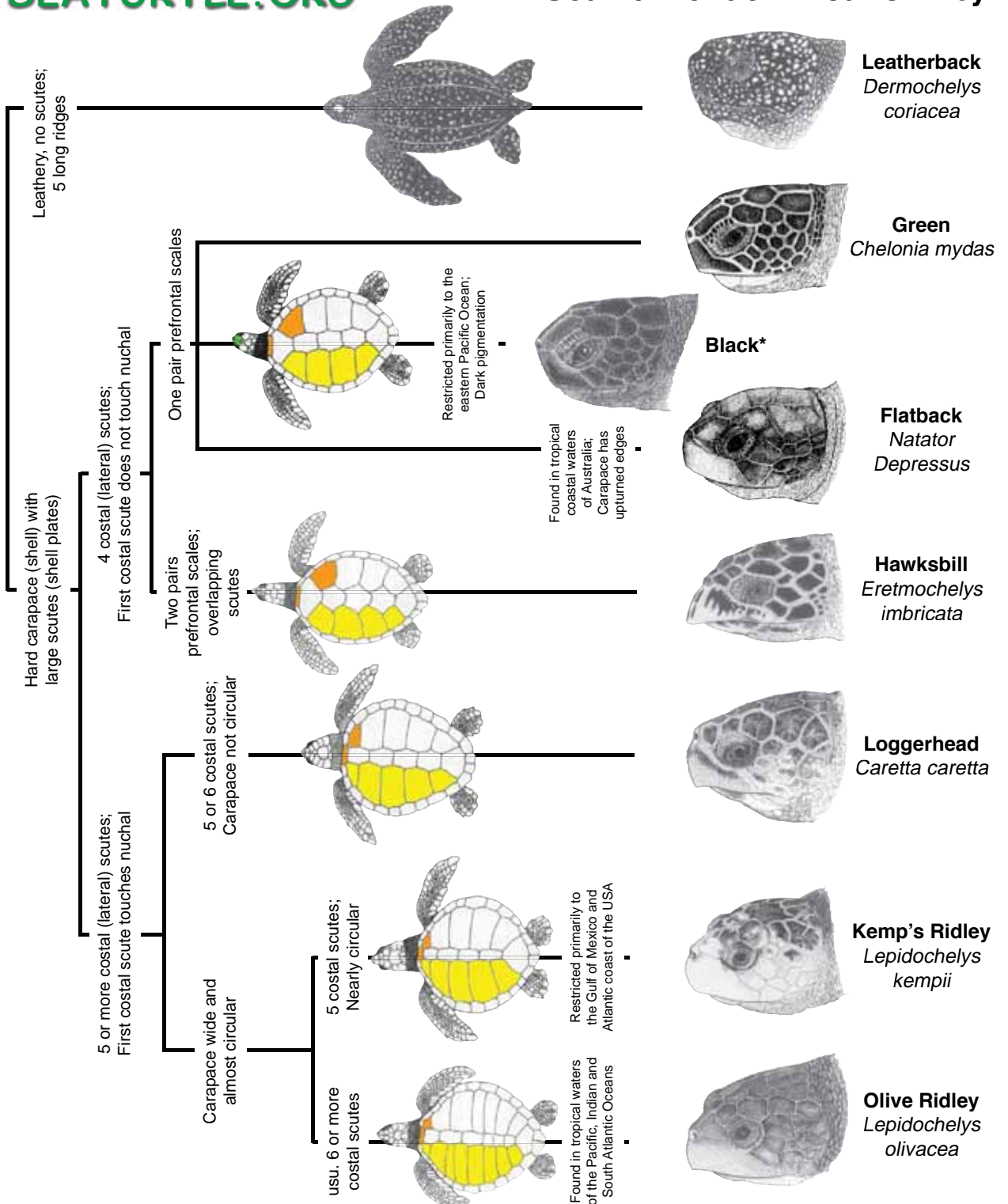


SEATURTLE.ORG

Sea Turtle Identification Key



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Source: Pritchard, P. C. H. and Mortimer, J. A. (1999) Taxonomy, External Morphology, and Species Identification. pp. 21-38. In: Eckert, K.L., K.A. Bjorndal, F.A. Abreu-Grobois, and M. Donnelly (Editors). 1999. Research and Management Techniques for the Conservation of Sea Turtles. IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group Publication No. 4. (for further details see <http://www.iucn-mtsg.org/publications/>)

