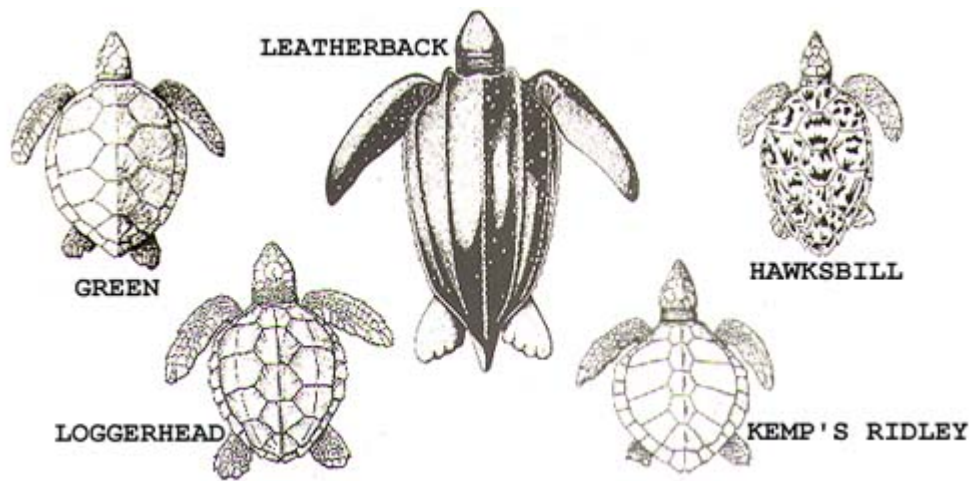


## Sea Turtles of Maryland



**Green Sea Turtle | Hawksbill Sea Turtle  
Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle | Leatherback Sea Turtle  
Loggerhead Sea Turtle | Olive Ridley Sea Turtle**

To report a sea turtle sighting, stranding or death  
please call our hotline:  
1-800-628-9944

Sea turtles are graceful saltwater reptiles, well adapted to life in their marine world. With streamlined bodies and flipper-like limbs, they are able to swim long distances in a relatively short time.

When they are active, sea turtles must swim to the ocean surface to breathe every few minutes. When they are resting, they can remain underwater for as long as two hours without breathing.

Although sea turtles live most of their lives in the ocean, adult females must return to land in order to lay their eggs. Scientists believe that nesting female turtles return to the same beach on which they were born. Often sea turtles must travel long distances from their feeding grounds to their nesting beaches. Just how sea turtles find their nesting beaches is unknown.

All six species of sea turtles in the U.S. are protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). These are the green, hawksbill, Kemp's ridley, leatherback, loggerhead and olive ridley sea turtles. The hawksbill, Kemp's ridley, and leatherback sea turtles are listed as endangered under the ESA. The loggerhead, green and olive ridley sea turtles are listed as threatened, except for the breeding populations of green sea turtles in Florida and on the Pacific coast of Mexico, and breeding populations of olive ridley sea turtles on the Pacific coast of Mexico, which are listed as endangered.

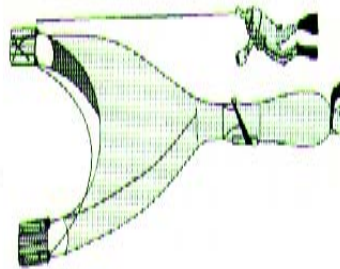
Because sea turtles nest on land, jurisdiction over them is shared between NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For more information please contact:

**Sea Turtle Coordinator**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
6620 Southpoint Drive South, Suite 310  
Jacksonville, FL 3216

**Protection of Sea Turtles**

Through interagency coordination under section seven of the ESA, sea turtles are protected by ensuring that federal actions will not jeopardize the continued existence of the species. Successful consultations have been conducted with the Minerals Management Service for oil and gas activities, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for dredging activities, the U.S. Navy for explosives testing, the Environmental Protection Agency for the designation of dredged material disposal sites, and many other Federal agencies for activities ranging from nuclear power plant construction to scientific research.



Diver filming a TED in operation

One of the most important ways NMFS acts to protect sea turtles is through requiring trawl fisherman to use Turtle Excluder Devices while fishing. The Turtle Excluder Device or TED is a grid of bars with an opening either at the top or the bottom. The grid is fitted into the neck of a shrimp trawl. Small animals like shrimp slip through the bars and are caught in the bag at the end of the trawl. Large animals such as turtles and sharks, when caught at the mouth of the trawl, strike the grid bars and are ejected through the opening.

NMFS has been able to show that TEDs are effective at excluding up to 97% of sea turtles with minimal loss of shrimp. This has enabled NMFS to avoid implementing more restrictive regulations on the shrimp industry.

The National Marine Fisheries Service works daily to balance the nations need for seafood resources and the mandate to recover protected marine species such as sea turtles. The TED-use requirements allow shrimpers to continue fishing in public trust waters and simultaneously to protect sea turtles. This is an example of balancing commercial needs with the biological need of protected resources.

The development and implementation of the consideration to industry concerns and included in their participation in developing the final regulations. Industry representatives also participate in review of new designs for TEDs, some of which

are submitted by the shrimpers themselves. NMFS ensured that the TED requirements were phased in gradually, and has provided numerous workshops and programs to work with the industry regarding TEDs.

