

TurtleTown U.S.A.



Sweeping Our beaches clean

Join us in welcoming our nesting sea turtles back to their birthplace.

Every April, volunteers come to our beaches to remove trash & debris in preparation for the sea turtle nesting season.

For information about the TurtleTown U.S.A. beach clean-up call 827-6980



Sea turtles are among the oldest creatures on earth and have remained essentially unchanged for 110 million years.

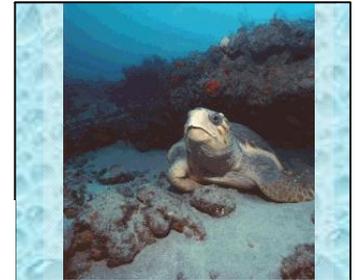
They are air-breathing reptiles with a hydrodynamic shape, large size and powerful front flippers that allow them to dive great depths and swim long distances. The leatherback turtle can dive deeper than any other air-breathing animal except perhaps sperm whales and elephant seals and is capable of traveling more than 3,000 miles from its nest beach.



Sea turtles are generally solitary creatures that remain submerged for much of the time they are at sea. They rarely interact with one another outside of courtship and mating.

Sea turtles spend their earliest years floating around the sea in giant beds of Sargasso weeds, where they do little more than eat and grow. Once they reach dinner-plate size, they appear at feeding grounds in nearshore waters. They grow slowly and take between 15 and 50 years to reach reproductive maturity, depending on the species. It is theorized that some species live over 100 years.

After decades of studying sea turtles, much has been learned but many mysteries still remain.



Although sea turtles can remain submerged for hours at a time while resting and sleeping, they typically surface several times each hour to breathe.



In summer, an ancient reproductive cycle begins when the female sea turtle leaves the sea and crawls ashore to dig a nest in the sand. She uses her rear flippers to dig the nest hole where she deposits about 100 eggs the size of ping-pong balls. The turtle covers the eggs with sand to camouflage them and returns to the ocean.

After incubating for about two months, two-inch hatchlings begin to emerge. The hatchlings make a mass exodus towards the ocean, usually at night, guided by the moonlight on the water.

After their first frantic crawl from the nest to the ocean, male sea turtles never return to shore. Females come back to the beach where they were born only long enough to lay eggs.

TurtleTown USA!



Sea Turtle Nesting & Hatching Season May 1st – October 31st

You can help by participating in our annual spring clean-up of the beach held every April. There are also adopt-a-sea-turtle-nest and adopt-a-sea-turtle programs. Turtle Patrols make daily inspections of nests during the nesting & hatching season.

Help Protect Our Endangered Babies!

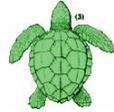


- Turn out all lights that shine on the beach.
- Never approach turtles emerging from the sea or nesting.
- Allow baby turtles to make it to the water on their own.
- Report any exposed eggs, disturbed nests, or injured turtles, to a Turtle Patrol member.
- Do not disturb marked nests.

Florida Sea Turtles

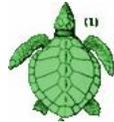


Florida is home to five of the seven species of sea turtles.



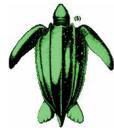
Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*)

The most common sea turtle in Florida, the loggerhead is named for its massive, block-like head.



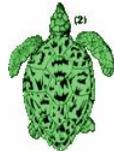
Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempi*)

The Kemp's Ridley is the rarest, most endangered sea turtle in the world. It has only one major nesting beach, an area called Rancho Nuevo on the Gulf coast of Mexico.



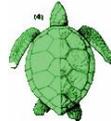
Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

The leatherback is larger, dives deeper, travels farther, and tolerates colder waters than any other sea turtle. The leatherback gets its name from the firm, leathery skin that covers its shell.



Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

The hawksbill is a small, agile turtle whose beautiful shell has been used to make jewelry and other ornaments. Raptor-like jaws adapted to collecting sponges, gives the hawksbill its name.



Green Turtle (*Chelonia Mydas*)

Green turtles are named for their green body fat that formed the basis of the popular green turtle soup. Adult green turtles are unique among sea turtles because they are largely vegetarians.

Threats to survival

Each year thousands of hatchling turtles emerge from their nests along the southeast U.S. coast and enter the Atlantic Ocean. Sadly, only an estimated one in 1,000 to 10,000 will survive to adulthood. The natural obstacles faced by young and adult sea turtles are staggering, but it is the increasing threats caused by humans that are driving them to extinction. Today, all sea turtles found in U.S. waters are federally listed as endangered, except for the loggerhead which is listed as threatened.

Natural Threats

To Hatchlings: Predators

To Adults: Occasional shark attack

Human-Caused Threats

To Hatchlings: Harvesting eggs, artificial lighting, coastal armoring and beach nourishment, driving on beaches.

To Adults: Pollution, ingestion of debris, commercial fishing, harvesting, coastal development.

You can help!
827-6980