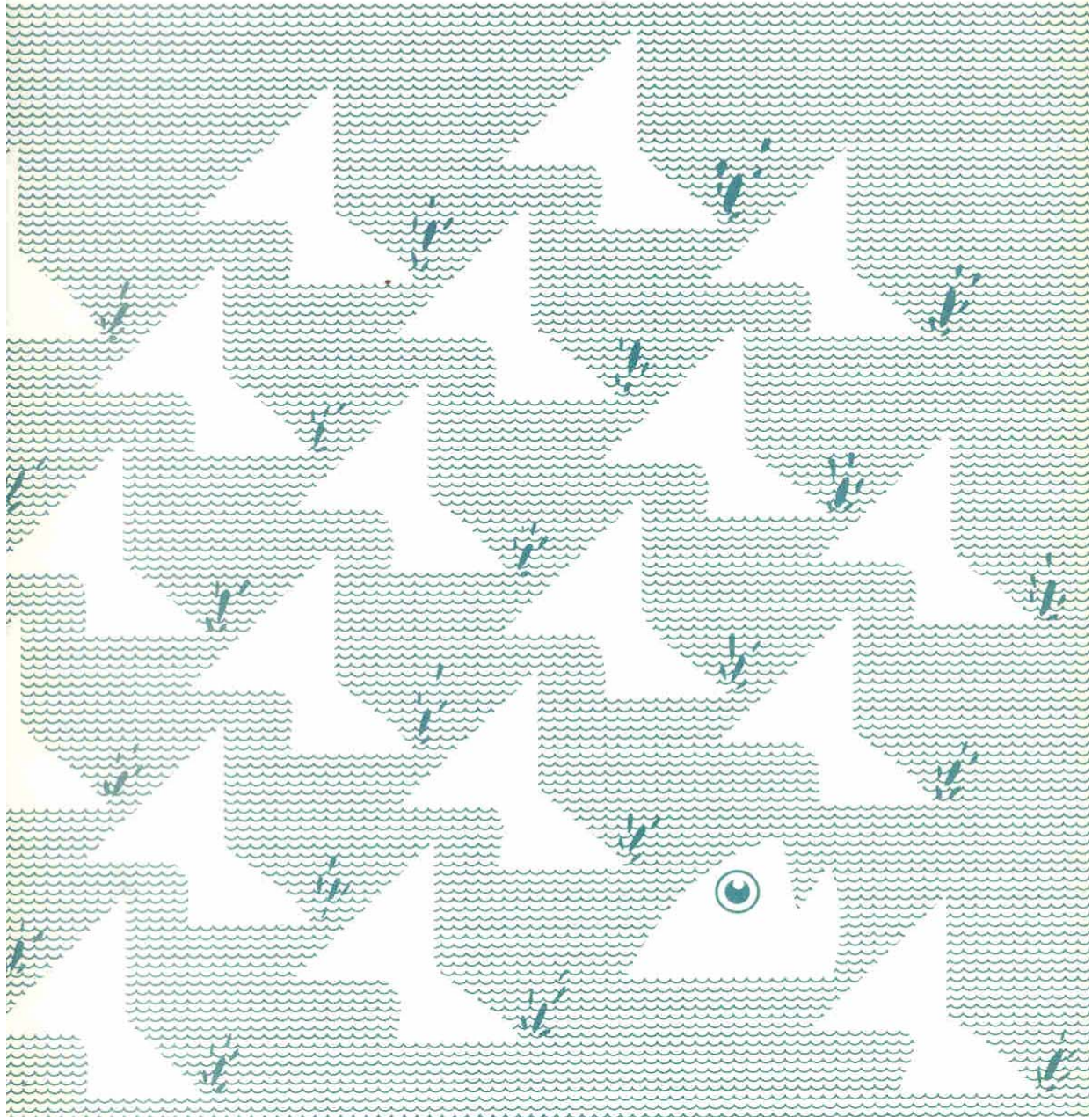


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Miami Seaquarium - Sea Turtles

A dozen Atlantic green sea turtles hatched at the man-made beach at the Miami Seaquarium on October 28, 1983, marking the first time Atlantic greens have been conceived and born outside their natural habitat.

The turtles were spotted crawling along the beach, towards the water in the Lost Islands section of the Seaquarium. They were taken to a holding tank, where they will be raised until next spring, when they will be released into the Atlantic Ocean off Cape Florida State Park, just 5 miles from the Seaquarium.

"This is an extremely important step in the preservation of the species, Seaquarium General Manager Warren Killer said. For years we've cooperated with the U.S. and State Government in the Head Start Program to help the chances of survival for these turtles. But now we know that adult turtles in captivity can successfully conceive offspring and that the eggs will hatch on a man-made beach.

The chances of these turtles reaching maturity are nearly 100 percent. Those born in the wild face much tougher odds."

Greens and other sea turtles have been declared endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Department of Natural Resources. Young hatchlings are especially vulnerable to human tampering with the nests, to predators, to pollution and to development along the beaches.

Those that manage to hatch are still endangered by natural predators such as crabs and fish, Zeiller said.

The hatchlings born today measured approximately 1½ inches across the shell, they will be kept at

the Seaquarium until they reach a shell length of 6 to 7 inches and weigh approximately 500 grams. At that size, their chances of survival are greatly improved.

Zeiller said the young turtles will be released in the spring along with several hundred greens that were rescued off Florida beaches last month and brought to the Seaquarium as part of the Head Start Program.

Green sea turtles are known to grow to 500 pounds and more. Tagged green turtles released from the Seaquarium over the past 11 years have been spotted all over the Atlantic Ocean, as far north as the coast of Holland.

The artificial beach from which the turtles hatch was made from sand recovered off the coast of Miami Beach. The nesting beach is 8 feet deep, and slopes towards the pools in the Lost Island, which has been declared a wild life sanctuary by the Tropical Audubon Society.

