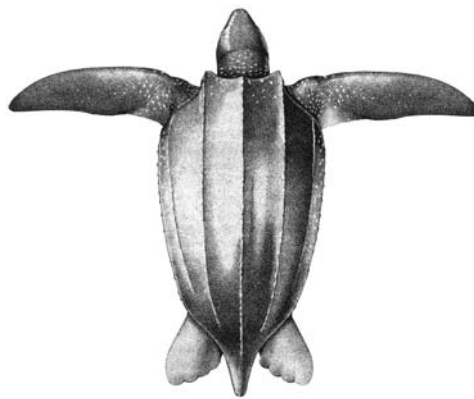


www.strandings.com

British Isles & Republic of Ireland Marine Turtle Strandings &
Sightings
Annual Report 2009

R.S.Penrose & L.R.Gander. February 2010



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CONTENTS.

	Page	
1	SUMMARY	6
2	INTRODUCTION	7
	2.1 The UK Turtle Implementation Group.	7
3	MATERIALS AND METHODS	8
	3.1 Live Animals.	9
	3.2 Dead Animals.	9
4	RESULTS	10
	4.1 Sightings.	13
	4.2 Strandings.	14
5	MATTERS ARISING	19
	5.1 Retrospective Reports.	19
	5.2 Repatriation.	19
6	LIVE STRANDING EVENTS 2009	22
	6.1 Rehabilitation.	22
7	BYCATCH	22
8	SAMPLES & POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS	22
9	DATA SHARING	23
10	UNUSUAL OCCURENCES	23
11	PUBLICITY	23
12	TAGGING	23
13	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	24
14	APPENDICES	24

List of Figures.		page
Figure 1.	Current Technical Co-ordination of the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP).	7
Figure 2.	All species sightings & strandings 1999-2009.	11
Figure 3.	All species sightings & strandings 2007.	12
Figure 4.	All species sightings & strandings 2008.	12
Figure 5.	All species sightings & strandings 2009.	12
Figure 6.	Leatherback sightings 2009.	13
Figure 7.	Loggerhead sightings 2009.	13
Figure 8.	Unidentified sightings 2009.	14
Figure 9.	Green turtle strandings.	14
Figure 10.	Kemp's ridley strandings.	15
Figure 11.	Leatherback strandings 2009.	15
Figure 12.	Loggerhead strandings 2009.	16
Figure 13.	Unidentified strandings 2009.	16
Figure 14.	All leatherbacks by month.	17
Figure 15.	All leatherbacks average over 1999-2009.	17
Figure 16.	All loggerheads by month.	17
Figure 17.	All loggerheads average over 1999-2009.	17

List of Plates.

Plate 1.	'Flash' being released off Gran Canaria.	19
Plate 2.	State veterinarian Pascual Calabuig releasing 'Nemo'.	20
Plate 3.	BBC flyer for the One Show.	21
Plate 4.	Mike Dilger, 'Willy' and Jean Beasley at Topsail Island.	21

List of Tables.

Table 1.	2009 Total number of reported marine turtles for British Isles & RoI (live & dead).	10
Table 2.	2009 Number of live marine turtles.	10
Table 3.	2009 Number of dead marine turtles.	10
Table 4.	Cumulative number of records.	17
Table 5.	Species Comparison.	18
Table 6.	'TURTLE' Database Species Totals (1748 - 2009).	18

1. SUMMARY

Only one turtle was recorded between January and June in 2009 and this is thought to be the carcass of T2008/047 a decomposing leatherback reported in December in the near vicinity. Turtles were reported in each month from June to December.

A total of 39 turtles were reported during the year, either as sightings (24) one of which was a leatherback turtle caught in a whelk rope or strandings (15). These comprised of 21 leatherback turtles, 9 loggerhead turtles and 9 unidentified turtles. All were single animal reports except for two unidentified turtles seen from land near Barmouth in June.

Live turtles (27)

Fifteen leatherback turtles (all sightings), 5 stranded loggerhead turtles and 7 unidentified turtles were reported alive.

One loggerhead from Co. Clare was taken to Lahinch Aquarium but died later and one loggerhead from Donegal was taken to Dingle Oceanworld but also died.

Two loggerhead turtles from Cornwall were successfully rehabilitated at Blue Reef Aquarium and are in preparation for release in Gran Canaria in 2010.

A loggerhead turtle from Wales was unfortunately put back in the sea.

