

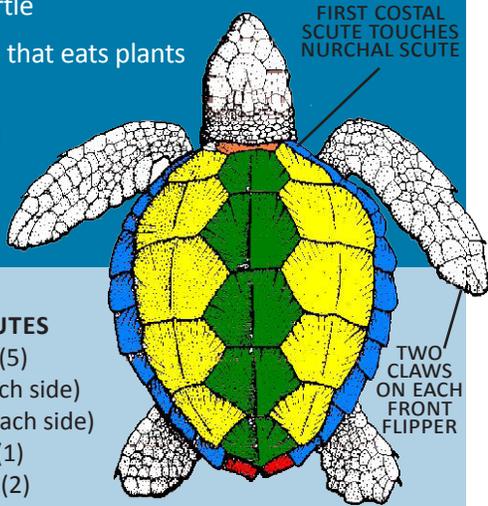
## VOCABULARY

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

**HATCHLING:** a baby turtle

**OMNIVORE:** an animal that eats plants and other animals

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



### LOGGERHEAD SCUTES

**GREEN:** vertebral (5)

**YELLOW:** costal (5-6 each side)

**BLUE:** marginal (11-12 each side)

**ORANGE:** nuchal (1)

**RED:** supracaudal (2)

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION** A protective shell consists of a reddish-brown, oblong **carapace** and a pale yellow **plastron**. Head, neck and flippers have scales. Average adults measure 36 inches long and weigh 250 pounds. **Hatchlings** are brown, measure about two inches long and weigh 0.04 pounds.

**DIET** As **omnivorous**, they eat algae, crabs, corals, fish, sponges, starfish, vascular plants and more. Powerful jaws help devour hard-shelled prey, such as conchs and whelks.

**LIFE HISTORY** It takes about 35 years to reach sexual maturity. Mating occurs from late March-early June. Females lay eggs from late April-early September and nest on beaches from Virginia to Alabama. Hatchlings immediately head to open water. Some remain just off the nesting beach while others swim out to sea. Juveniles return to near-shore areas 7-12 years after hatching to continue to grow and mature.

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION** They inhabit all oceans except the Arctic and are the most prevalent sea turtle in the United States. Adults migrate long distances. Most nesting occurs in the subtropical region of the Atlantic, but nests have been documented from Maryland to Florida.

**LOCAL INFORMATION** They are the most commonly stranded sea turtle in Maryland. Most are found along the Atlantic coast, but many also occur near the Chesapeake Bay. They strand from May-October when water temperatures are warm. The main cause of death is boat strike.

**STATUS** The Endangered Species Act lists loggerheads as threatened, which means they may soon become endangered. Federal and state agencies strive to reduce bycatch and eliminate threats such as habitat destruction and trash mistaken for food.

# LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE

*(Caretta caretta)*

**CLASS:** Reptilia

**ORDER:** Testudines

**FAMILY:** Cheloniidae

**GENUS:** *Caretta*

**SPECIES:** *caretta*



The top of the flippers and head exhibit the same coloration as the carapace.



The pale yellowish plastron is significantly lighter.



Each loggerhead will lay three to five nests during a single nesting season. Each nest contains an average of 110 eggs.

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



Larry Hogan, Governor ● Mark Belton, Secretary

**Amanda Weschler**

Cooperative Oxford Laboratory  
904 South Morris Street  
Oxford, Maryland 21654

443-258-6073

amanda.weschler@maryland.gov



Learn more at [dnr.maryland.gov](http://dnr.maryland.gov)

The facilities and services of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources are available to all without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin or physical or mental disability. This document is available in alternative format upon request from a qualified individual with disability.