

MARINE TURTLE IDENTIFICATION CARDS



These turtle identification cards are produced as part of a series of awareness materials developed by the Coastal Fisheries Programme of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community



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Flatback turtle

(*Natator depressus*)



Mean length: 0.9 m

Mean weight: 90 kg

Colour: grey to olive-green carapace; underside of flippers and tail yellow or cream colour.

Diet: sea cucumbers, crustaceans and other invertebrates.

Status: listed as "endangered" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN); Appendix I of CITES (prohibited international trade and transport).

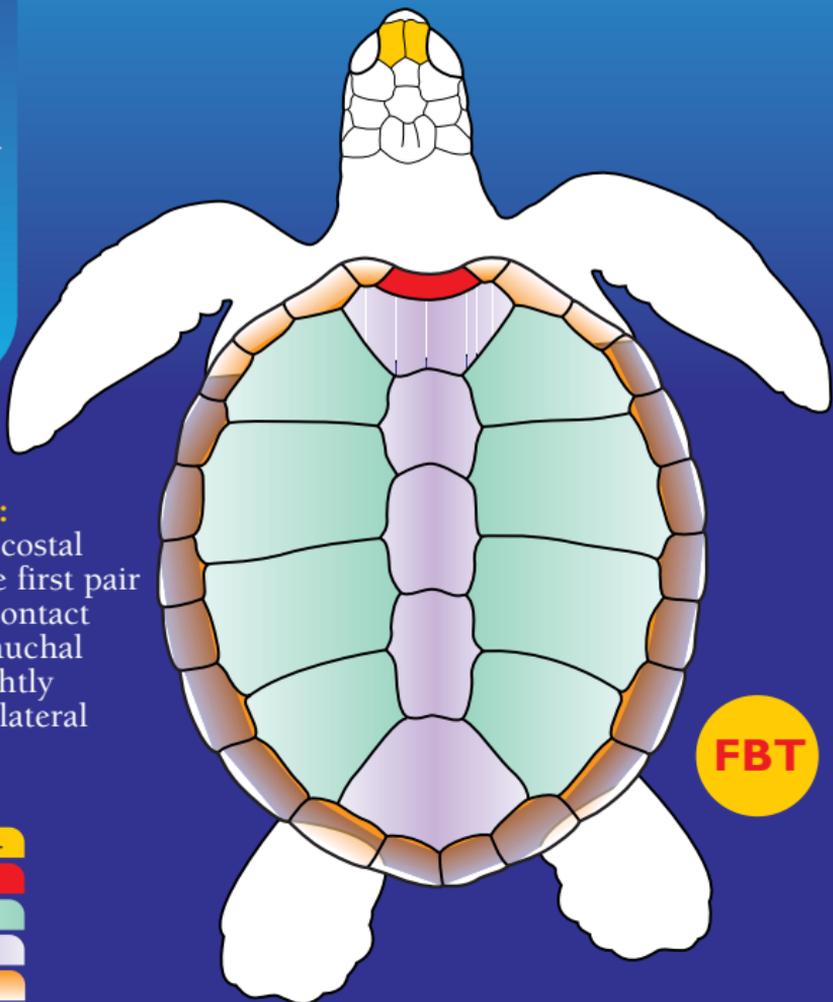
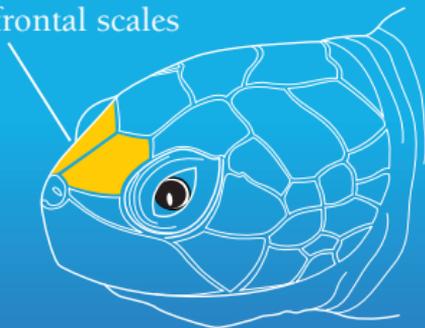


Photo: Dr Colin Limpus

Flatback turtle

(*Natator depressus*)

1 pair of prefrontal scales



Carapace:

4 pairs of costal scutes, the first pair is not in contact with the nuchal scute; slightly upturned lateral margins.

PREFRONTAL

NUCHAL

COSTAL

VERTEBRAL

LATERAL

FBT

Loggerhead turtle

(*Caretta caretta*)



Mean length: 1 m

Mean weight: 150 kg

Colour: reddish-brown to orange-brown carapace.

