

CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT AND POLICY

LIGHT POLLUTION GUIDELINES FOR WILDLIFE INCLUDING MARINE TURTLES, SEABIRDS AND MIGRATORY SHOREBIRDS*

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Light pollution is increasing globally by ~2% per year and is a common problem near turtle nesting beaches. Artificial light can disrupt critical behaviours in sea turtles. Nesting female turtles may avoid artificially lit beaches and hatchling turtles may not be able to find the ocean when coastal areas are artificially lit at night, making them more vulnerable to predation. Recent studies have demonstrated that hatchlings in the water are attracted to light, which may delay their dispersal to the open ocean or trap them in light pools increasing their risk of predation at sea. To address this conservation challenge, the Australian Government developed Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife including Marine Turtles, Seabird and Migratory Shorebirds (Light Pollution Guidelines). The Light Pollution Guidelines aim to raise awareness of the potential impacts of artificial light on marine turtles and provide a framework for assessing and managing these impacts near important nesting beaches. The Guidelines provide foundational knowledge on the potential biological impacts of artificial light, as well as consistent, standardised and transparent processes and expectations for assessing, measuring, auditing and managing artificial light around wildlife. Although the Light Pollution Guidelines were developed within the Australian context, the pervasive nature of light pollution means that the broad principles, process, and technical information provided in the Light Pollution Guidelines can be applied in other countries experiencing similar challenges. On this basis, the Australian Light Pollution Guidelines were presented to 13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) in Gandhinagar, India in February 2020. The Guidelines were endorsed, and the Secretariat requested to promote the Light Pollution Guidelines amongst subsidiary agreements to the CMS, such as the Indian Ocean South East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOESA).



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