



Wildlife officer Doug Coughran weighs one of the 30 hatchling loggerhead turtles washed up on beaches between Ocean Reef and Mandurah. Photo courtesy *The West Australian*.

At loggerheads with weather

LOGGERHEAD turtle hatchlings like this one being weighed by wildlife officer Doug Coughran, have a tough time at this time of year.

Recent stormy weather conditions have seen more than 30 of the tiny turtles, hurled onto beaches between Ocean Reef and Mandurah.

The turtles usually hatch on the coast between Shark Bay and Exmouth

Gulf and swim to the warmer waters of Shark Bay.

Some hatchlings become caught in the Leeuwin Current, which sweeps them down the coast where colder waters and exhaustion prevent them from feeding properly.

Storms then wash the weakened turtles ashore with many ending up as a tasty feed for crabs and birds.

Of the 30 or so turtles, aged from a few weeks to a few months, 20 have survived.

The hatchlings, the tiniest measuring about four centimetres across the shell, and one green turtle thought to be about 15 years old, were fed, measured and tagged.

After they had recovered, part of a joint CALM and Royal Australian Navy project

saw the turtles placed on board the Navy patrol boat HMAS *Geraldton*.

The tagged turtles were later released into warmer waters off Dampier where CALM staff will keep track of their progress.

Loggerhead turtles have been known to live up to 100 years, grow to more than a metre in shell length and weigh 140 kg.



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