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Turtle Protection Comparison Report

How do turtle protections in the BVI compare to other Caribbean Countries?

By

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REPORT: How do turtle protections in the BVI compare to other Caribbean Countries?

The request was made to see how the Bristish Virgin Islands (BVI) compares to other Caribbean countries with respect to turtle protection. The ProtectedSeas database found 178 sites in the Caribbean that mention turtles for the following 22 countries and territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, French Antilles, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Netherland Antilles, Saba, St Kitt and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos.

Based on this review, the **BVI ranks at about 14 out of 22**. BVI protects turtle nests, nesting females, turtle eggs, as well as leatherback and loggerhead turtles year-round. Taking green and hawksbill turtles above the size restriction is allowed for 4 months out of the year (December 1 to March 31). Possession of turtles on sportfishing vessels or pursuant to a pleasure fishing license is prohibited.

The following 11 countries/territories provide full protection, meaning that their laws prohibit the taking of all species of sea turtles, year-round. Potentially all also prohibit the taking of turtle eggs, and most restrict the purchase, sale, and possession of turtle meat, shells, and other turtle products.

- Anguilla
- Netherland Antilles
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Jamaica
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- French Antilles (* for Martinique)
- Cuba*
- Saba*

* regulations on turtle eggs/products unclear

[1] RESTRICTED:
- It is illegal to remove from the fishery waters, expose for sale, sell, purchase or have in one's possession any undersized turtle or to catch any leatherback sea turtle or loggerhead sea turtle. Undersized means a carapace (shell) length less than 24 inches for green sea turtles and less than 15 inches for hawksbill sea turtles.
- The annual closed season is from 1-April to 30-November. During the closed season, it is illegal to fish for, remove from the fishery waters, possess, sell or purchase any turtle.
- It is illegal to capture any species of turtle on any beach (or set within 100 meters of the shore any net, seine or other article for the purpose or with the intention of fishing for, catching or taking, a turtle).
- The possession, purchase or sale of turtle eggs is prohibited.
- It is illegal to have any turtle on board a sportfishing vessel.
- The taking of turtles is prohibited as a condition for a pleasure fishing license.
- All turtles taken (sea or river) must be over 20 pounds.

ALLOWED:
Hawksbill (15+ inches) and green sea turtles (24+ inches) may be legally harvested between 1 December and 31 March. In any case, all turtles taken must be over 20 pounds.
1997 Fisheries Act; 2003 Fisheries Regulations

The remaining countries/territories have varying degrees of protection, but all allow take of sea turtles to some extent. These measures are summarized in the table below.

- Antigua and Barbuda and Cayman Islands have year-round bans on taking turtle eggs and certain species with a 4-month open season for green and loggerhead turtles of a certain size, but rank slightly higher than BVI for the following reasons:
  - Antigua and Barbuda fully protect more species: leatherback, hawksbill, olive ridley, kemp's ridley
  - Cayman Islands only protect leatherback and hawksbill turtles, but have further limitations on how many turtles may be taken (quota is 4) and who may take them (residents only)

- Saint Lucia and Turks and Caicos are roughly on par with BVI:
  - Saint Lucia protects turtle eggs, nests and nesting females, as well as leatherback turtles, but allows take of hawksbill, green, and loggerhead turtles of a certain size for varying seasons each year (in 2013 it was 3 months).
  - Turks and Caicos protects turtle eggs and nesting females, as well as leatherback, loggerhead, Kemp's ridley, and olive ridley turtles, but allows take of green turtles of a certain size all year and hawksbill turtles of a certain size for 4 months out of the year.

- Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Montserrat, and St. Kitts and Nevis rank lower than BVI:
  - Dominica protects turtle eggs, nests and nesting females, but allows take of all species over 20 lbs. for 8 months each year.
  - Dominican Republic protects turtle eggs and nesting females, but allows take of green, loggerhead, and leatherback turtles of certain sizes all year and take of hawksbill turtles of a certain size for 8 months each year.
  - Grenada protects turtle eggs and leatherback nests and other nests during a closed season, as well as leatherback turtles, but allows take of other sea turtles (varies) for 7 months of the year.
  - Haiti protects turtle eggs and nesting females, but allows take of sea turtles for 6 months of the year.
  - Montserrat protects turtle eggs and nesting females, but allows take of all sea turtles over 50 lbs. for 3 months of the year.
  - St Kitts and Nevis protects turtle eggs, nests and nesting females, but allows take of turtles that are not undersized (leatherback: under 350lbs; green: under 180lbs; hawksbill: under 85lbs; loggerhead: under 10lbs) for 5 months each year.

Country	Prohibition on taking eggs	N (nest)/NF (nesting females) prohibitions	Take prohibitions	Open Season	Allowed
Antigua and Barbuda	Y	N/NF	leatherback, hawksbill, olive ridley, kemp's ridley	Season varies Default = closed	green (<24in), loggerhead (<24in)
Cayman Islands	Y		leatherback, hawksbill	4 months	green (16-24in), loggerhead (16-24in) *Residents only *Quota: 4
BVI	Y	N/NF	leatherback, loggerhead	4 months	green (>24in), hawksbill (>15in)
Saint Lucia	Y	N/NF	Leatherback	varies (3 months in 2013)	hawksbill (>60), green (>75), loggerhead (>75)
Turks and Caicos	Y	NF	Leatherback, loggerhead, kemp's ridley, olive ridley	[green: all year] [hawksbill: 4 months	hawksbill (18-24in); green (18-24in)
Dominica	Y	N/NF		8 months	all species > 20lbs
Dominican Republic	Y	NF		All year [hawksbill: 8 months]	green (>35in), hawksbill (>28in), loggerhead (>59in), leatherback (>59in)
Grenada	Y	N (leatherback only); N (closed season)	leatherback	7 months	Varies
Haiti	Y	NF		6 months	
Montserrat	Y	NF		3 months	all species > 50lbs
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Y	N/NF		5 months	leatherback (>350lbs), green (>180lbs), hawksbill (>85lbs), loggerhead (>10lbs)

Better than BVI
Worse than BVI
Similar to BVI

Report Produced by lawyers, geographers and software professionals
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