Diet: crustaceans, molluscs, fish and echinoderms.

Status: listed as "endangered" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN); Appendix I of CITES (prohibited international trade and transport).

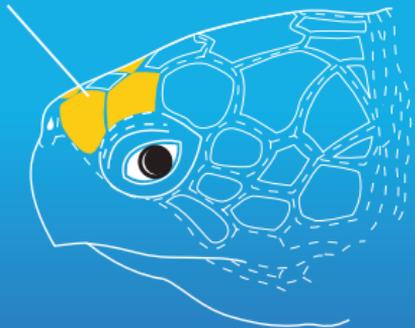


Photo: World Wildlife Fund

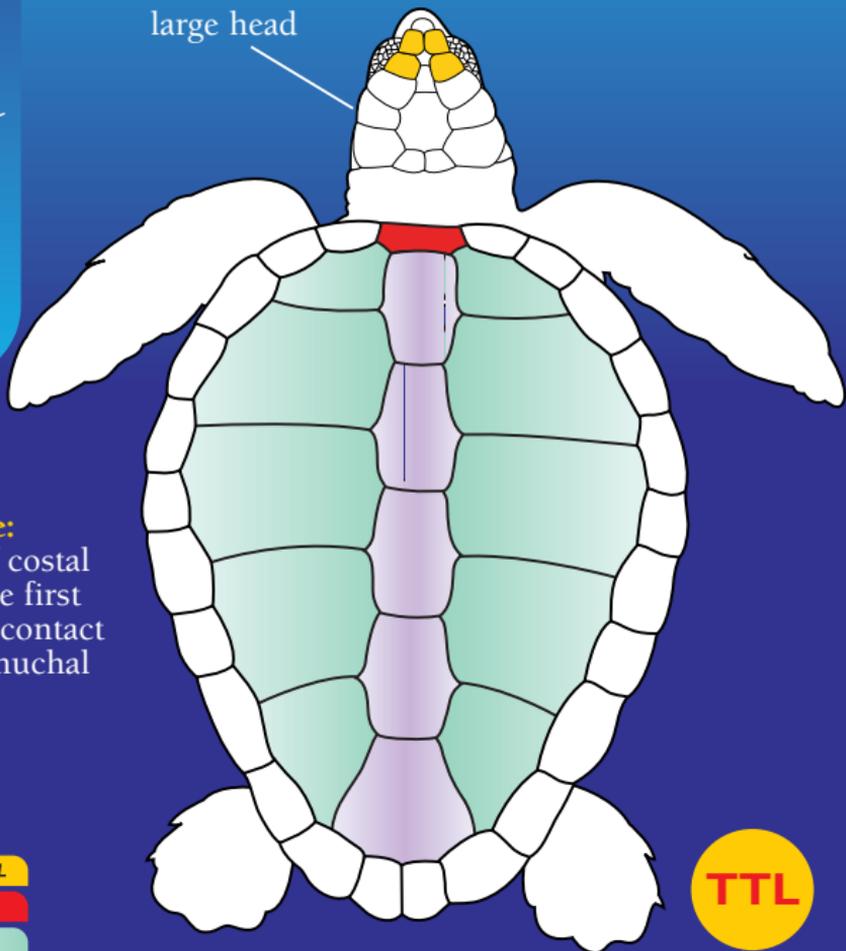
Loggerhead turtle

(*Caretta caretta*)

2 pairs of prefrontal scales



large head



Carapace:

5 pairs of costal scutes, the first pair is in contact with the nuchal scute.

PREFRONTAL

NUCHAL

COSTAL

VERTEBRAL

TTL

Hawksbill turtle

(*Eretmochelys imbricata*)



Mean length: 0.9 m

Mean weight: 60 kg

Colour: reddish-brown to orange carapace with dark brown to black markings; darkish head scales and flippers, separated by light-colour bands; undersides of flippers and tail very pale yellow.

Diet: soft coral, sponges, crustaceans and cephalopods.

Status: listed as "critically endangered" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN); Appendix I of CITES (prohibited international trade and transport).



