Passage 4

Grade 3 · Nonfiction · 274 words

Nonfiction

I read it: ☆ ☆ ☆

Sea Turtles: Ocean Travelers

1 Sea turtles are reptiles that spend almost their whole lives in the ocean. They are strong swimmers. Instead of feet, they have long flippers that work like paddles. Unlike many land turtles, a sea turtle cannot pull its head or flippers inside its shell.

2 Even though they live in water, sea turtles breathe air with lungs. They must swim to the surface to take a breath. When a sea turtle is resting, it can hold its breath for a long time.

3 The biggest sea turtle is the leatherback. Instead of a hard shell, it has a tough, leathery back. A large leatherback can weigh more than 1,000 pounds!

4 Sea turtles may swim thousands of miles in their lives, but female sea turtles come back to land to lay their eggs. On a warm night, a mother turtle crawls up onto a sandy beach. She digs a deep hole with her back flippers and lays about one hundred eggs, each about the size of a ping-pong ball. Then she covers the nest with sand and returns to the sea.

5 The eggs stay warm in the sand for about two months. Then the baby turtles, called hatchlings, break out of their shells and dig their way up to the surface, usually at night. They scramble toward the brightest part of the sky, which is normally the moonlight shining over the ocean.

6 Bright lights from houses and streets can confuse the hatchlings and lead them the wrong way. That is why some beach towns ask people to turn off outdoor lights during nesting season. Small actions like this help more baby sea turtles reach the water safely.

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