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[Sea Turtles, Victims Of Oil Spill, Play Key Role In Ecosystem](#)

First Posted: 07-22-10 12:08 PM | Updated: 07-22-10 12:08 PM



The devastation wrought by the BP oil spill on the Gulf of Mexico's threatened and endangered sea turtles could have even further-reaching effects because of the critical role turtles play in the ocean ecosystem, a new report says.

The report, from the ocean conservation group Oceana, is titled: "[Why Healthy Oceans Need Sea Turtles: The Importance of Sea Turtles to Marine Ecosystems](#)".

"Sea turtles are ambassadors to our oceans," Elizabeth Wilson, a marine scientist for Oceana said in a statement. "It is tragic that these magnificent animals are being killed by the oil spill. Each sea turtle lost as a result of the oil spill will further disrupt this marine ecosystem."

The report explains that sea turtles perform vital functions such as maintaining healthy seagrass beds with their grazing, making coral reefs healthier by removing sponges as they forage and keeping jellyfish populations in check.

Just as oil-coated seabirds visually represent the damage caused by the oil to the Gulf coast's shorelines, dead and dying sea turtles represent the mostly unseen toll that massive plumes of dispersed oil are taking below the surface.

Graceful and normally long-lived, sea turtles are particularly vulnerable to the effects of oil in the water, as the Huffington Post [chronicled here](#).

Meanwhile, the ongoing [mass relocation of hatchlings](#) to Florida's Atlantic Coast has been guided more by hope and guesswork than by science.