Photo: Dr Colin Limpus

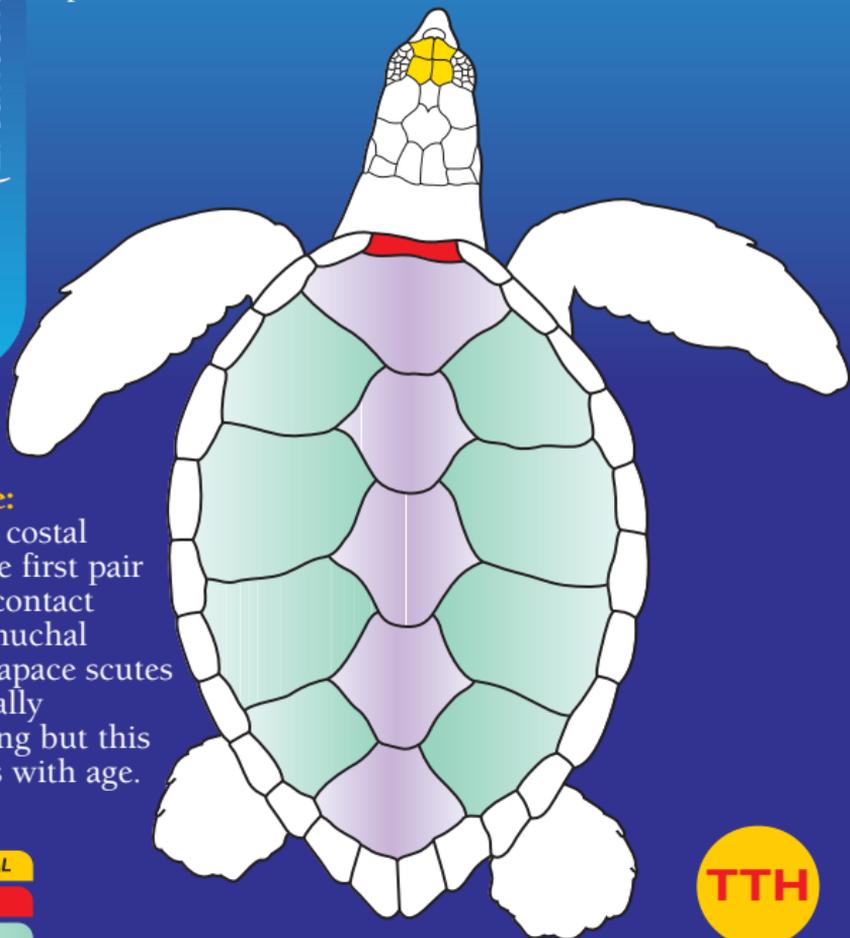
Hawksbill turtle

(*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

2 pairs of prefrontal scales



pointed hooked beak



Carapace:

4 pairs of costal scutes, the first pair is not in contact with the nuchal scute; carapace scutes are generally overlapping but this trait fades with age.

PREFRONTAL

NUCHAL

COSTAL

VERTEBRAL

TTH

Kemp's ridley turtle

(*Lepidochelys kempii*)



Mean length: 0.7 m

Mean weight: 40 kg

Colour: olive-green carapace in adults, grey in juveniles; yellowish underside in adults, white in juveniles.

Diet: crustaceans, mainly crabs.

Status: listed as "critically endangered" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN); Appendix I of CITES (prohibited international trade and transport).