The geographical distribution of the 27 live animals is as follows:- 7 Republic of Ireland, 1 Scotland, 6 England, 10 Wales, 0 Northern Ireland and 0 Isle of Man.

Dead turtles (12)

Six leatherback turtles, 4 loggerhead turtles and 2 unidentified turtles were reported as dead.

Five leatherbacks stranded dead and one was by-caught. Four loggerhead turtles stranded dead. One unidentified hard-shell was dead at sea and one is awaiting *post-mortem* examination.

The geographical distribution of the 12 dead animals is as follows - 5 Republic of Ireland, 2 Scotland, 3 England, 2 Wales, 0 Northern Ireland and 0 Isle of Man.

Updated turtles

Three rehabilitated loggerhead turtles from 2008 were successfully released in Grand Canaria.

The live stranded Kemp's ridley turtle T2007/001, reported in January 2007 from Devon, cared for at Weymouth Sea Life, was finally released in the U.S. in April 2009.

T2007/036 from Co. Kerry, and originally thought to be a loggerhead turtle, had later been identified as a Green turtle. This is probably the first recorded stranded green turtle for the Republic of Ireland.

Data sharing

2008 TURTLE data has been forwarded to NBN Gateway <http://www.nbn.org.uk/>

TURTLE Record totals

Current total of 2433 is broken down thus: Republic of Ireland 1246, England 532, Scotland 366, Wales 203, Northern Ireland 39, Isle of Man 28, Channel Isles 12 and Offshore 7.

2. INTRODUCTION

In 1990, the ‘Collaborative UK Marine Mammal Strandings Project’ was initiated and part-funded by the UK Department of the Environment (now Defra). The project involves detailed pathological and other investigations of stranded marine mammal carcasses (mostly cetacean) from UK waters. It forms part of the Department's international obligations towards conservation agreements, including the ‘Agreement on the conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas’ (ASCOBANS).

Detailed pathological investigations of stranded marine turtles were included in 2001 and the systematic recording and occasional examination of stranded basking sharks began in 2007. The project is now named the ‘Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme’ (CSIP, www.ukstrandings.org) (see **Figure 1.**).

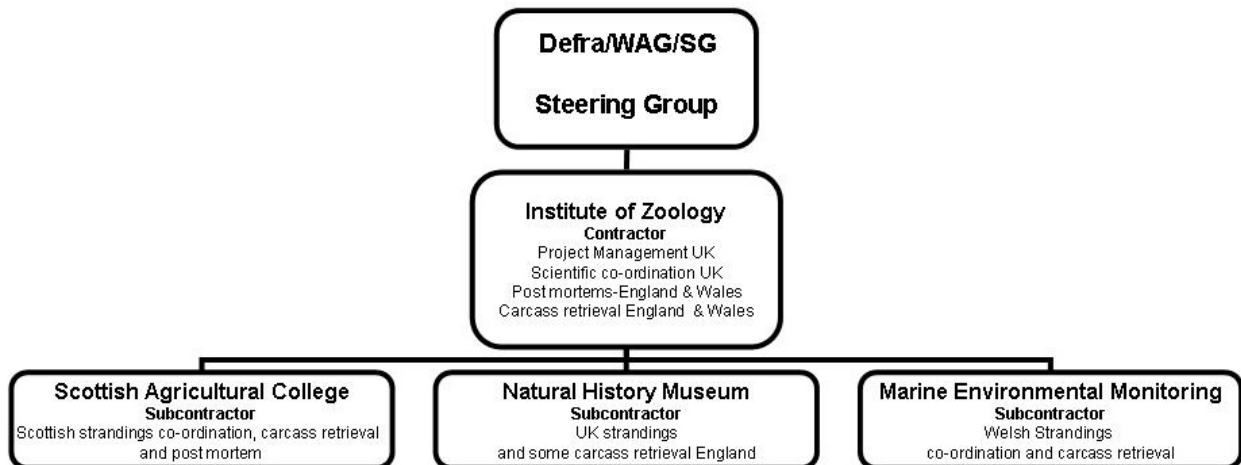


Figure 1. Current Technical Co-ordination of the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP).

