

[Press release: World Wildlife Day: A helping hand to turtles and mangroves](#)

Government-funded projects to protect the world's turtles and mangroves have been praised by the Environment Minister on World Wildlife Day.

Today (Sunday 3 March) marks [United Nations World Wildlife Day](#). The theme for this year is 'Life below water: for people and planet'.

One of the key animals whose plight is being highlighted is the turtle, targeted for their eggs, meat and shells. Turtles have also suffered from habitat loss due to construction on coastlines.

The UK Government's [Darwin Initiative](#) has supported the work of Flora and Fauna International to help these important sea creatures. One such project to protect leatherback and hawksbill turtles in Nicaragua has achieved a significant reduction in the illegal harvesting of their eggs.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

World Wildlife Day is a chance to celebrate the wonderful individuals and organisations in coastal communities around the globe who are dedicated to protecting our flora and fauna.

I am pleased to see this successful work to protect turtles in Nicaragua. The Darwin Initiative is critical in supporting this type of international conservation project.

The UK is also a global leader in providing support and finance to help coastal communities protect and enhance vital resources, such as mangroves. This overseas support is critical to delivering on our ambition to be the first generation to leave our environment in a better state than we found it.

[Flora & Fauna International](#) has been working to protect marine turtles in Nicaragua for 15 years and a key part of that work has been ensuring local communities are central to conservation initiatives.

The most recent project received £385,617 from the UK Government's [Darwin Initiative](#) in 2017 and has been achieving significant success for young turtle hatchlings.

Joanna Elliot, Senior Director, Conservation Partnerships, [Fauna & Flora International](#) said:

In Nicaragua we have worked with our community partners to bring about a 95% reduction in the number of turtle eggs that are

illegally harvested and ensured more than 190,000 leatherback and hawksbill hatchlings have begun their ocean lives that otherwise would have been lost.

Support from the Darwin Initiative has been critical in helping us find a solution that has not only benefitted biodiversity but also directly improved the lives and livelihoods of local people through jobs and business opportunities in tourism and related sectors.

A video of the project helping turtles in Nicaragua is available to view [here](#).

2019 marks the Government's Year of Green Action, a year-long drive to help people to connect with, protect and enhance nature.

The Darwin Initiative is a grants scheme that helps to protect biodiversity and the natural environment around the globe. These projects reflect the UK Government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) commitments to protect the marine environment, to secure the benefits of biodiversity for the poorest communities and to help prevent the extinction of species.

Blue Forests

In 2016, the UK Government funded the establishment of the 'Blue Forests' initiative run by British organisation [Blue Ventures](#). The aim of the project is to reduce deforestation of mangroves habitat, create new sustainable livelihoods, support community health and women's empowerment and increase climate resilience in coastal communities.

This initiative has been funded through the UK's [International Climate Finance](#) programme and plays a crucial role in addressing the global challenge of Climate Change.

So far, Blue Ventures has worked with over 6,000 coastal people, empowering local management of 160,000 hectares (ha) of mangrove forests at six different sites across three countries, and partner villages have replanted 652,000 mangrove trees.

Dr Alasdair Harris, Executive Director, [Blue Ventures Conservation](#), said:

World Wildlife Day is a rallying reminder of the foundational importance of our planet's biodiversity to all life on Earth. Wildlife underpins all life, and its loss imperils our own future.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the mangrove forests of the tropical Indian and Pacific oceans. These so-called blue forests protect shorelines, absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide, and form the foundation of fisheries and marine ecosystems that underpin coastal economies for hundreds of millions of people.

Defra's work is on the frontline of efforts to reverse mangrove

loss – innovating scalable approaches to conservation that deliver meaningful benefits to people and nature.

Projects like these are illustrative of the 'win-win' approach encouraging sustainable livelihoods whilst conserving some of the world's iconic and endangered species and landscapes, which benefits us all.