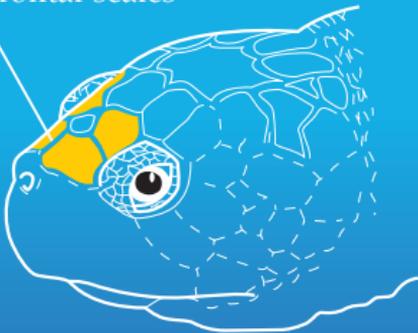


Photo: Clearwater Marine Aquarium

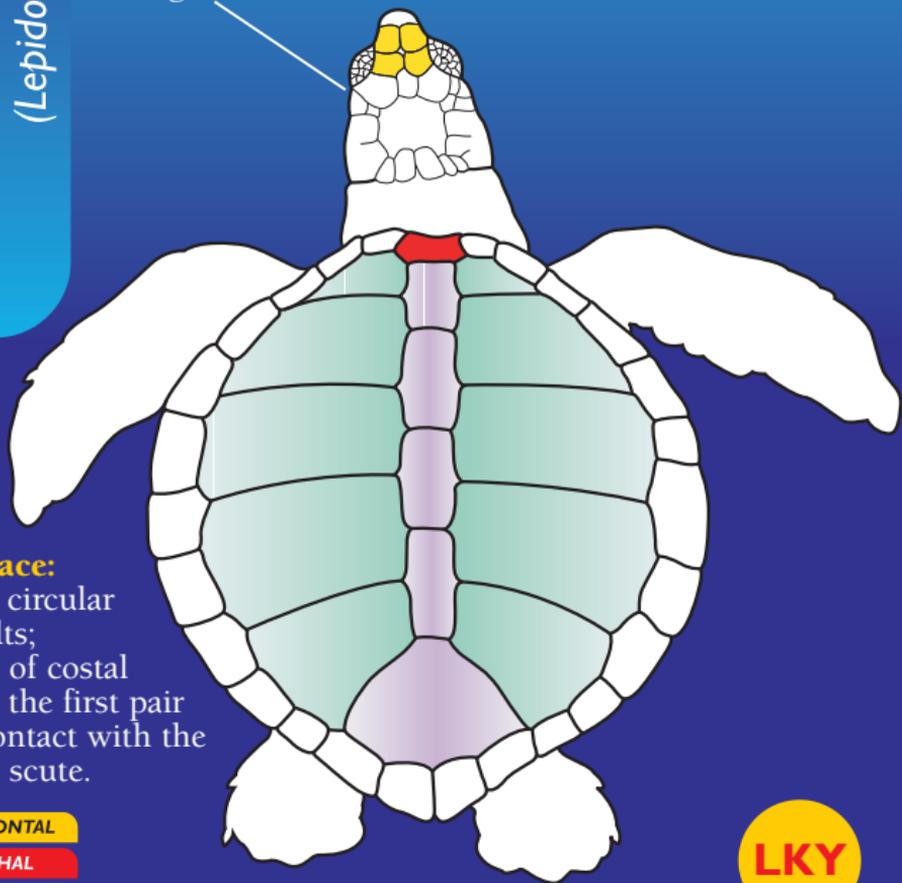
Kemp's ridley turtle

(*Lepidochelys kempii*)

2 pairs of prefrontal scales



large head



Carapace:

almost circular in adults;
5 pairs of costal scutes, the first pair is in contact with the nuchal scute.

PREFRONTAL

NUCHAL

COSTAL

VERTEBRAL

LKY

Leatherback turtle

(*Dermochelys coriacea*)



Mean length: 1.7 m

Mean weight: 450 kg (record at 918 kg)

Colour: back (pseudocarapace) and entire body: deep bluish-black with white spots. This animal does not have any scales.

Diet: mainly jellyfish but also molluscs, seaweed or plants.

Status: listed as "critically endangered" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN); Appendix I of CITES (prohibited international trade and transport).

