



Eight Different Sea Turtle Models

The numbers (and names) are faintly molded on the ventral surface (plastron). A method to obscure these names which we have found to work is to cover them with a small piece of duct tape or adhesive tape, then write the number on the tape with a permanent marker and cover the number with Scotch tape so the permanent marker will not wipe off.

Sometimes these turtle models are mislabeled during manufacture, but if you key them out correctly they will be correctly identified.

#1 Leatherback Turtle

#2 Hawksbill Turtle

#3 Green Turtle

#4 Black Turtle

#5 Flatback Turtle

#6 Loggerhead Turtle

#7 Kemp's Ridley Turtle

#8 Olive Ridley Turtle

The number of scutes on head, carapace and plastron are diagnostic as to species.

Models can be sexed based upon tail length: mature male's tail extends beyond posterior margin of carapace.

How to Use the Sea Turtle ID Dichotomous Key

- Choose any turtle.
- Begin at #1 and read both parts of the statement.
- Choose the statement that best describes your turtle and do as it states.
- Continue following the statements, reading both parts, until you can identify your turtle.

*Always begin at statement #1 for each new turtle you want to identify.



DICHOTOMOUS KEY SEA TURTLE ID ACTIVITY

1-A scutes arranged in a distinct pattern on carapace with medial, lateral and marginal positions:

go to #2.

1-B no scutes on carapace, longitudinal ridges on carapace:

Leatherback

2-A medial scutes five (5) in number:

go to #3

2-B medial scutes more than five (5) in number:

Olive Ridley

3-A lateral scutes four (4) in number:

go to #4

3-B lateral scutes more than four (4) in number:

go to #5

4-A medial scutes imbricated, “beak” hooked:

Hawksbill

4-B medial scutes not imbricated, “beak” not noticeably hooked:

go to #6

5-A small terminal scute at centerline of posterior margin of plastron:

Kemp’s Ridley

5-B no such scute on plastron:

Loggerhead

6-A poster margin of carapace pointed, not rounded:

Black

6-B poster margin of carapace rounded:

go to #7

7-A lateral scutes of carapace conspicuously larger than the medial scutes:

Flatback

7-B lateral scutes of carapace approximately the same size as the medial scutes:

Green



VOCABULARY

scute - bony external plate

marginal – edge

carapace - top of shell

posterior - back or rear

plastron - underside of shell

imbricated - to overlap in a regular pattern

medial - pertaining to the middle

terminal – end

lateral - pertaining to the sides