



Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtles Could Be Extinct in 20 Years

by Ali Berman
February 28, 2013

A new study by the Center for Biological Diversity found that Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtles could go extinct in as little as 20 years.

Numbers for the turtles have been declining by 5.9 percent since the 1980 s. The study reports, "one of the sites on Bird's Head Peninsula that accounts for 75 percent of total leatherback nesting in the western Pacific — nests have fallen from a peak of 14,455 in 1984 to a low of 1,532 in 2011." They go on to say that since the females come to nest three times a year that puts an approximate total number of turtles in that nesting area at 500. A far cry from the nearly 5,000 that nested there in the 80 s.

Catherine Kilduff from the Center for Biological Diversity said, "This study is a grim warning that we're not doing enough to save leatherback sea turtles or their ocean home. The problems they face — climate change, plastic pollution, fisheries that catch far more than fish — are problems that



threaten us, too. We need to act now to stop these amazing, ancient animals from winking out forever."

Leatherback Sea Turtles are the largest sea turtles on earth. They can weigh between 550 to 2000 pounds and grow as long as six feet. Unfortunately, while they have been protected under the endangered species act, their habitat was not labeled as critical until February of 2012. And that is just off the waters of Washington, Oregon and California where the animals hunt for jellyfish.

The study notes the biggest threats to the species include, "catch in fisheries, predation of eggs and hatchlings by pigs and dogs, beach erosion, elevated sand temperatures at nesting sites and climate-driven oceanographic processes. The scientists concluded that beach conservation alone will not be enough to prevent extinction; they urged additional conservation measures in national and international waters to reverse the decline."

We hope the world takes this study seriously and makes every effort to help the Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle increase its numbers.