas* is listed as Threatened and may be taken by residents only, and "if such taking is customary, traditional and necessary for the sustenance of such resident and his immediate family"
- * the sale of all turtle products is prohibited

Trust Territory Code, Title 45, Section 2

- * the taking of *E. imbricata* of lengths less than 68.8 cm and of *C. mydas* of less than 86.4 cm is prohibited
- * taking of any turtles during the periods 1 June - 31 August and 1 December - 31 January is prohibited
- * turtles may not be killed on shore, and their eggs may not be collected

The Ngerukewid (Seventy) Islands is a protected marine reserve. No harvest of turtles is allowed in this reserve.

Traditional law was practised in some areas of Palau. Johannes (1981) states that the god on the island of Ngerur owned the islands' turtles, and no turtles could be caught while on the island and no eggs could be dug.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG)

PNG is a signatory to CITES.

Fauna Protection and Control Act, 1966

- * Trade in the following sea turtles is regulated : *C. caretta*, *C. depressa*, *C. mydas*, *E. imbricata*, *L. olivacea*, *D. coriacea*
- * export of only restricted numbers is allowed and detailed reasons are needed for the export of more than four specimens
- * an export permit is required

Fauna (Protection and Control) Act 1974

- * The export of all wildlife whether dead or alive, parts or

products, requires an export permit issued by the Conservator of Fauna

- * Vertebrate wildlife may be exported only to approved institutions for legitimate scientific or zoological purposes

Ranba, Crown Island and Long Island in Madang Province and Ndrolowa in Manus are Wildlife Management Areas. Vui (1993) states that the Labu-Tali and Maus-Buang areas were reserved as Turtle Project Areas in 1990.

PITCAIRN

Pitcairn and Henderson Island are included in the UK ratification of CITES.

Local Government Regulations Part III, Plant and Animal Quarantine Amendment 1976

- * requires the issue of a permit for the import or export of all species listed on the CITES appendices

Local Government Regulations Part IV Amendment No. 2, 1982

- * no person may harass, hunt, kill or capture any sea turtle (Cheloniidae and *D. coriacea*). Exceptions may be granted under permit for scientific purpose or traditional subsistence use

SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Solomon Islands are not a party to CITES.

Fisheries Regulations 1972

- * it is prohibited to export, or attempt to export, the shell of any turtle of less than 60cm in carapace length
- * the taking of *D. coriacea* is completely prohibited without a permit by the Principal Fisheries Officer

Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations 1977

- * it is prohibited to sell or expose for sale any turtle with a carapace length of less than 75cm
- * prohibited to take, destroy, possess, sell or expose for sale, buy or export eggs of *D. coriacea* except under a written permit

The Arnavon Islands were declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1979, but this was abandoned in 1982 due to disputes regarding land ownership. The islands have never been permanently inhabited, due to the lack of fresh water available (Ramohia 1992). The Arnavon Islands Marine Conservation Area was declared in 1995 after extensive community consultation with the three resource users/owners (Kia, Posare, Whagena). Turtles may not be taken from the core area of the AMCA and Conservation Officers from the three villages regularly patrol the nesting sites and monitor nesting sites.

TOKELAU

Tokelau is not a party to CITES.

In Tokelau the lafu system operates, where all types of fishing are banned in specific areas of the main reef. The decision to establish a

lafu is made by the Council of Elders (Toloo, Gillett & Pelasio 1993).

The Council of Elders has placed a ban on the taking of turtle eggs at Atafu and Nukunonu atolls, and similar measures are being discussed on Fakaofu (Groombridge & Luxmoore 1989).

TONGA

Tonga is not a party to CITES.

Law of Tonga, 1967

- * turtles and their eggs are fully protected from 1 December to 31 January
- * turtle fences must be licensed and must be less than 450 feet (137m) in width and length, and have a mesh size of greater than 1.5" (38mm)
- * the use of poison (other than "aukava" prepared locally by traditional methods) and dynamite is prohibited

Birds and Fish Preservation Act No.24, 1974, Amended 1975

- * the capture of leatherback turtles is prohibited throughout the year
- * all other species of turtle may not be caught between 1 November and 31 January

TUVALU

Tuvalu is not a party to CITES.

Wildlife Conservation Cap.47, May 1975

- * capture of turtles on land is prohibited except under licence
- * possession of illegally acquired turtle or turtle egg is prohibited

Fisheries Ordinance Cap.45, July 1978

- * enables closed seasons or closed fishing areas to be declared
- * fishing with explosives or poisons is prohibited
- * prohibits fishing by foreign vessels except under permit

On the island of Nukulaelae the council placed a ban on capturing turtles, and those breaking this law will be penalised (Keay & Semese 1993).

VANUATU

Vanuatu is a signatory to CITES.

Arrete Conjoint No 7, 1974

- * it is an offence to keep any turtle alive, out of the water for more than 72 hours, to sell or export any stuffed or preserved turtle, to dig up or collect turtle eggs, or to kill turtles while on land, or to sell any turtle or turtle egg, whether live or dead

Fisheries Regulation 1983

- * it is an offence to disturb, take, have in possession, sell or buy any turtle eggs and also to interfere with any turtle nest
- * applies to all species

- * the commercialisation of *E. imbricata* is prohibited i.e. offence to buy or sell any hawksbill or its shell

Village bans on take of turtles e.g. Pele, Eutanlang, Ngnu (Efate) have been put in place for 10 years by village elders following awareness programs during the Year of the Sea Turtle.

WALLIS AND FUTUNA

Wallis and Futuna Islands are an Overseas Department of France, and are covered by the French acceptance of CITES.

WESTERN SAMOA

Western Samoa is not a party to CITES. A draft of the new Fisheries Regulations that completely bans all forms of harvest of turtles is currently awaiting the Western Samoa Government's final approval and confirmation.

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SUMMARY

COUNTRY	US ESA	CITES	LOCAL LEG.	SIZE LIMIT	RESTRICTED SEASON	PROTECTED AREAS
American Samoa	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Cook Islands	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Fiji	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
French Polynesia	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Guam	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Kiribati	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Marshall Islands	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Nauru	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
New Caledonia	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
Niue	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Northern Mariana Islands	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Palau	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Papua New Guinea	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Pitcairn	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Solomon Islands	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
Tokelau	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Tonga	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Tuvalu	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Vanuatu	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Wallis & Futuna	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Western Samoa	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO