

SEA TURTLE DISENTANGLEMENT NETWORK



EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS – Please Call Immediately
NOAA Fisheries Service Stranding HOTLINE: 978-281-9351
PCCS (Mass. Only): 800-900-3622 or USCG VHF CH. 16



Sea turtles can become accidentally entangled in active or discarded fixed fishing gear and other man-made material. These entanglements may prevent the recovery of endangered and threatened sea turtle populations. NOAA Fisheries has established the Sea Turtle Disentanglement Network to promote reporting and increase successful disentanglement of sea turtles. Please report all sea turtle entanglements and disentanglements, including documentation, to the contact numbers listed above.

How to Approach an Entangled Sea Turtle:

- Look for moving or unusually clumped buoys and lines near the turtle.
- Approach turtle slowly and carefully until vessel is alongside, then stop the vessel.
- If possible, record lat/lon and time at turtle's initial location.

How to Assess and Document the Entanglement:

- Is the turtle moving, attempting to swim away from the vessel or diving?
- How is the turtle entangled: flippers (front right, front left, etc.), head, shell?
- Are there single or multiple wraps of line on the turtle?
- Are the wraps restricting the turtle's movement or cutting into the skin?
- Is the turtle bleeding?
- Are there any other new or old injuries (such as propeller wounds)?



Leatherback Photos: Don Lewis



Loggerhead Photo: Thomas Dellinger / University of Madeira, Portugal

How to Disentangle:

- Do not get into the water with the turtle or bring it aboard. Work from the vessel with the turtle in the water.
- Determine which line is under strain from anchoring or drifting gear.
- Grapple the anchoring line and maintain a firm hold to keep turtle close to the vessel without lifting the turtle above the water. To avoid losing the turtle before completely disentangled, **do not release or cut this line before trying to remove all other gear.**
- Try to unravel the gear from the turtle without cutting. Be careful around powerful flippers, jaws, and claws.
- If the gear cannot be removed by unraveling and the turtle is at risk of strangulation, drowning or further injury, try to cut the line.
- Avoid cutting turtle by pulling line away from the turtle with a boat hook before cutting.
- If gear must be cut, tie it off to the boat or existing gear to avoid losing the gear. Save all cut off/removed gear for analysis ashore (see *Documentation*).
- If you cannot free the turtle of **ALL** gear, report the last known location, area landmarks, wind and current speed and direction, and any identifying characteristics about the turtle or gear. Report this information to the red contact numbers above or VHF Ch. 16.

How to Release:

- Leave engines in neutral and release the turtle from the last line (the anchoring line).
- Record the lat/lon and time of release.
- Ensure that the turtle is safely away from the vessel before starting the engines.
- Observe turtle behavior after release. Did it dive and/or swim away or did it remain relatively immobile at the surface?

Documentation:

- Log critical information (time, location, sea turtle description, signs of injury, behavior) when you encounter an entangled sea turtle.
- Log information about gear (line type, color and diameter, buoy/float type and color, buoy/pot ID#s), and final location of gear (brought ashore, left at site, etc.). Photograph/video the gear and sea turtle if possible.
- Reports and documentation (time, location, description, photos, video) of dead or injured sea turtles are also important.
- Report logged information to the red contact numbers at top of this card. Send photos, video and any removed gear to:

