Leatherbacks of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Leatherback turtles (Dermochelys coriacea) are the largest of all sea turtles and are the only ones with a thick, rubbery skin rather than a hard shell. The leatherback can grow to a length of seven feet (over two metres) and weigh up to 900 kilograms.

Diet
Leatherbacks feed almost exclusively on soft bodied animals like jellyfish aided by their delicate scissor-like jaws.

Migration
Female turtles fitted with satellite transmitters from the Andamans indicate two corridors of migration. Some turtles migrated eastwards to Australia while others migrated westward towards Madagascar and the east coast of Africa.

Threats
The greatest threats faced by leatherbacks globally are habitat loss, incidental bycatch and accidental ingestion of plastics which are mistaken for jellyfish.

Tagging
Tagging is a valuable source of information on various aspects of reproductive biology, growth, population size and migration as it allows researchers to identify each turtle with a unique ID number.

Nesting
They lay about 80-100 eggs in a clutch and can nest 4-7 times a season.

The eggs are the size of billiard balls and take about 65 days to hatch.

Nesting Beaches
The beaches of Little Andaman Island and Great and Little Nicobar Islands are the most significant leatherback nesting beaches between Southeast Asia and South Africa (with over 1000 nests per season).