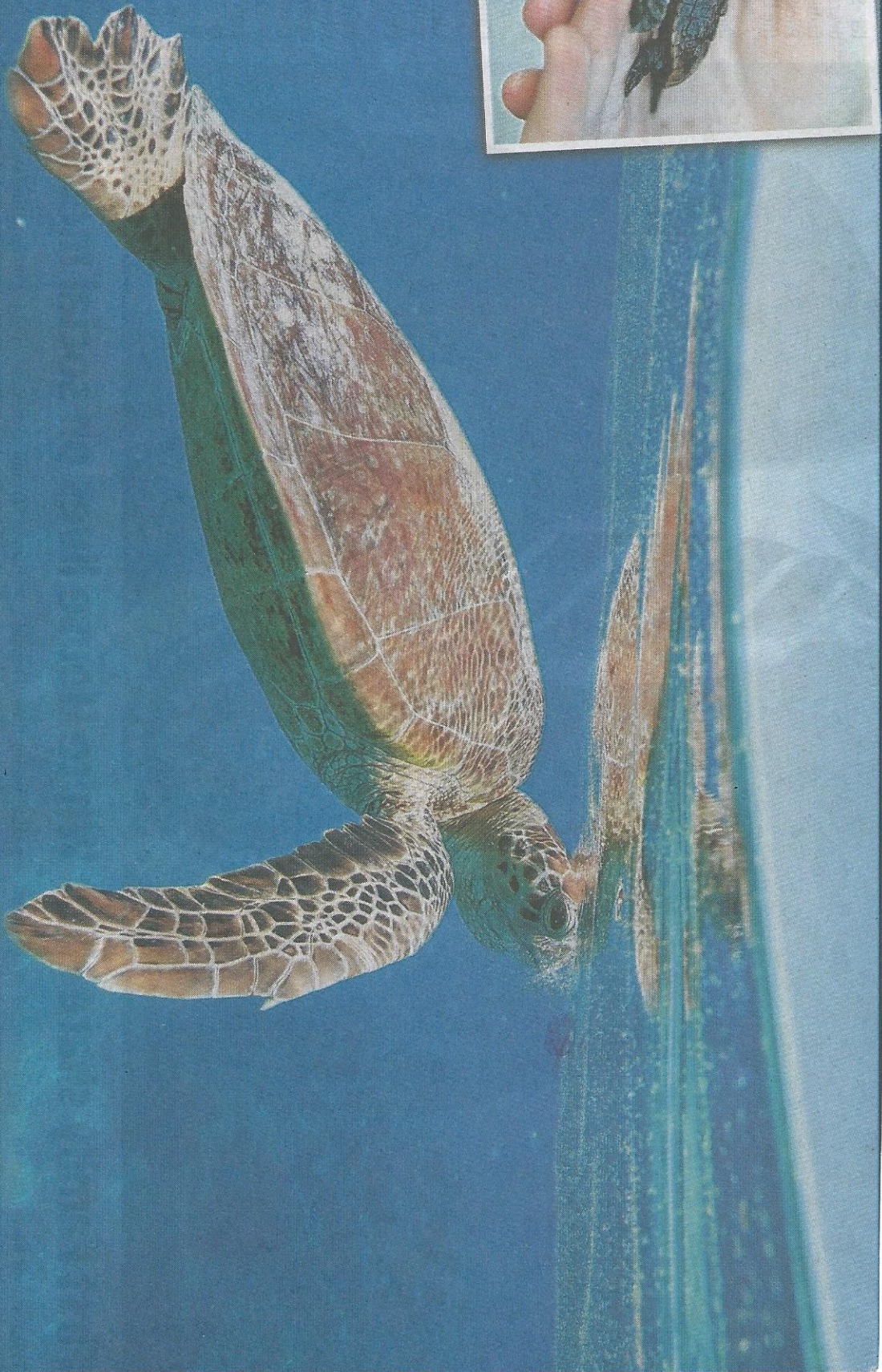




GREENIE: A green sea turtle takes a dip; and (inset) a hatchling at Mon Repos. Pictures: Nigel Hallett



IT'S ONE SHELL OF A RIDE FOR HATCHLINGS

JEREMY PIERCE

ONE of nature's greatest wonders has hatched a tourism boom in central Queensland.

The annual procession of nesting turtles at Mon Repos, near Bundaberg, is in full swing with nightly tours fully booked weeks in ad-

vance. Park rangers at Mon Repos are leading nightly tours of 300 visitors while dozens of people without bookings are being turned away every day.

In one of the great stories of nature, turtles which hatched as babies at Mon Repos decades ago make their way back to the same stretch of sand as adults to lay dozens of eggs

during the summer season. So far more than 350 turtles have laid eggs at Mon Repos, with almost 100 babies hatching over the past week to start their perilous journey into the ocean.

While many travel far and wide during their formative years, all who can will return to the beach to lay their eggs as adults.