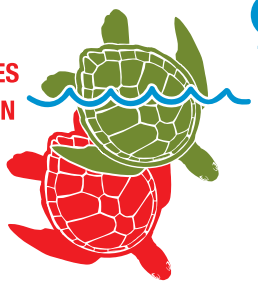
SEA TURTLE HANDLING AND RESUSCITATION REQUIREMENTS

IF YOU ENCOUNTER AN ENTANGLED, INJURED OR UNRESPONSIVE SEA TURTLE, please immediately call the National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Region Hotline:

866-755-NOAA (6622)

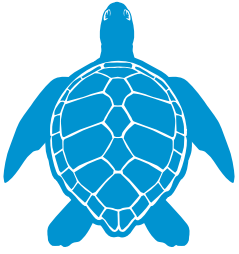
Any sea turtle taken incidentally during fishing must be handled with care to prevent injury, observed for activity, and returned to the water according to the following procedures:

A A SEA TURTLE THAT IS ACTIVELY MOVING OR IS DEAD (THAT IS, IF MUSCLES ARE STIFF AND/OR THE FLESH HAS BEGUN TO ROT) MUST BE RELEASED OVER THE VESSEL'S STERN ONLY:



- When fishing gear is not in use,
- When the engine is in neutral, and
- In areas where the turtle is unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels.

OTHERWISE, YOU MUST CONSIDER THE TURTLE UNRESPONSIVE AND ATTEMPT RESUSCITATION AS DESCRIBED IN B.



You are strongly encouraged to read the full regulation, which can be found at 50 CFR 223.206(d)(1).

B YOU MUST ATTEMPT RESUSCITATION ON SEA TURTLES THAT ARE UNRESPONSIVE AS FOLLOWS:

1 Place the turtle top shell up* and elevate its hindquarters at least 6" (or 15-30°) for at least 4 hours and up to 24 hours.

- The amount of elevation depends on the turtle's size; larger turtles require greater elevation.
- In warm weather (over 60 °F), keep the turtle shaded and moist, preferably by placing a damp towel over the head, shell, and flippers. You must NOT place the turtle into a container of water.

2 Periodically rock the turtle gently side to side by holding the outer edge of the shell and lifting one side about 3", then alternate to the other side.

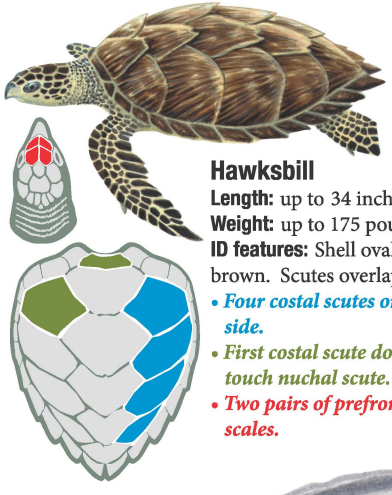
3 Periodically gently touch the eye and pinch the tail (reflex tests) to see if there is a response.

C IF THE TURTLE REVIVES AND BECOMES ACTIVE DURING RESUSCITATION EFFORTS, you must release it over the vessel's stern as described in A. If the turtle does not respond to the reflex test (as described in B 3) or move within 4 hours (up to 24 hours, if possible), you must return the turtle to the water in the same manner.

SEA TURTLES OF THE UNITED STATES ATLANTIC COAST

Text color corresponds to identification feature in diagram.

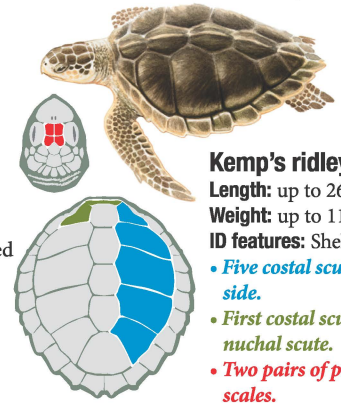
3 Feet



Hawksbill

Length: up to 34 inches
Weight: up to 175 pounds
ID features: Shell oval, mottled brown. Scutes overlapping.

