



## **Turtle Deaths Will Not Stop Unless We Stop**

Press Statement for immediate release - 27th January 2022

25th January saw the twelfth dead sea turtle found in Terengganu this year so far, compared to fifty-five from the entirety of 2021. This raises critical concerns on the alarming number of turtle deaths recorded within such a short period.

Sea turtles, arguably the most iconic animals in Terengganu's culture and heritage are even more important to the marine ecosystems – meaning their absence could lead to the collapse of oceans that Terengganu's fishing and tourism industry depend on.

Accidental deaths at this scale not only harms the ocean but Terengganu's culture, economy, and its heritage. These mass deaths are the point of no return for the endangered sea turtles and warrants the dire need of immediate action to prevent such further deaths.

A carcass found earlier on Kapas Island, was an adult female green turtle that died due to suspected plastic ingestion, while the death of an adult male green turtle found a day prior was believed to have been entangled in a fishing net.

The Department of Fisheries Malaysia as the governing authority for such matters acts and responds to reports of stranded turtles, as well as monitors the numbers of deaths.

The reported number of stranded turtles so far in 2022 is also raising alarm bells within the wider marine conservation community.

Gail Tay, Director of Operations and Programmes for The International SeaKeepers Society, Asia, a nonprofit marine conservation group commented, *"The assumptions thus far are that the cause of deaths is mainly due to marine debris or pollution. In 2021, 20 sea turtle deaths were officially reported in the first 5 months. In comparison, the unprecedented numbers of stranded dead turtles found in such a short period this year, strongly indicates that there may be other mitigating factors. We need to get a deeper understanding of the root cause of the puzzling deaths of these already endangered species."*

Added Kapas Turtles Co-Founder, Rani Awang, *"Our community group strongly supports the recommendation by Dr Mohd Uzair Rusli Head of External Research Laboratory Institute of Oceanography and Environment, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, to form a special task force to conduct further investigations through postmortems of the stranded sea turtles. On average, only one in every 1,000 hatchlings are estimated to survive until adulthood while the rest are eaten by predators at sea. Personally, I have seen the numbers of sea turtles in Terengganu declining sharply over the years and I urge everyone to help to protect our sea turtles."*

Aside from the immediate action taken from all relevant government agencies, this problem also needs the initiative from the public to champion the efforts of conserving Terengganu's sea turtles. One way is to prevent plastic waste from reaching the ocean by reducing, re-using, recycling and to keep the beaches clean. Members of the public are also urged to report sightings of stranded turtles to the Department of Fisheries.

## Green Turtle Facts

Green turtles are the largest species of hard-shelled turtles and second largest sea turtle. These turtles are in danger from human poachers who take their precious eggs and human pollution, in the form of plastics, fishing nets, and marine traffic.

- Green sea turtles are classified as an Endangered species
- They are typically 91 to 122 cm long and weigh 136 to 159 kilos.
- Turtles are critical to maintaining healthy coral ecosystems.
- The turtles bring needed nutrients to maintain healthy beaches.
- The green sea turtle population seems to be growing on Kapas, but more data is needed.
- Male green sea turtles have been spotted in the area year-round leaving some to speculate that they are establishing habitat.

Photo: A "Nester" from Kapas Island.



## More About Kapas Turtles Project



Kapas is a small island, in the sparkling waters off the Terengganu coast in Malaysia. Only about 30 minutes from Kuala Terengganu, and a 15-minute boat ride from the jetty in Marang, Terengganu, this small island is a jewel to locals, foreigners, and once again the green turtles.

Kapas Turtles is a community-based project focused on turtle conservation on the island of Kapas. The community volunteers monitor turtle nesting and activities to improve the protection of these endangered turtles. They do this on a volunteer basis while running their resort activities. Since turtles' nest at night, and nesting lasts into the morning hours, this is a very exhausting time for the dedicated locals during nesting season.

For more information visit:



[KapasTurtles](#)

## More About The International SeaKeepers Society



The International SeaKeepers Society is a non-profit organisation focusing on the health of the world's oceans and climate. SeaKeepers works with the boating and yachting community to make the most of their unique potential to further marine research, and to raise awareness about the issues our oceans face. The International SeaKeepers Society acts as a global catalyst, working with governments, scientists, industries, and other marine organisations, to further its mission and to support sensible, achievable marine protection and restoration.

Our motto of Research, Educate, Protect and Restore is achieved through our program streams which include scientist led expeditions, instrument deployments, educational outreach, and community engagement. The International SeaKeepers Society established SeaKeepers Asia in 2016. This expansion, of the new Chapter in Asia, was established under the leadership of Julian Chang.

For more information visit: [www.seakeepers.org](http://www.seakeepers.org)  
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