2.1 The UK Turtle Implementation Group.

In 1999, English Nature, now Natural England, published the UK Marine Turtles Grouped Species Action Plan (SAP) on behalf of the UK Biodiversity Group. The SAP is part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and aims to enhance marine turtle conservation in UK waters and in the UK Overseas Territories as well as raise awareness and knowledge of their occurrence, legal protection and measures to enhance conservation amongst marine users and the general public. The SAP is being implemented by a group of organisations led by joint lead partners the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and the Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust¹ (ARC). The contact agency is Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The Turtle Implementation Group (TIG) consists of the following organisations:-

- **Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust¹** is an authority on reptile and amphibian issues and are Lead Partners or joint Lead Partners for all five of the reptile and amphibian Action Plans within the UK BAP www.arc-trust.org
Contact: *Tony Gent 01202 391319*
- **Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)** The Countryside Council for Wales is the Government's statutory advisor on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and the opportunity for outdoor enjoyment in Wales and its inshore waters.
Contact: *Tom Stringell 01248 385500*
- **Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)** is the Isle of Man Government's department responsible for species protection and site designation under the Manx Wildlife Act 1990. The Department is also the key Isle of Man contact for strandings and sightings of sea turtles. www.gov.im/daff/
Contact: *Laura Hanley 01624 685835*
- **Marine Conservation Society (MCS)** is the UK charity dedicated to the protection of the marine environment and its wildlife. MCS is joint Lead Partner of the Marine Turtles Grouped Species Action Plan and coordinates the TIG. www.mcsuk.org
Contact: *Sue Ranger or Peter Richardson 01989 566017*

¹ Formally Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT).

- **Marine Environmental Monitoring (MEM)** is a member of the Defra “UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme”, www.strandings.com www.ukstrandings.org MEM also manages ‘TURTLE’ the British Isles & Republic of Ireland database holding both records of sightings and strandings of marine turtles dating back to 1748.
Contact: *Rod Penrose (Reporting telephone No. 01348 875000)*
- **MEDASSET**, founded in 1988, is an international environmental NGO registered as a charity and private company in the UK and as a Non Profit Organisation in Greece, working for the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats throughout the Mediterranean, through scientific research, environmental education, political lobbying and awareness-raising.
Contact: *Lily Venizelos + 30 210 3613572 E-mail: medasset@medasset.org*
- **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)**, part of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, provides the legislative and policy framework for the conservation of nature and biodiversity in the Republic of Ireland. It also oversees its implementation, based on good science, with particular emphasis on the protection of habitats and species, through the designation and conservation of sites under EU Directives and national legislation.
Contact: *Dr Ferdia Marnell +3531 8883290.*
- **Natural England (NE)** is the Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and natural features throughout England.
Contact: *Jim Foster 01733 455251.*
- **Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)**, is the agency responsible for the implementation of government environmental policy in Northern Ireland. Its aim is “to protect and conserve the natural and man-made environment and to promote its appreciation for the benefit of present and future generations”.
Contact: *Gary Burrows, 028 9056 9571 or 028 7082 3600.*
- **Queen’s University Belfast:** Dr Jonathan Houghton works on the foraging ecology and migratory behaviour of marine turtles with a particular focus on the predator prey interactions of leatherback turtles and gelatinous zooplankton (jellyfish).
Contact: *Dr Jonathan Houghton 028 90972297.*
- **Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)** is a government body responsible to the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament. SNH promotes the care, improvement, responsible enjoyment, understanding, appreciation and sustainable use of Scotland’s natural heritage. SNH is the contact government point for the Marine Turtles Grouped Species Action Plan.
Contact: *Laura Clark 01463 725237.*
- **The Wildlife Trusts** is a partnership of 47 Wildlife Trusts, across the UK, caring for more than 2,400 nature reserves. It campaigns for the protection of wildlife and invests in the future by helping people of all ages to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of nature. The Wildlife Trusts Basking Shark Project contributes at sea survey data, from the west coast of Britain on an annual basis.
Contact: *Dr Nick Tregenza 01736 711783.*
- **University College Cork** *Professor John Davenport* is Head of Department of Zoology & Animal Ecology. He has worked on most species of sea turtles since the early 1980s, conducting fundamental studies on their physiology and biomechanics. He is currently linked to turtle conservation programmes in Bermuda and Cephalonia.
Contact: *Professor John Davenport +353 21 490 4051 or Dr Tom Doyle +353 (0) 21 4703119.*
- **University of Exeter, Cornwall Campus** hosts the Marine Turtle Research Group that carries out fundamental and applied research on marine turtles in British waters, the Mediterranean, West Africa and throughout the UK Overseas Territories.
Contacts: *Dr Brendan Godley & Dr Annette Broderick 01326 371 861.*

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Contact details vary for different parts of the British Isles & Republic of Ireland and the Turtle Code should be consulted for the relevant contacts.

