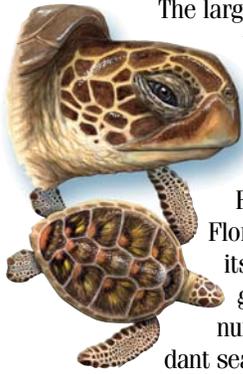
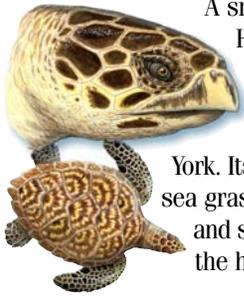


Green Sea Turtle (*Threatened*)



The largest of the hard-shelled turtles, the green sea turtle can reach 4 feet long and 500 pounds, though the average is usually 3 feet and 250+ pounds. Usually found among sea grass in inlets, bays and estuaries throughout the tropical and subtropical Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans, it is known to nest on Florida beaches. It gets its name from the color of its body fat, which is green from the algae and grasses it eats. A popular food source in a number of cultures, populations of this once abundant sea turtle have drastically declined.

Atlantic Hawksbill Sea Turtle (*Endangered*)



A small- to medium-sized sea turtle, the Atlantic Hawksbill averages 3 feet long and 100-200 pounds. It gets its name from its hawk-like beak. Found in warm coastal waters throughout the tropics, this turtle is rarely seen in New York. Its preferred diet is sponges, but it also eats algae, sea grasses, soft corals, crustaceans, mollusks, jellyfish and sea urchins. Highly prized for tortoiseshell jewelry, the hawksbill has been hunted for its beautiful shell.

Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Threatened*)



The most frequently seen sea turtle in NY waters, the loggerhead has a conspicuously large, block-like head, and averages 3 feet long and 300 pounds. Its powerful jaws are well suited to eating hard-shelled prey (crabs, crustaceans, mollusks), in addition to jellyfish, fish and eelgrass. It regularly nests on the U.S. Atlantic Coast, primarily in Florida. Though protected in the U.S., loggerhead turtles and eggs are hunted extensively in many parts of the world.

Atlantic/Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle (*Endangered*)



The most endangered and smallest of the sea turtles, the Kemp's ridley averages 20-28 inches long and 80-110 pounds. It has a distinctive round to heart-shaped shell. Usually found in sheltered areas along the coastline in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, it is the second most commonly seen sea turtle in New York. It eats crabs, fish, jellyfish, squid, snails, clams, starfish and some marine vegetation. Its only known nesting ground is a single stretch of protected beach near Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Kemp's ridley populations are endangered largely due to exploitation of their meat and eggs.

Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Endangered*)



The largest sea turtle, the leatherback can reach 6 feet long and weigh up to 1,300 pounds.

Unlike other turtles, it does not have a shell on its back, but rather leathery skin (hence, its name). The most pelagic sea turtle, its large front flippers and the ridges on its back aid it in swimming. It can swim for long periods and cover great distances. It has the largest range of any reptile and is found around the globe, except for the Arctic and Antarctic. Its ability to maintain a warmer core body temperature for longer periods allows this turtle to visit more northern regions. Jellyfish make up the bulk of its diet. The leatherback is endangered largely due to the collection of its eggs for food.

Note: Length measurements given are upper shell lengths only. Actual body lengths from tip to tip are much longer. (Example: Leatherbacks can measure 9 feet long tip to tip.)

Sea Turtle Populations

Despite the enormous number of eggs produced by a single female over her breeding lifetime, all sea turtle populations are either threatened or endangered. The decline in sea turtles is attributed to a number of factors, including: loss of nesting habitats to development; destruction of nests by predators and poachers; harvest of turtles for eggs, meat, leather, and tortoiseshell; and accidental killing by commercial fishing operations. In the U.S., all sea turtles are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

To stop sea turtle populations from dwindling further, there are numerous ongoing efforts to protect and study them. Across the world, a network of volunteers go to great lengths to return stranded turtles to the sea.

In some areas, known sea turtle nesting grounds are patrolled during the breeding season, in some instances by armed guards. To lessen turtle deaths caused by some shrimp trawling nets, the US Fish & Wildlife Service requires shrimp trawlers of the southeastern and gulf coasts to have a turtle excluder device on their nets, which enables turtles to escape. In New York, the waters off Long Island are critical habitat for the development of immature (2-5 year-old) Kemp's ridleys. To learn about the turtle's habits and movements, biologists attached radio transmitters to young turtles. Information collected helps biologists plan the best management approach to ensure those sea turtles are here for future generations to enjoy.

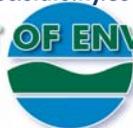
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Check out DEC's website at www.dec.state.ny.us for more information on sea turtles.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

George E. Pataki, Governor



Erin M. Crotty, Commissioner

New York State Conservationist, February 2005