



PHOTOS BY K. MUGA

FIG. 1. Two *Varanus komodoensis* consuming a freshly captured female *Eretmochelys imbricata* on Komodo Island, Indonesia.

Ecology 81:2305–2313). However, due to their nocturnal oviposition behaviors, their large body size, and protective carapace, adult sea turtles typically experience low rates of predator-induced mortality during their brief period on land (Heithaus et al. 2008. *J. Exp. Mar. Biol. Ecol.* 356:43–51). Among the very few known land predators of adult sea turtles are jaguars (Aur-tar 1994. *Mar. Turt. Newsl.* 67:11–12), large crocodylians (Ortiz et al. 1997. *Chelon. Conserv. Biol.* 2:585–587), and adult Komodo Dragons (*Varanus komodoensis*), noted below.

At least two species of marine turtles, including *E. imbricata*, are known to nest along the shoreline of Komodo National Park in Indonesia (Halim et al. 2001. *Tigerpaper* 28:10–18). At 0530 h on 8 November 2019, along the shore of Loh Liang on the south facing shore of Komodo Island (8.57393°E, 119.49683°S; WGS 84), the lead author observed an adult *V. komodoensis* actively hunting an adult nesting female *E. imbricata*. The turtle had just reached the shore, presumably to nest, and was captured along the water line. The *V. komodoensis*, ca. 2.5 m in total length, continued consuming the turtle until ca. 0940 h, when it was joined by a second, smaller (ca. 1.5 m in total length) *V. komodoensis*. The smaller individual was feeding on the hindquarter (Fig. 1). The turtle's eggs and stomach were consumed through an opened wound in the back-left leg. By 1000 h, the larger *V. komodoensis* lifted the carcass onto the berm and finished consuming the remaining internal organs of the turtle, leaving only the carapace.

While varanids are common predators of sea turtle eggs and hatchlings (Lei and Booth 2018. *Austral Ecol.* 43:309–315), documented events of varanid predation on adult sea turtles are possibly restricted to those by *V. komodoensis*, due to size constraints (Bull et al. 2010. *PLoS ONE* 5:e11097). Generally, introduced ungulates (rusa deer, feral pigs and water buffalo) dominate the diet of adult *V. komodoensis* (Jessop et al. 2007. *Biol. Conserv.* 135:247–255), but marine subsidies such as turtles and their eggs may play a crucial role in their ecology, especially when and where terrestrial prey is scarce (Burden 1928. *Am. Mus. Novit.* 316:1–10; Shine and Somaweera 2019. *Glob. Ecol. Conserv.* 18:1–9).

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**ERETMOCHELYS IMBRICATA (Hawksbill Sea Turtle).**  
**PREDATION.** Sea turtle eggs and hatchlings are subjected to frequent predation by terrestrial predators (Bouchard and Bjorndal 2000.