Illustrations by Tom McFarland

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Species Descriptions

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Spanish Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>
Leatherback	Baula, Tortuga Laúd, Tora	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
Color dark gray/black with white spots	Carapace tapered; leathery with 5 ridges	
Max Length 165 - 190+ cm	Plastron relatively small	
Max Weight 400 - 500 kg	Head tooth-like notch on either side of upper jaw; no scales	
Range all oceans, subarctic to tropical; pelagic		
Green Turtle	Tortuga Verde, Tortuga Blanca	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
Color J: radiating streaks; A: brown, buff	Carapace 4 costal scutes	
Max Length 120 cm	Plastron yellowish; 4 inframarginal scutes	
Max Weight 230 kg	Head round face; serrated jaw; 1 pair elongate prefrontal scales	
Range all subtropical and tropical seas; bays and coastal waters		
Black Turtle*	Tortuga Negra, Prieta	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
Color black or grayish with black markings	Carapace 4 costal scutes	
Max Length 90 cm	Plastron cream to gray; 4 inframarginal scutes	
Max Weight 150 kg	Head round face; serrated jaw; 1 pair elongate prefrontal scales	
Range East Pacific Ocean; bays and coastal waters		
*The status of the Black turtle or east Pacific green turtle, sometime referred to as <i>Chelonia agassizii</i> or <i>C. mydas agassizii</i> , remains uncertain. Recent genetic evidence supports an Atlantic-Mediterranean vs. Indian-Pacific grouping, while morphological and behavioral data suggest an east Pacific species or subspecies.		
Flatback Turtle	Kikila, Tortuga Franca Oriental	<i>Natator depressus</i>
Color olive grey	Carapace 4 costal scutes; broad and round; upturned margins	
Max Length 100 cm	Plastron yellowish; 4 inframarginal scutes	
Max Weight 90 kg	Head preocular scale; wide; flat; triangular	
Range tropical coastal Australia		
Hawksbill Turtle	Tortuga Carey	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>
Color amber and brown streaks	Carapace 4 costal scutes; (usually) overlapping scutes; oval	
Max Length 90 - 110+ cm	Plastron cream with dark blotches front and rear; 4 inframarginal scutes	
Max Weight 80 kg	Head curved beak; distinct overbite; 2 pair prefrontal scales	
Range all oceans; tropical waters; reef areas		
Loggerhead	Caguama, Amarilla, Cabezona, Tortuga Boba	<i>Caretta caretta</i>
Color red brown to brown	Carapace longer than wide; 5 or more costal scutes, first very small	
Max Length 90 - 110 cm	Plastron yellow to orange, 3 inframarginal scutes	
Max Weight 100 - 180 kg	Head large head; 4 or more prefrontal scales	
Range all oceans; primarily temperate waters; near shore, often associate with structures (i.e., wrecks, platforms)		
Kemp's Ridley	Tortuga Lora, Cotorra	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>
Color gray to light olive green	Carapace round; 5 (sometimes 6) costal scutes	
Max Length 70 cm	Plastron white to yellow; 4 inframarginal scutes with pores	
Max Weight 40 - 50 kg	Head triangular; relatively large; 2 pair prefrontal scales	
Range Gulf of Mexico, eastern USA; coastal; < 16° N		
Olive Ridley	Tortuga Golfina, Tortuga Olivacea, Parlama	<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>
Color gray to olive green	Carapace nearly round; 6 - 9 costal scutes, number may be asymmetrical	
Max Length 70 - 80 cm	Plastron cream/white; 4 inframarginal scutes with pores	
Max Weight 45 - 60 kg	Head triangular; relatively large; 2 pair prefrontal scales	
Range tropical waters of Pacific, Indian and South Atlantic Oceans; pelagic		

SUGGESTED REFERENCES

- Bjorndal, KA (Editor). 1995. *Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles* (Revised Edition). Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.
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