

## VOCABULARY

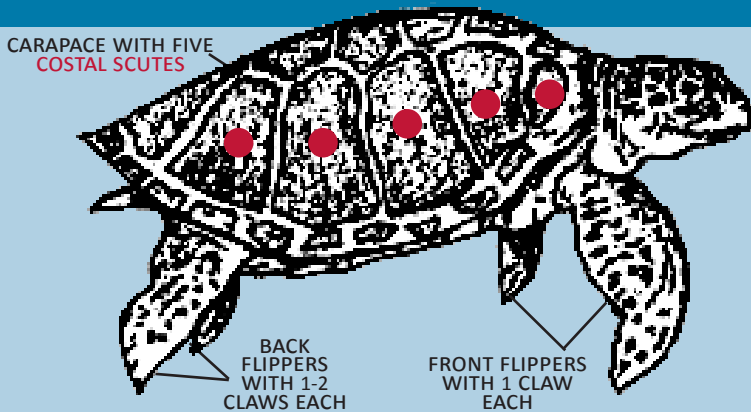
**ARRIBADAS:** large groups of sea turtles nesting at the same time in the same location

**CARAPACE:** the dorsal (upper) part of the shell, covered by bony external plates called **SCUTES**

**HATCHLING:** a baby turtle

**NERITIC ZONE:** area of the ocean near shore with a muddy or sandy bottom

**PLASTRON:** the ventral (underside) part of the shell, also covered in scutes



**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION** A protective shell consists of an almost circular, grayish green **carapace** and a pale yellow **plastron**. Front flippers have one claw each, while back flippers can have up to two each. On average, adults measure 24-28 inches long and typically weigh 100 pounds. **Hatchlings** are about 1.5 inches long and weigh 0.5 ounces.

**DIET** These marine reptiles occupy the **neritic zone**, which allows for a diet consisting mainly of swimming crabs. They also eat small fish, jellyfish and mollusks.

**LIFE HISTORY** **Arribadas** congregate near beaches to mate. Females then come ashore to nest two or three times from May-July. After an incubation period of 50-60 days, hatchlings head straight for the water to avoid predators.

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION** In the United States, Kemp's ridley sea turtles are found from New England to Florida and in the Gulf of Mexico. For 95 percent of the worldwide population, nesting occurs on beaches near Rancho Nuevo, Mexico, but occasional nesting has been documented from North Carolina to Florida.

**LOCAL INFORMATION** They are occasionally found along the Atlantic coast and in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

**STATUS** The Endangered Species Act lists Kemp's ridleys as endangered, which means they are at risk of extinction. Federal and state agencies strive to reduce bycatch, and devices called turtle excluders safely remove sea turtles from trawl nets.

# KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLE

*(Lepidochelys kempii)*

**CLASS:** Reptilia

**ORDER:** Testudines

**FAMILY:** Cheloniidae

**GENUS:** *Lepidochelys*

**SPECIES:** *kempii*



Kemp's ridleys are the smallest sea turtles across the globe with carapaces nearly as wide as they are long.



They are one of two species that nest in arribadas—the other is the olive ridley. Females lay about 100 eggs in each nest



This is the most endangered sea turtle species in the world.

**TO REPORT A STRANDED MARINE MAMMAL OR SEA TURTLE, CALL THE 24-HOUR HOTLINE AT 800-628-9944**



Larry Hogan, Governor ● Mark Belton, Secretary



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