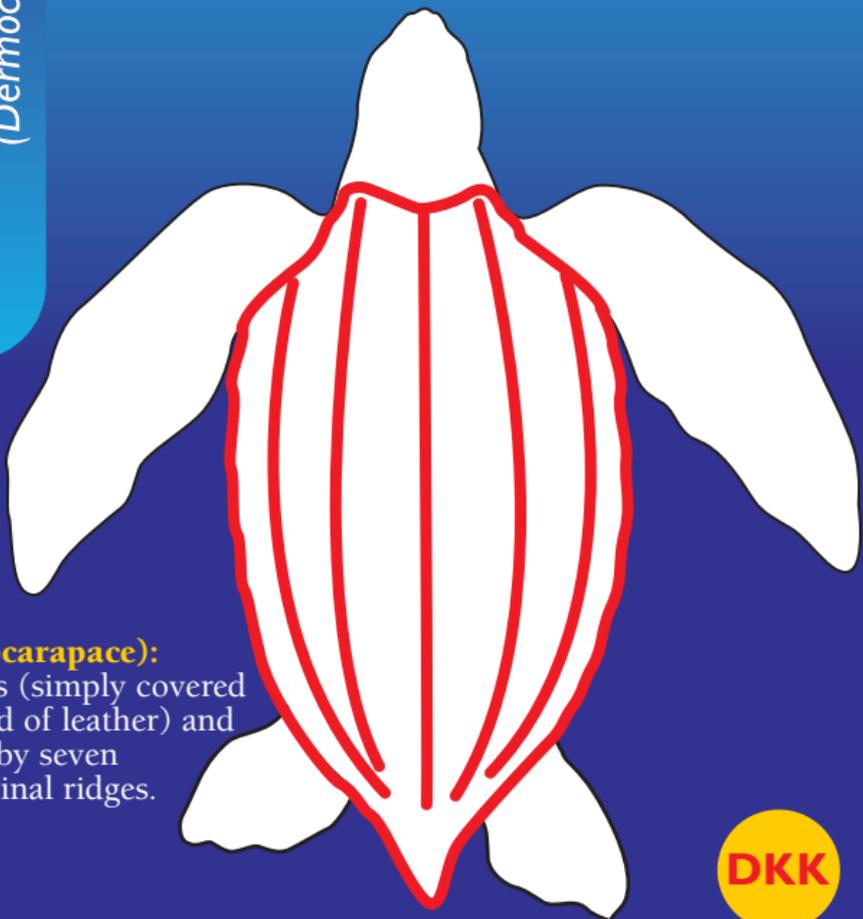
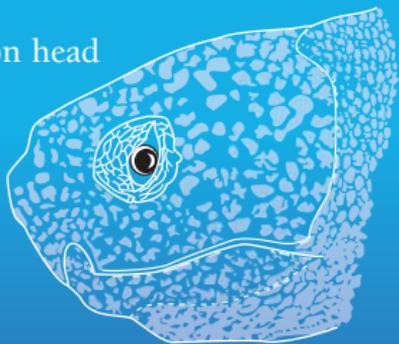


Photo: Vincent Liardet

Leatherback turtle

(*Dermochelys coriacea*)

no scales on head



Back

(pseudocarapace):

no scales (simply covered by a kind of leather) and divided by seven longitudinal ridges.

DKK

Olive ridley turtle

(*Lepidochelys olivacea*)



Mean length: 0.7 m

Mean weight: 45 kg

Colour: carapace and underside of flippers green to dark brownish-green; top of flippers and neck greyish-green.

Diet: crustaceans, molluscs, jellyfish, less frequently seaweed and plants.

Status: listed as "endangered" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN); Appendix I of CITES (prohibited international trade and transport).

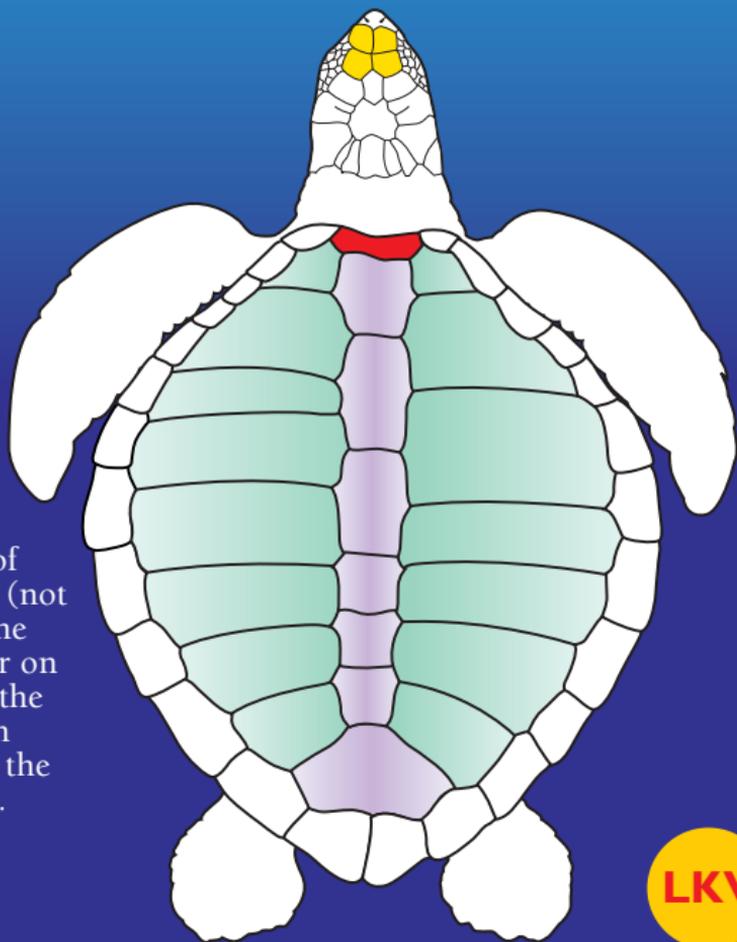
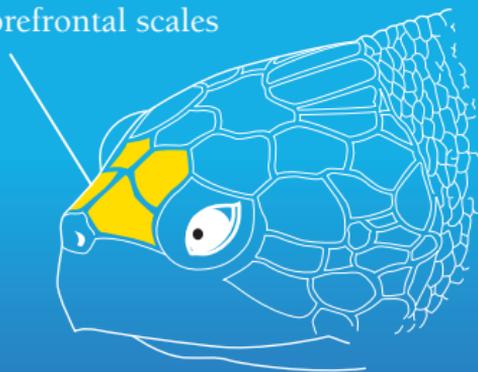