With respect to foreign shrimp fisheries, NMFS and the State Department have been working closely with Mexico and other shrimp supplying nations in Latin America to help them develop comparable TED programs. These programs are now in place in about a dozen countries in the wider Caribbean area. In addition, NMFS and the State Department are negotiating an International Sea Turtle Convention to further promote TED programs in other countries.

## Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

The green sea turtle is a medium to large brownish sea turtle with a radiating or mottled pattern of markings on the shell. The head is small in comparison to the other sea turtles and the biting edge of the lower jaw is serrated. Adult shell lengths range in size from 0.9-1.1 meters (36-43 inches) and weights average 90-137 kilograms (200-300 pounds). Primarily a tropical herbivorous species, the juveniles frequently occur in Florida waters, especially in areas abundant with sea grasses. The greatest cause of decline for green turtles has been commercial harvest for eggs and food, as well as leather and jewelry.



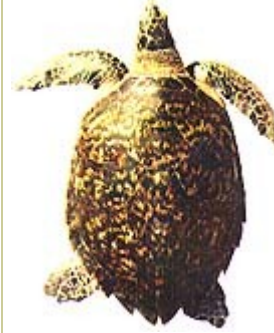
### ESA Status

**Endangered** for Florida and east pacific breeding populations  
**Threatened** everywhere else.

## Hawksbill Sea Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

The hawksbill sea turtle is a small to medium sea turtle with a very attractively colored shell of thick overlapping scales. This shell is the source of "tortoise shell." Hawksbill turtles have a distinct, hawk-like beak. Adults range in size from 0.8-1.0 meters (30-36 inches) shell length and weigh 45-90 kilograms (100-200 pounds). The hawksbill turtle is a shy tropical reef dwelling species that feeds primarily on sponges. Commercial exploitation is the major cause of the continued decline of the hawksbill sea turtle. There is a continuing demand for the hawksbill's shell as well as other products including leather, oil, perfume, and cosmetics. The hawksbill shell commands high prices (currently \$255/kilogram), a major factor preventing effective protection.

**ESA Status: Endangered**



## Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*)

The Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle is the smallest and most endangered sea turtle. Adults do not exceed 0.8 meters (30 inches) in shell length and range in weight from 36-45 kilograms (80-100 pounds). The broadly oval-shaped shell is usually olive grey, but the young are black. Kemp's ridley sea turtles are found in the coastal waters and bays of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean where they forage predominately on crabs. On one day in 1947 approximately 40,000 female Kemp's ridleys nested at Rancho Nuevo, Mexico. A large-scale nesting event such as this is called an arribada. Today less than 1,000 females annually nest at Rancho Nuevo. The decline of this species was primarily due to human activities including collection of eggs, fishing for juveniles and adults, killing adults for meat and other products, and direct take for indigenous use. In addition to those sources of mortality, Kemp's ridleys have been subject to high levels of incidental take by shrimp trawling which is believed to have hurt their recovery.

**ESA Status: Endangered**



## Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

The leatherback is the largest sea turtle. Individuals have attained a shell length of 1.85 meters (6 feet) and weights of 637 kilograms (1,400 pounds). Unlike other species of sea turtle, the leatherback does not have scales. Instead, it is covered with firm, rubbery skin with several longitudinal ridges or keels. Leatherback sea turtles are a highly migratory species that nests in the tropics and ranges as far north as Canada and the northern Pacific ocean. The leatherback sea turtle feeds primarily on jellyfish. The species faces significant threats from incidental take in commercial fisheries and marine pollution, as well as from the harvest of eggs and flesh.

**ESA Status: Endangered**



## Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta Caretta*)

The loggerhead sea turtle is a large reddish-brown sea turtle with a disproportionately large head. Adult loggerheads range in size from 0.85-1.0 meters (33-40 inches) shell length and weight between 68-182 kilograms (150-400 pounds). Loggerhead sea turtles are the most common sea turtle encountered in the southeastern U.S., and are frequently observed around wrecks, underwater structures, and reefs, where they forage on a variety of crabs, jellyfish and mollusks. The most significant threats to loggerheads are coastal development, commercial fisheries, and pollution. In addition, loggerhead turtles are often captured incidental to shrimp trawling. Shrimping is thought to have played a significant role in the population declines observed for this species.

**ESA Status:** Threatened



*Photo by John White*

## Olive Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

The olive ridley sea turtle is similar to the kemp's ridley, but it has a thinner shell, and a smaller, more lightly built skull. The upper shell is generally higher than the kemp's ridley and has a greater variation in the number of scutes. The shell is heart-shaped to round, and may be grey-brown, black or olive in color. As adults, Kemp's and olive ridleys are the smallest of the sea turtles. They weigh as much as 45 kilograms (100 pounds), with shells generally between 0.6 - 0.8 meters (24 and 30 inches) long. Both eggs and adults are heavily exploited. Olive ridleys in Mexico have been overharvested for international trade with Japan. There is evidence that the turtles are often being captured in shrimp trawls and gill nets.

**ESA Status: Endangered**