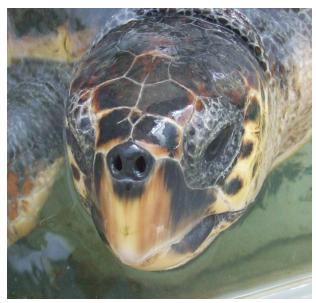
Close-ups of Maltese Nature (45) Animals Around Us (12) – Loggerhead Turtle



Today, we shall be discovering the wonderful Loggerhead Turtle, Maltese: Fekruna Komuni, known as Caretta caretta. This marine turtle has a wide geographical range: including the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans, and within the Mediterranean Sea.

Even though the adult Loggerhead Turtle may reach a length of 100cm, the turtles in the Mediterranean Sea are usually smaller and only reach a length of 50 to 70cm. This turtle has a large heart-shaped shell with an upper-part (carapace) which is typically

reddish-brown in colour, whilst the lower-part (plastron) has a pale yellow colour. The shell is composed of a number of bony plates.

This turtle has a distinctive large head and powerful jaws, use to feed on hardshelled crabs, sea-urchins and molluscs. In addition, whilst in open-water, this turtle also feeds on jellyfish and other animals.

The females typically lay their eggs on beaches, just above the high-tide line, so as not to be reached by the waves. Interestingly, until the 1930's, this turtle used to even lay its eggs on our shores, such as at Ramla I-Ħamra in Gozo.

The Loggerhead Turtle is an endangered species and is protected by a number of local and international legislation. MEPA's work to preserve the species is varied such as issues guidelines to fishermen for the handling of these reptiles; the preparation of an action plan and processing of relevant applications. Additionally, MEPA is involved in, and provides the relevant assistance to the competent entities for, the rescue and rehabilitation of injured turtles, as well as their return into the wild. A survey has also been carried out to record the movements of two released turtles, with the hope of shedding light on their elusive migration patterns.

Should you require more information, please contact nature.requests@mepa.org.mt.

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