Photo: Dr Colin Limpus

Olive ridley turtle

(*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

2 pairs of prefrontal scales



Carapace:

5 to 9 pairs of costal scutes (not necessarily the same number on either side), the first pair is in contact with the nuchal scute.

PREFRONTAL

NUCHAL

COSTAL

VERTEBRAL

LKV

Green turtle

(*Chelonia mydas*)



Mean length: 1.1 m

Mean weight: 145 kg (can weigh more than 250 kg)

Colour: olive-green carapace with black spots in adults (> 0.9 m); brick red with a few streaks in sub-adults (0.15–0.9 m); bluish-black with a white edge bordering the carapace and flippers at birth.

Diet: adults: herbivores; juveniles: mainly carnivores (small crustaceans, molluscs and other invertebrates).

Status: listed as "vulnerable" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN); Appendix I of CITES (prohibited international trade and transport).

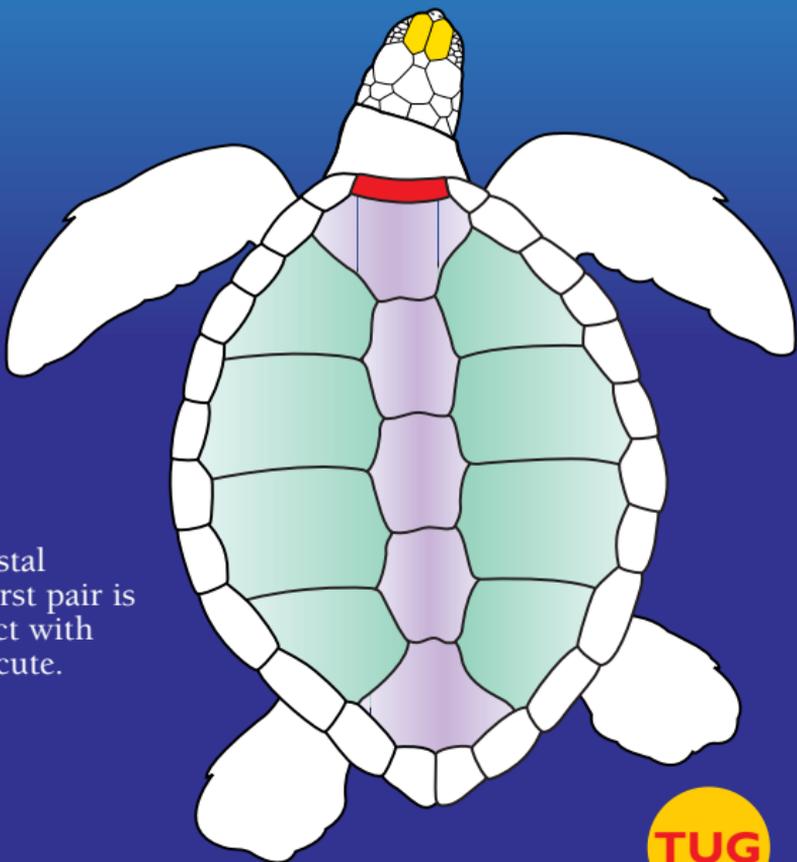
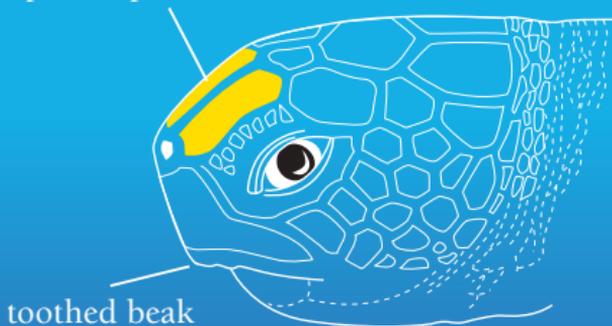