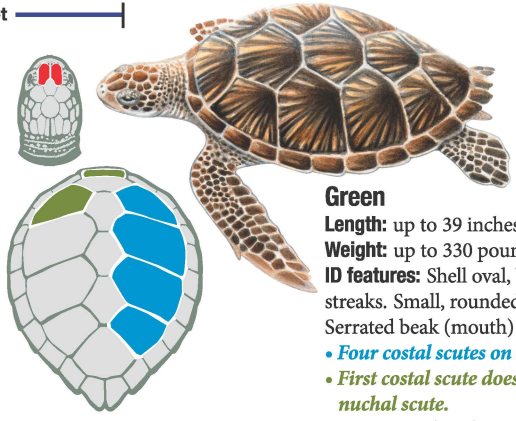
- *Four costal scutes on each side.*
- *First costal scute does not touch nuchal scute.*
- *Two pairs of prefrontal scales.*



Kemp's ridley

Length: up to 26 inches
Weight: up to 110 pounds
ID features: Shell round, gray.

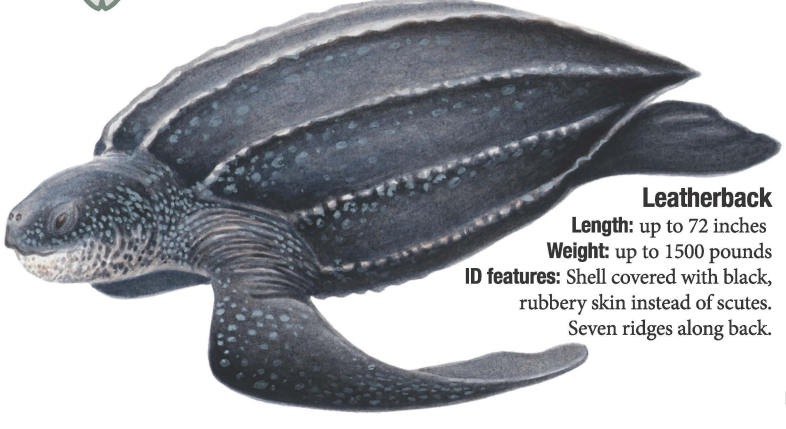
- *Five costal scutes on each side.*
- *First costal scute touches nuchal scute.*
- *Two pairs of prefrontal scales.*



Green

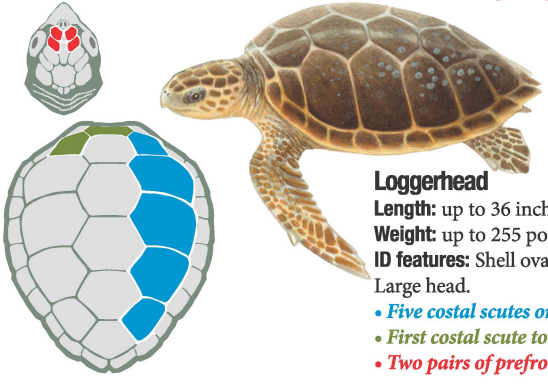
Length: up to 39 inches
Weight: up to 330 pounds
ID features: Shell oval, brown with streaks. Small, rounded head. Serrated beak (mouth) edges.

- *Four costal scutes on each side.*
- *First costal scute does not touch nuchal scute.*
- *One pair of prefrontal scales.*



Leatherback

Length: up to 72 inches
Weight: up to 1500 pounds
ID features: Shell covered with black, rubbery skin instead of scutes. Seven ridges along back.



Loggerhead

Length: up to 36 inches
Weight: up to 255 pounds
ID features: Shell oval, reddish-brown. Large head.

- *Five costal scutes on each side.*
- *First costal scute touches nuchal scute.*
- *Two pairs of prefrontal scales.*

National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Region Protected Resources Division
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