

Go slow for turtles and dugongs

Turtles and dugongs are two species of concern in the wake of extreme weather events recently experienced in Queensland. Seagrass meadows, the critical foraging areas for green turtles and dugongs, can be damaged due the physical impacts of wave action and degraded due to poor water quality following floods and cyclones.

Changes in their regular foraging areas can cause green turtles and dugongs to move to other areas in their search for food and significant changes in their movements and health have been recorded after similar extreme weather events in the past.

Surface-breathing marine animals such as turtles and dugongs are vulnerable to injury or death from boat strike when surfacing for air or foraging in shallow areas. It is now more important than ever to be careful when boating in the Marine Park as green turtles and dugongs will be on

the move and may be in areas they are not usually seen. Be on the lookout for surfacing turtles and dugongs in areas such as shallow reef flats and seagrass meadows. Travel slowly and with no wake in these areas.

Populations of turtles and dugongs take a long time to recover if they become depleted so it is up to all Reef users to help protect them and their Reef habitat. All six species of marine turtle found along the Queensland coast are listed as endangered or vulnerable and it may take decades for these turtles to mature and be able to breed.

Dugongs are also slow breeders, with a calving interval of three to seven years and a gestation period of 13 to 15 months. Animals of breeding age are precious as they produce the next generation and ensure the survival of the species.

How the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is helping

Experts from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority are working with partner research organisations and other government agencies to track the movements of green turtles and dugongs, and analyse water quality and the health of seagrass meadows and coral reefs in the aftermath of cyclones and floods.

This research will provide vital information on how green turtles and dugongs respond when their seagrass meadows are damaged and allow managers and researchers to better understand the impact of extreme weather events on marine animals and their habitat.

What you can do to help Go slow – lookout below!

1 Keep a good lookout on the water

2 Avoid shallow seagrass meadows

3 If you cannot avoid seagrass meadows, reduce your speed to below 10 knots



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

**Report sick, injured or dead
marine animals on 1300 130 372**