

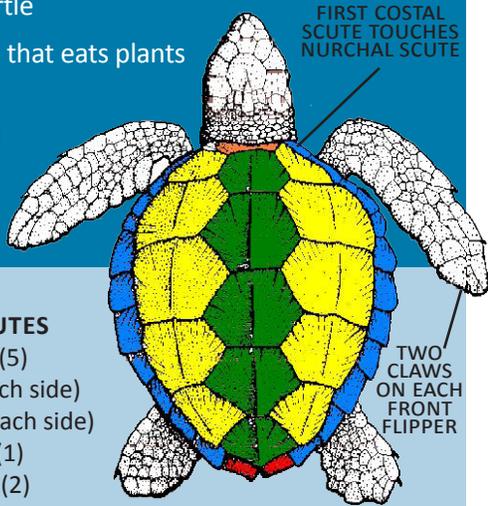
VOCABULARY

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



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