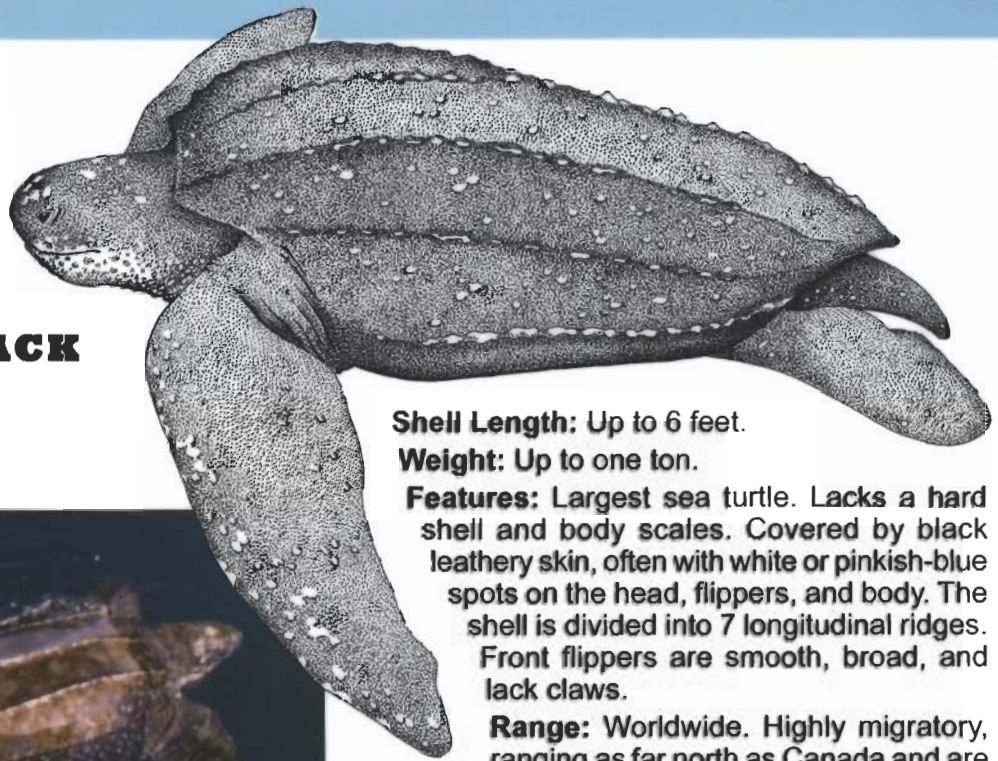
NOAA Fisheries Protected Resources Division
One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

SEA TURTLES YOU MAY ENCOUNTER

LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE



Photo: Nova Scotia Leatherback Turtle Working Group



Shell Length: Up to 6 feet.

Weight: Up to one ton.

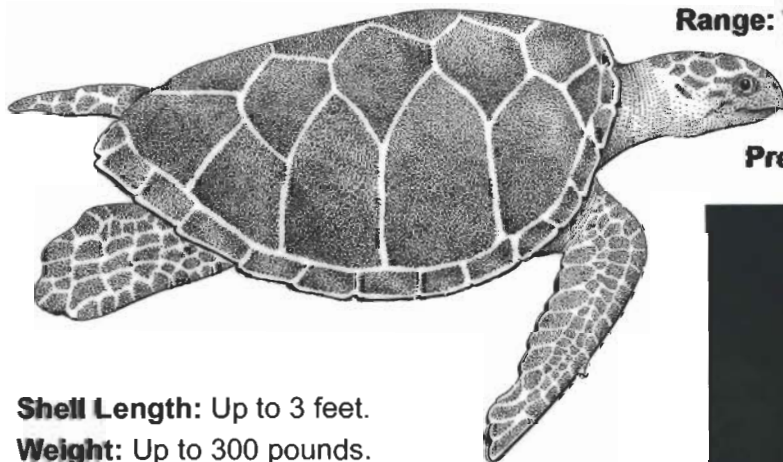
Features: Largest sea turtle. Lacks a hard shell and body scales. Covered by black leathery skin, often with white or pinkish-blue spots on the head, flippers, and body. The shell is divided into 7 longitudinal ridges. Front flippers are smooth, broad, and lack claws.

Range: Worldwide. Highly migratory, ranging as far north as Canada and are most commonly seen in northeastern waters June - November. Migrates south in winter.

Prey: Primarily jellyfish.

Illustrations: Linda Bound / International Wildlife Coalition

LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE



Shell Length: Up to 3 feet.

Weight: Up to 300 pounds.

Features: Shell is hard and covered with plates. Head large and broad with powerful jaws for crushing prey. Front flippers are covered in scales, with two claws on each flipper. Shell

and head yellow-orange to reddish brown, often covered by barnacles.

Range: Worldwide. Ranging as far north as the Gulf of Maine and most commonly seen in northeast waters May - November. Migrates south in winter.

Prey: Crustaceans, molluscs.

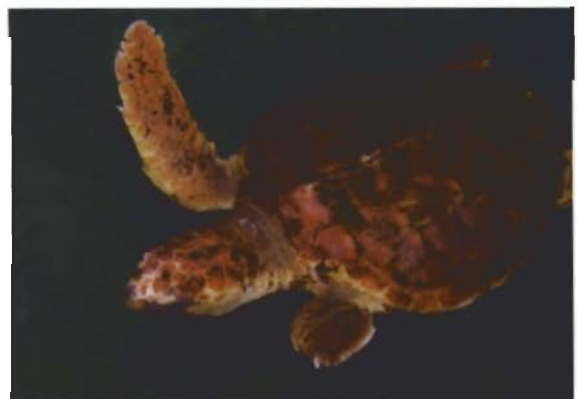


Photo: J Wyneken