Let’s Get Closer with Turtle

Turtle is an animal sea which can find in all oceans in this world. As the scientist research, turtle has been exist since end of Jura’s Era (145-208 million years ago), same like dinosaur. Turtle has a couple of legs as rower which give them power in the water. Even though all his life spends to rove about the sea, they are usually up to surface for earning oxygen. That’s because they are breath with lung. Turtle is grouping on vertebrates and reptile’s class. Generally, turtle is migrating for long way with short travel time. They are took a walk 3000 kilometers only for 58-73 days.

Turtle has a different lay egg cycle from 2-8 years for once. Male turtle usually spend his life in the ocean, but female turtle commonly stops by land to lay egg. Female turtle preferably quietly beach to buriers her egg. Noise and light can makes female turtle refuse to lay egg on a beach.

The hatchlings swim on ocean using earth magnetism for comeback to their hometown. But not all hatchlings would do regeneration. From a hundred eggs, just a dozen will grows up. That’s because hunting activities by their natural predators like crab, bird, mouse, and bigger fish when they on deep ocean.

There are 7 kinds of turtle in this world and six are in Indonesia. The six are Chelonia mydas, Eretmochelys imbricata, Lepidochelys olivacea, Dermochelys coriacea, Natator depressus, and Caretta caretta. Dermochelys coriacea is the biggest turtle with 2,75 meters length, and 600-900 kilograms weight. And the smallest is Lepidochelys olivacea with 50 kilograms weight.

All the kind of the turtles in Indonesia is protected by government rules Number 7 in the years 1999 about Preserving of Any Animals and Plants. That’s mean is all kind of selling turtle even live or die of the body part is prohibited. As rules Number 5 in the years 1990 about The Conservation of Biological Natural Resource and Their Ecosystem, seller and buyer the marketing of animal protected will be punishing in jail for 5 years and in fine one million rupiahs. All using of prohibited animal is only for research, science, and rescuing the kind of its animals.

As rules of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna), all the kind of sea turtle has been added into Appendix I where it means marketing of turtle which commercial purposes is also prohibited. The World Conservation IUCN is adding Eretmochelys imbricata into very-endangered. And Chelonia mydas, Lepidochelys olivacea, and Caretta caretta into endangered.

The threat for turtle is not only by their natural predators but also from black marketing endangered fauna about their body, egg, and meat. The Chelonia mydas is the most selling on black marketing fauna. This is still happening especially on Bali. And Eretmochelys imbricata is the most taking turtle for scales merchandise. Sea pollution by oil and trash are also contributes for turtle’s threat exist.

Why we have to protecting the turtles? What’s function of the turtle for people? These questions was appear when PROFAUNA sit for discussion about turtle conservation. “As the rules, it is obviously that every kind of turtle is protected and prohibiting for marketing. But for human benefit, there are not much explaining about that”, said Bayu Sandi, PROFAUNA Indonesia’s campaigner. For explaining that, PORFAUNA quoting Wilson EG, Mile, KL, Allsion D, and Magliocca M which published on oceana.org.

As Wilson and team, turtle has an important role to keep ocean ecosystem. The healthy ocean will be habitat of million fish as protein source for people. For example Chelonia mydas who keep survival of sea grass and seaweed. When they are ‘weeding’, the Chelonia mydas has been helped increasing nutrition and helping the sea grass to growth up. Without constant weeding process, see grass will too much and closing of sea flow. Besides, it obstructs the sun light to penetrate to the sea floor. It causes the down of sea grass to rot and creating the new habitat of fungus.

Turtles whose eating sea grass also helps sea grass moves. Some of them eating it several centimeters from the down of the leave that causes the end of sea grass will disappear. As the result of intensity of that, the sea grass wouldn’t gather on one point but it moves spread. Florida Cove and Mexico Cove is the right model of this case. The death of its sea grass proved that Chelonia mydas is extinct.

Eretmochelys imbricata is also has important role to keep healthy ecosystem. Their mouth which is like bird beak helps them to eating every kind of sponges. With that, they can control the composition of species and distribution of sponge from coral reefs ecosystem. Sponge is fight over the place with coral reef aggressively. With ate by Eretmochelys imbricata, it will give coral reef to colony and grow. Without Eretmochelys imbricata, sponges will dominate of coral reef and changing the structure of ecosystem.

Physic defense and chemistry of the sponge covering the fish and the whole of ocean mammals to eating them. When Eretmochelys imbricata crack the sponge, so the nutrition of the sponge is open up and can ate by ocean species which commonly can’t open up the surface. So indirectly, Eretmochelys imbricata feeding to fish.

Not only Eretmochelys imbricata and Chelonia mydas, Dermochelys coriacea also has important role too. As we know that Dermochelys coriacea is the biggest turtle in the world. He fills his necessary of nutrition and energy from jellyfish. With 2,7 meters length, Dermochelys coriacea can travel the ocean with only by eating the jellyfish as energy source. It can eat around 200 kilograms jellyfish or as weight as African Lion every day.

As the biggest natural predator of jellyfish, Dermochelys coriacea is as balancer of ecology. When the population of Dermochelys coriacea is downward, the jellyfish will boom and replacing the fish population. This issue becomes worst because people are overfishing over the fish and automatically jellyfish will dominate.

What will be happen if the jellyfish is booming? The booming of jellyfish all over the world will inhibit the growth of the fish. Jellyfish is eating egg and larva of fish. Basically, not only Dermochelys coriacea whose can eat jellyfish but also Chelonia mydas and Caretta caretta. But surely, the ocean would never be interest if inhabited only by the jellyfish.

We have to remember that every endangered fauna supposed to be protecting by us. Basically, every creation of God are no one useless even the fauna. As we read before that every fauna on an ecosystem is related each other. One who lost, it is impacting to other species. Even one lost will kills two or more species. We as people who have to help them to survive not only for WWF but all of us have to be animal endangered ambassador for our self.