Photo: Vincent Liardet

Green turtle

(*Chelonia mydas*)

1 pair of prefrontal scales



Carapace:

4 pairs of costal scutes, the first pair is not in contact with the nuchal scute.

PREFRONTAL

NUCHAL

COSTAL

VERTEBRAL

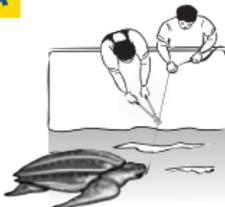
TUG

Releasing hooked turtles

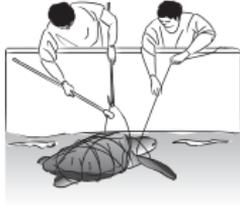


If a turtle is caught, the following steps should be taken to give it the best possible chance of survival:

A Assess the turtle's size,



if large, release it or entangle it using cutter and gaff to cut tangled lines

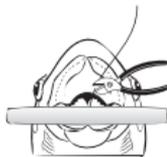


if small, bring it on board with dip net

B Place a piece of wood in the turtle's mouth so it cannot bite,



if hook is visible, cut off barb and remove hook, or use de-hooker to remove hook

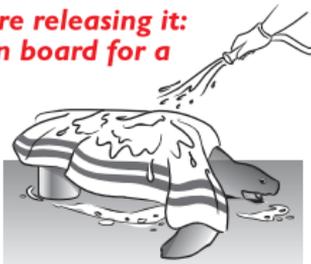


if hook is not visible, cut line close to mouth

C Assess the condition of the turtle before releasing it: depending on how lively it is, keep it on board for a minimum of 4 hours, and up to 24 hours



Raise rear flippers 20 cm off deck to drain water from lungs



Place turtle in shaded location, covered with wet towels

D Identify the turtle's species name then carefully return it to the water



E Record the interaction and inform your fisheries department



Sea turtles are endangered species

Ecology:

- Sea turtles have inhabited our oceans for 100 million years.
- There are seven species, six of which can be found in the Pacific Ocean.
- During the nesting season, the females return to the beach where they were born to lay about a hundred eggs.
- The hatchlings are born and enter the sea 45 to 70 days later.
- Out of a thousand hatched eggs, only two turtles will reach adulthood.
- At sea, turtles have a varied diet that includes jelly fish, seaweed, coral, fish and many invertebrates.

Dangers:

- Accidental death from commercial fishing gear, including surface longlines.
- Swallowing deadly waste, including plastics, polystyrene, cigarette filters, etc
- Poaching for meat, egg and shells.
- Nesting beach destruction related to development.
- Very high juvenile natural mortality rate.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) considers sea turtles to be “vulnerable” (1 species), “threatened with extinction” (3 species) or “critically endangered” (3 species).

Please help to protect them!

If you are on a commercial fishing vessel:

- Follow expert advice on reducing accidental capture of turtles.
- If you do capture turtles, use the best techniques to increase their chance of survival.
- Use these cards to find the turtle species names, record the capture in your logbook and notify your fisheries department.
- Check for any tags on the turtles' flippers. Record the number and send the information to the address on the tag

If you are on a yacht:

- Don't disturb adult turtles as they come ashore to lay eggs. Don't shine lights on them. Keep away from them and only photograph them once they've finished.
- Don't touch the turtles or their eggs.
- If you watch a turtle hatching, don't touch it.
- Keep dogs away, as they are potential predators.

Protection measures:

- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) prohibits international trade in any of the seven species of sea turtles.
- Many countries also prohibit them from being hunted or sold locally.
- It is illegal to keep turtles that have been captured on commercial fishing vessels