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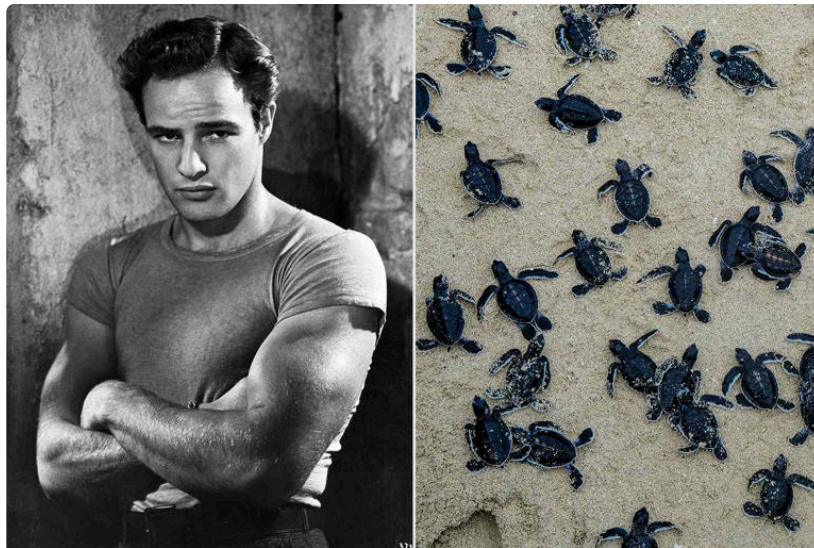
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The 'Godfather' star fell in love with the atoll while filming 'Mutiny on the Bounty' and spent the rest of his life working to protect it



 Marlon Brando, in character as Stanley Kowalski from Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire', Hundreds of baby sea turtles on Thursday, August 4, 2022 were released into the sea in Indonesia's Bangka Belitung island as part of a conservation program Credit: CB/Getty; Resha Juhari/NurPhoto via Getty © CB/Getty; Resha Juhari/NurPhoto via Getty

NEED TO KNOW

- Marlon Brando fell in love with the Tetiaroa Atoll while filming *Mutiny on the Bounty* in the 1960s
- The atoll is now a sanctuary for endangered green sea turtles, with over 15,000 hatchlings recorded in one season
- Brando's vision of conservation inspired a luxury eco-resort and ongoing efforts to protect wildlife and promote sustainability

More than six decades after [Marlon Brando](#) fell in love with a remote Tahitian atoll, the island he devoted himself to protecting has become a sanctuary for thousands of sea turtles.



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Biologists monitoring the Tetiaroa Atoll in French Polynesia recorded an estimated 15,614 green sea turtle hatchlings emerging from nests in a single season, according to figures from the nonprofit [Tetiaroa Society](#) and its research partner [Te mana o te moana](#), as reported by [Upworthy](#).

During the 2024–25 season, researchers documented more than 430 turtle tracks along the atoll's beaches. They identified 113 nesting females and monitored about 161 nests, estimating hatchling numbers by painstakingly counting empty eggshells.



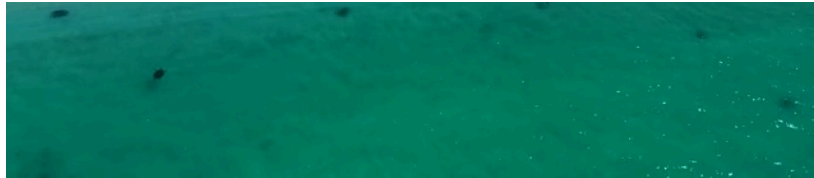
[L](#) Sea turtle hatchlings on a sandy beach moving toward the ocean Credit: Getty

This milestone traces directly back to Brando. The [Godfather](#) star became enamored with Tetiaroa while filming *Mutiny on the Bounty* in the early 1960s. He fell in love with both the atoll and his Tahitian co-star, Tarita Teriipaia, with whom he had two children, Simon and Cheyenne. Captivated by the land, he secured a long-term lease on the roughly 1,445-acre atoll, made up of 12 small islets called motus, and set out to preserve its wildlife, ecology, and culture.

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 B2B Castaways (Strick and Fran)

Stranded on a remote island when we found a turtle in trouble



“For Marlon, Tetiaroa was his paradise,” his estate co-executor Mike Medavoy told [The Hollywood Reporter](#). “It was a place for him to get away from everything. This was especially important to a person who had a whole thing about the difference between being a celebrity and being a human being.”

But his ambitions reached beyond a personal escape. Brando envisioned the atoll as a working model for conservation, once expressing hope that the island would serve as an ecological model and not just a tourist preserve, but a place where research and sustainability could thrive.

Though Brando died in 2004 at age 80, that vision endured. The Tetiaroa Society was established to protect the atoll through a research and education center and to explore new forms of conservation and alternative energy.



└ Two baby turtles begin their life at sea after leaving the beach of Tetiaroa Credit: Alexis Rosenfeld/Getty

The green sea turtle — known as honu in Tahitian and, according to the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#), the world’s largest hard-shelled sea turtle — is central to that vision. The atoll is one of the region’s major nesting sites for the endangered species, and protecting the turtles is a core activity of the atoll’s on-site Ecystation research hub.



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That commitment shapes the guest experience at The Brando, the luxury eco-resort that opened on the atoll in 2014. As [Forbes Travel Guide notes](#), the resort's 35 villas sit well back from the beach and are surrounded by trees so their lights don't disorient the protected sea turtles nesting on the shore.

The property's sustainability efforts go further: thousands of solar panels produce nearly all the resort's electricity; a seawater air-conditioning system slashes cooling-related energy use; and materials from champagne bottles to old flip-flops are recycled. Guests can also take a "Green Tour" to see the composting and renewable-energy systems firsthand.

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Decades later, the actor's vision of an island where people and nature coexist has become tangible and measured, in part, by giving over 15,000 tiny turtles a clear, safe path to the sea.

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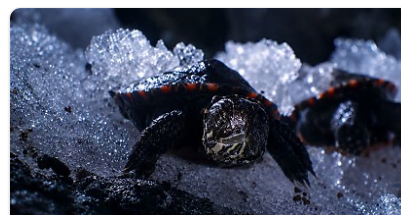
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