



Turtle Debate: Can Sea Turtles Live In Freshwater?



With seven species of sea turtles that range from small to large, these magnificent marine reptiles have stood the test of time and have been around for over 110 million years.

Sea turtles are among the oldest creatures on earth, and during their time here they have evolved to become perfectly adapted for marine life.

In this post, we're going to take a closer look at the sea turtle's habitat and answer a question many turtle enthusiasts ask. **Can sea turtles live in freshwater?**

No, sea turtles are unable to live long-term in freshwater as they rely on the marine ecosystem for food and ultimately their survival. However, they are able to survive in freshwater for short periods without much happening to them.

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Can Any Sea Turtles Live In Freshwater?

Sea turtles are perfectly adapted to live in the sea (the clue is in the name). They have evolved over millions of years to survive in marine ecosystems and play a crucial role in maintaining them.

However, sea turtles are able to survive in freshwater for an extended period of time, albeit not as stress-free as they would in their own

saltwater habitats, but they can survive.

Sea turtles may struggle to maintain buoyancy at first in freshwater due to the lessened gravity but once it adapts they will be able to survive for months.

The problem is that sea turtles feed on crabs, jellyfish, whelks, mollusks, and many other types of marine prey.

This means that sea turtles living in freshwater will struggle to find enough of as well as the right type of food in order to sustain themselves.

Can Any Turtles Live In Freshwater?

Of 356 turtle species in total, only 7 are sea turtles, 60 are terrestrial tortoises, and the remaining live in freshwater environments such as lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds.

There are many species of turtle that live specifically in freshwater, and many of these would lose body mass and die if exposed to saltwater, unlike their sea turtle cousins.

Freshwater turtles are known as terrapins. They often have a life span of between 10 – 30 years and are usually no bigger than 15 – 30cm.

Below are some examples of freshwater turtles (terrapins):

- Diamondback terrapin
- Painted turtle
- Common snapping turtle
- European pond turtle
- Box turtle
- Map turtle

Do Sea Turtles Need Saltwater?

Sea turtles naturally live in the ocean which is salt water. They rely on marine ecosystems for food and help maintain seagrass beds and coral reefs.

Although some sea turtles could survive in freshwater, it's not optimal and they would likely start to experience negative health effects over time.

Sea turtles also only drink seawater from the ocean, they have special glands behind each eye called "salt glands" that they use to get rid of salt from the seawater.

Not only that, but sea turtles lay their eggs on the beach, so without this, they would struggle to reproduce and lay eggs and therefore the sea turtle population would suffer.

Despite sea turtles technically being able to survive in freshwater, ultimately they would likely die over a long period of time.

Final Thoughts

So, can sea turtles live in freshwater? No, sea turtles are required to live in marine ecosystems in order to thrive in their natural habitats.

Freshwaters do not offer enough food for sea turtles and are far from optimal for these types of turtles.

Although there are many other species of turtle that reside in freshwater, sea turtles are perfectly adapted to life in the ocean and rely on it heavily for survival.

The ocean is vast and provides plenty of food for sea turtles to eat, whereas ponds, rivers, and other freshwaters simply do not have this abundant resource.

Thanks for taking the time to read this post and learn more about sea turtles' natural habitat. If you would like to learn more about these amazing marine reptiles feel free to stick around.



George Taylor

Hi, I'm George – the founder of MarinePatch. I created this blog as marine wildlife has been my passion for many years. I've spent over a decade in the marine wildlife industry and spent years out in the field conducting research. In today's modern world, an online blog is the best place for me to share my findings and reach as many people as possible to help educate and inspire others. Enjoy your time here and you're welcome back anytime!