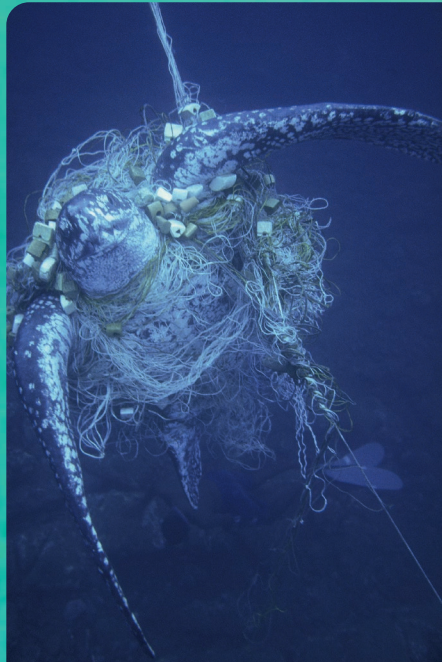




The **NWA Leatherback Regional Action Plan** project focuses on the leatherback sea turtle population of the Guianas (Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana) and neighboring Trinidad and Tobago to implement protection measures for these nesting populations. These nesting sites are known to have the largest populations of Leatherbacks in the Wider Caribbean region.

The action plan identifies the biggest threats to declining leatherback populations. A practical and detailed 5-Year workplan with various actions, activities, and tasks has been developed to mitigate these threats and give the leatherback population a chance to recover and stabilize by 2030. To carry out this workplan, dedicated manpower and funds are needed.

First, regional and national endorsement for the action plan will be obtained. After that, stakeholders will work from different angles to reduce bycatch and increase support from local communities by promoting shared interests, improving knowledge, and tackling socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, proper and careful monitoring of the population must be guaranteed in the coming years, together with ongoing scientific research, to determine the impact of actions taken and make any necessary adjustments to ensure the recovery of the imperiled NWA Leatherback population.



**Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Regional Action Plan Working Group Members:**

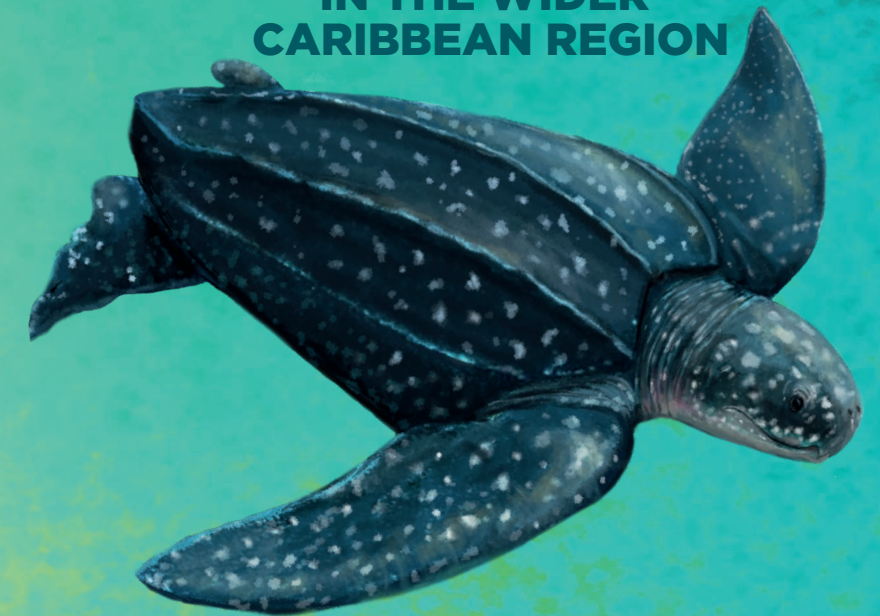
-  **Canada:**  
Thiviya Kanagasabesan (WWF-Canada);
-  **France / French Guiana:**  
Mathilde Lasfargue, Karim Chkioua (Office français de la biodiversité / French Biodiversity Agency), Nicolas Paranthoën (ONF), Audrey Chevallier (WWF-France);
-  **Guyana:**  
Diana Fernandes (WWF-Guianas);
-  **Suriname:**  
Soraya Wijntuin, Michael Hiwat (WWF-Guianas);
-  **The Netherlands / Dutch Caribbean:**  
Arjan de Groene, Monique van de Water (WWF-NL);
-  **Trinidad and Tobago:**  
Danielle Lewis-Clarke, Justine Dolabaille (Environmental Management Authority);
-  **USA:**  
Karen Eckert (WIDECAST).

This project is funded by WWF-NL.



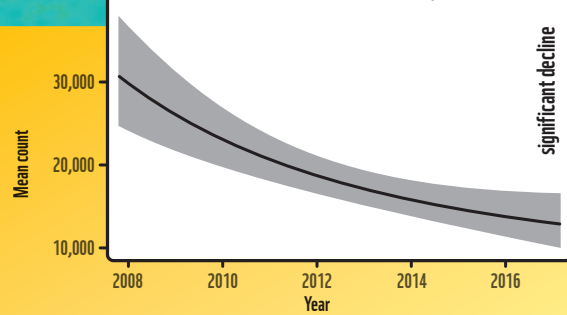
**NORTHWEST ATLANTIC LEATHERBACK**  
*(Dermochelys coriacea)*  
**REGIONAL ACTION PLAN**

**IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION**





### NESTING TRENDS GUIANAS / TRINIDAD



The population of Leatherback sea turtles is declining at a rapid rate. Based on nest count data since 2001, the rate of decline varies per country between 80% and 95%.

### MIGRATION ROUTE OF NORTHWEST ATLANTIC LEATHERBACKS



The Northwest Atlantic (NWA) Leatherback population ranges throughout the Northwestern Atlantic Ocean, from the nesting beaches in the Wider Caribbean Region to the foraging areas that reach all the way to the northeastern waters of the USA and Canada and east into the waters of western Europe and Africa. Major nesting areas occur in Trinidad and Tobago (TT) and the three Guianas (Suriname, Guyana, and French Guiana).

While the precise number of nesting beaches varies considerably from year to year due to coastal dynamics, at present there are 30 known nesting beaches in TT (18 in Trinidad, 12 in Tobago) and five nesting beaches along the shorelines of the Guianas.



**ENDANGERED**

In 2019, IUCN reclassified the NWA Leatherback sea turtle subpopulation as an **endangered** species under Red List criteria A2b.



### THREATS:



IUU (illegal unreported unregulated) fishing



Bycatch (fish trawlers, tuna longlines and drifting gillnets)



Illegal consumption of eggs (mostly green turtle eggs)



human disturbance (e.g. light pollution)



Coastal destruction and alteration



Sandmining



Off-shore oil and gas development



Climate change



Dog predation



Jaguar predation



Eroding beaches



Fifteen years ago (2007), WIDECAS identified 10 WCR nesting beaches as receiving more than 1,000 leatherback nesting crawls per year, while most beaches (92%) hosted fewer than 100 crawls per year.

In a more recent (2019) spatial analysis of sea turtle nesting in the WCR, WIDECAS identified only six leatherback colonies with more than 1,000 nesting crawls per year. These are located in French Guiana, Panama, and Trinidad.

This reduction mirrors the worrisome decline reported by the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Working Group (2018, 2019), based on data pooled from across the NWA Leatherback nesting range. Particularly worrisome declines are noted in the Guianas and Trinidad, once among the largest nesting colonies in the world.

The Leatherbacks consume large amounts of jellyfish which helps to keep the jellyfish population in check. The overabundance of jellyfish may reduce fish populations, which can result in a reduction of the commercially important fish population.

