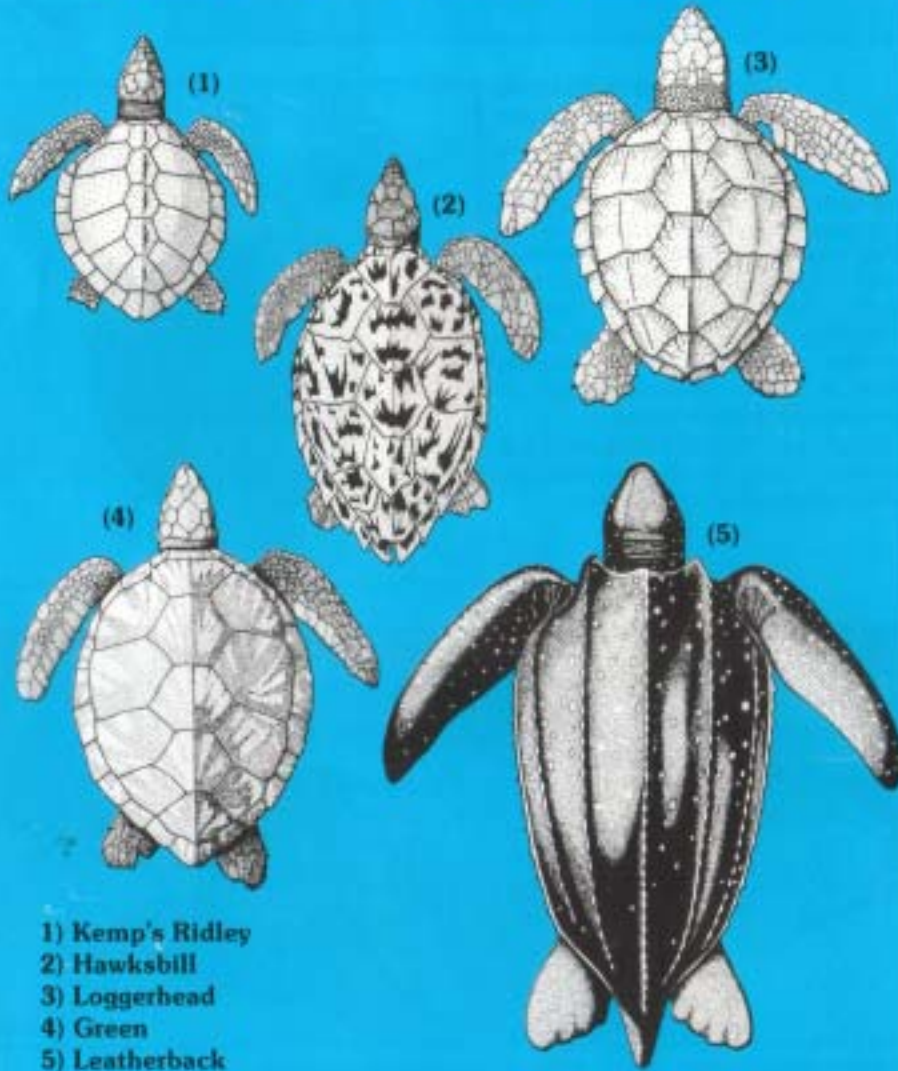


## QUICK REFERENCE ILLUSTRATIONS



# The 5 Sea Turtle Species of the Atlantic and Gulf Coast of the United States.

The purpose of this leaflet is to help gather information about sea turtles. The pictures and captions are designed to help you identify the different species.

**WHAT TO DO:** Many sea turtles are tagged with metal or plastic tags usually on the inside edge of the front flippers but sometimes on the rear flippers or even the shell. If you see a tag it should **NOT** be removed (unless the turtle is dead). The tag numbers should be reported to the address on the tag or to the nearest State Marine Fisheries office, the National Marine Fisheries Service, or the Fish and Wildlife Service.



**WARNING:** Sea turtles are protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act, international agreement, and many state laws. Under these laws the unauthorized taking or harassment of sea turtles dead or alive, or taking their eggs or disturbing their nests is prohibited and can carry fines up to \$20,000.

There is a reward of up to \$2,500 for information leading to the conviction of violators. To report a violation, contact a Federal, State, or local law enforcement officer.





# SEA TURTLES of the ATLANTIC and GULF COAST of the UNITED STATES and their status under the ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA)



(1)

## KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLE (1) (*Lepidochelys kempi*)

Smallest of the sea turtles. Adults do not exceed 30 inches in shell length and range in weight from 80-100 pounds. The broadly oval shaped shell is usually olive gray, but young are black. Found in the coastal waters and bays of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic where they forage predominantly on crabs. Only a few hundred females nest in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico, each year.

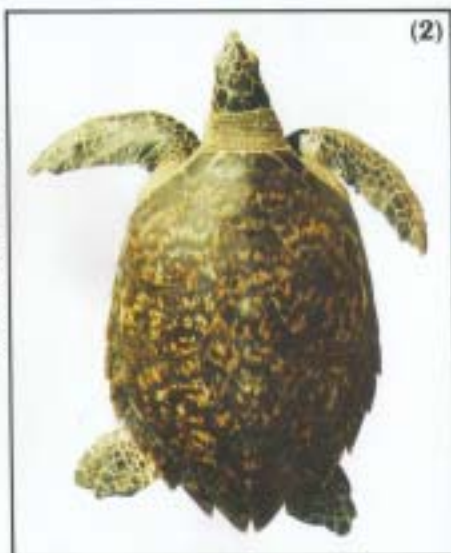
ESA Status: **ENDANGERED**



## HAWKBILL SEA TURTLE (2) (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

Small to medium sea turtles with a very attractively colored shell of thick, overlapping scales...the source of "tortoise shell". Has distinct hawk-like beak. Adults range in size from 30-36 inches shell length and weigh 100-200 pounds. A shy tropical reef dwelling species where it forages primarily on sponges.

ESA Status: **ENDANGERED**



(2)

(3)

## LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE (3) (*Caretta caretta*)

A large reddish-brown sea turtle with a disproportionately large head. Adults range in size from 33-40 inches shell length and weigh 150-400 pounds. This is the most common sea turtle encountered in the southeastern United States. Frequently observed around wrecks, underwater structures, and reefs where it forages on a variety of crabs, jellyfish, and mollusks.

ESA Status: **THREATENED**



## GREEN SEA TURTLE (4) (*Chelonia mydas*)

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 other sea turtles and the biting edge of the lower jaw is serrated. Adult shell lengths range in size from 36-43 inches and weights average 200-300 pounds. Primarily a tropical herbivorous species, the juveniles frequently occur in Florida waters, especially in areas abundant in sea grasses.

ESA Status: **ENDANGERED** for Florida and east Pacific breeding populations; **THREATENED** everywhere else.



(4)



(5)

## LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE (5) (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

The largest sea turtle. Can attain a shell length of six feet and weights of 1,400 pounds. Black with white blotches, the shell lacks scales and is covered by a firm, rubbery skin with seven longitudinal ridges or keels. A highly migratory turtle that nests in the tropics and ranges as far north as Canada and the northern Pacific. Feeds primarily on jellyfish.

ESA Status: **ENDANGERED**

To report sightings or data  
on sea turtles, contact:

**SEA TURTLE PROGRAM**  
SOUTHEAST FISHERIES CENTER  
75 Virginia Beach Drive  
Miami, Florida 33149  
Telephone: 305/361-4200