

**TURTLE - COUNTRY REPORT  
FIJI -1991**

Fiji has 4 species of turtles of which 2 are quite important and also quite common to Fiji waters. Hawksbill locally known as Taku is the most common and the green turtle also found in large numbers known as Vonudina are both consumed locally.

**Export**

Both raw and worked turtle shells have been exported for a long time. Though no reliable export data is available figure 1 shows the trend of the export for last 10 years.

Since the beginning of 1991 detailed export records of all marine resources are compiled at Fisheries Division (a permit from Fisheries Division is required for each consignment exported). Out of the 1044 kg of turtle shells exported till end of July this year 944 kg was still unworked (raw) shells even though there was a total ban on export of raw shells from the beginning of this year. This was due to the fact that shell exporters held a large stock of raw shells when the regulation came into effect. There is still some shells left ( in fact 148 kg) with one exporter who may export unworked shells since the division has already given him approval. As one would expect any turtle shell exported from this month will all be in the processed form.

**Meat Consumption**

Turtle meat is widely consumed in Fiji both for traditional and commercial use. It has a special place in the Fijian traditional customs. Both of the commonly found species are consumed and both of them command a similar price for its meat.

Figure 1 shows the volume of turtle meat that moved through the commercial trading for the last 12 years. It should be anticipated that subsistence consumption of turtle meat would be similar to or even more than the volume moved through the commercial sector. At the moment there is no accurate estimate of the subsistence utilization of turtles in Fiji. In 1990 the average price for turtle meat was \$3.64 per kg, sold mostly on roadside stalls and municipal markets and compares very well with top grade fish.

**Turtle Sightings**

During the this season (1990-1991) the following information were gathered:

- . Atleast 4 nesting sites were observed at Mokogai. 450 eggs were moved into cages were all have hatched and are now held at the hatchery on the island and are

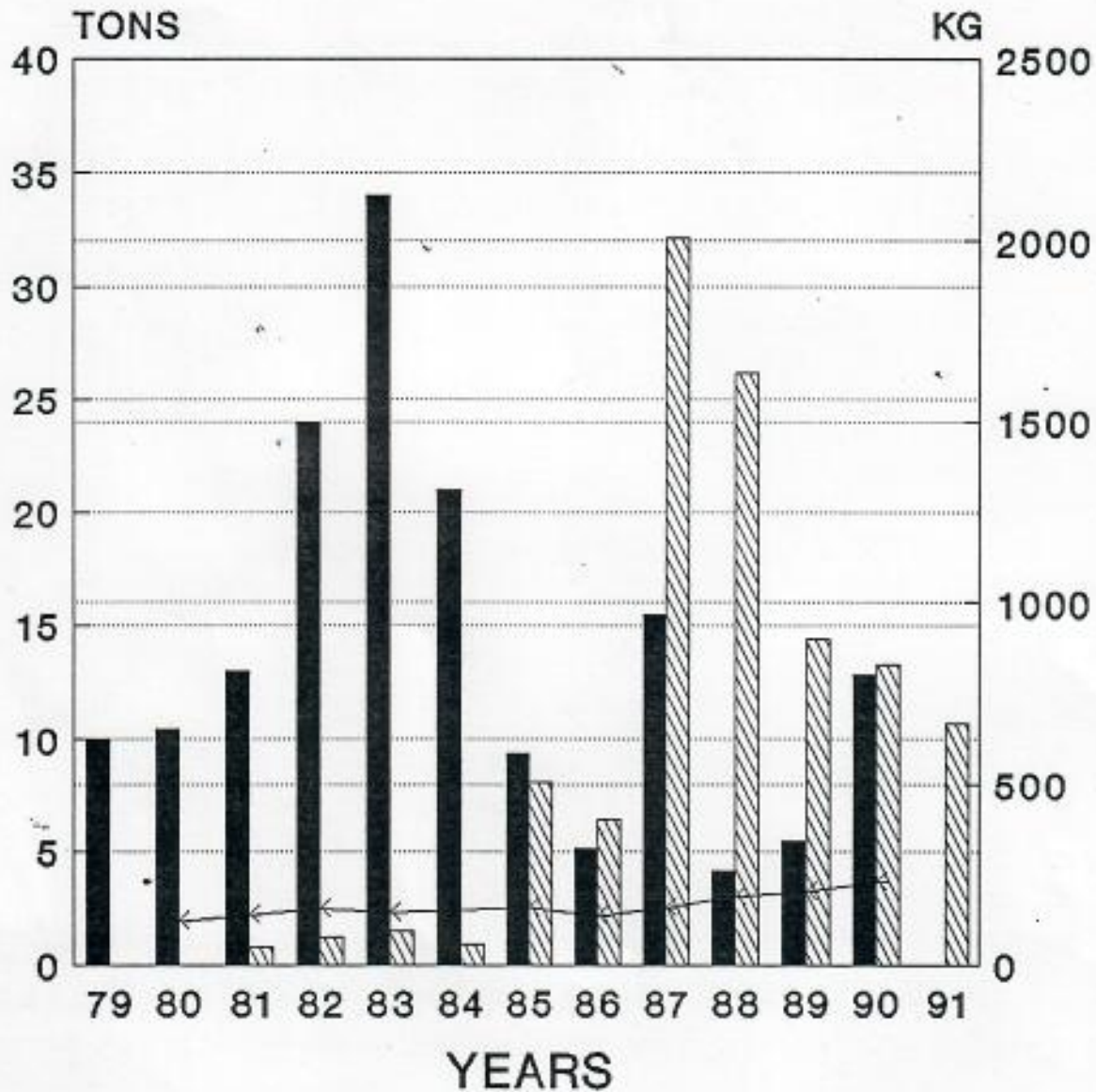
doing very well, growing 1 to 2 cm a month and would be released before the end of the year.

. At Namena Island at least 18 nesting sites were located this season of which, one was in danger of being washed away by heavy swells. With the help of the owner of the island 104 eggs were moved to higher grounds of which 100 of those hatched out successfully. The eggs hatched within 60 days after nesting. All the nestings were of Hawksbill turtle. Fewer turtles nested this season than the previous years. The owner also claimed that a green turtle nested at the island a few years back but there has no further nestings of green turtle.

. The first nesting of this season at Namena Is. was reported on 22nd December.

. One leatherback turtle was captured on 7th Dec at Yaro Passage near Kia Is, by a commercial fisherman, measuring 1.9m and weighing 220 kg (without guts). Since the turtle was caught during closed season it was confiscated, thus getting a lot of publicity on turtles. The huge size and being seen for the first time in the area, brought attention to the news media.

# FIJIAN TURTLE INDUSTRY



Meat consumed
  Shell exported  
\* Meat price

Export data not available for other year