In **England & Wales** a 24 hour answer phone **01348 875000**, is interrogated at regular intervals. A message requests callers to leave details of the stranding or sighting and location, along with their name and contact phone number, so they may be reached if confirmation of details are required. A dedicated email address to receive digital photographs has been created info@strandings.demon.co.uk and a mobile phone has been activated to receive ‘phone images’ only Tel. No. **07773 592227**. (If the stranding is a live-stranding a message on the answer-phone informs the caller to contact the RSPCA immediately. see 3.1).

For **Scotland** all records should be reported to Scottish Natural Heritage on **01463 725237** with dead strandings being reported to the Scottish Agricultural College **01463 243030**. Live strandings and entanglements should be reported to the SSPCA on **0131 3390111**.

For **Northern Ireland** all records of live or dead turtles should be reported to both the Ulster Museum **028 9038 31144** and the Portrush Coastal Zone on **028 7082 3600**.

In the **Republic of Ireland** all records should be reported to Prof. John Davenport on **00353 (0)21**

4904140 (work) and **00353 (0)21 4897392** (home) or Dr Tom Doyle on **+353 (0)21 4703119**. Sightings & strandings can also be reported online in the Republic of Ireland at www.turtle.ie

UK turtle sightings and strandings can also be reported using the UK Turtle Code online at www.euroturtle.org/turtlecode

On the **Isle of Man** all marine animal strandings should be reported to **DAFF** on **01624 685835** or directly to either **Dr Fiona Gell 07624 473753** or **Laura Hanley 07624 483942**.

The following criteria are applied: -

3.1 Live Animals

(Condition code 1)²

In 1994 the Marine Animal Rescue Coalition (MARC) was formed. This consists of all the major animal welfare and conservation bodies involved with marine mammals/turtles in the UK. It has been agreed that in the case of a live-stranding the first point of call would be the RSPCA (England & Wales), SSPCA (Scotland) as they support a manned 24-hour emergency phone. The RSPCA/SSPCA would then contact the relevant organisations, Marine Environmental Monitoring etc.

Contacts and advice can be found in the UK Turtle Code at www.strandings.com/Turtlepage.html

3.2 Dead Animals

(Condition code 2a extremely fresh as if just died)²

(Condition code 2b slight decomposition)²

(Condition code 3 moderate decomposition)²

Health and safety precautions are followed with the animal being handled only with gloved hands. Preferably it is then taken immediately for *post-mortem* examination, but due to funding cuts in 2006 freezing is now an option until transport becomes available.

(Condition code 4 advanced decomposition)²

(Condition code 5 mummified carcass)²

Species identified, basic measurements taken together with skin for DNA. Health and safety precautions being observed. Local Authorities then contacted for safe disposal of remains.

All live and dead marine turtles are allocated a “T0000/001” number. “T” designates the animal as a marine turtle, 0000 is the year and /001 is an individual number for each record of the same year. Records of all strandings & sightings in the British Isles & Republic of Ireland are kept by the Strandings Co-ordinator. Copies of *post-mortem* examination reports are sent from the Strandings Co-ordinator to the finder and others associated with the relevant stranding.

² Body conditions based on Kuiken, T. and Garcia Hartmann, M (1991) Proceedings of the European Cetacean Society workshop on cetacean pathology: dissection techniques and tissue sampling. ECS newsletter 17, Special issue: 39pp

4. RESULTS

The following three tables include marine turtle 'sightings' and 'strandings' reported through 2009.

Table 1.

2009 Total number of reported marine turtles for the British Isles & RoI. (live & dead).													
Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
Green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawksbill turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kemp's ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	5	6	2	0	1	21
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	1	2	9
Unidentified	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	1	1	1	0	0	9
Total animals	0	1	0	0	0	10	3	8	10	3	1	3	39

Table 2.

2009 Number of live marine turtles.													
Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
Green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawksbill turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kemp's ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	4	4	1	0	0	15
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	5
Unidentified	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	1	0	0	0	7
Total animals	0	0	0	0	0	9	2	7	6	1	1	1	27

Table 3.

2009 Number of dead marine turtles.													
Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
Green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawksbill turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kemp's ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	6
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	4
Unidentified	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Total animals	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	2	0	2	12

The general geographical distribution of each species, strandings and sightings, are plotted on the following maps. Although the maps are generated directly from the data stored, they should be regarded as showing distribution of animals rather than giving absolute counts. While the co-ordinate system and the mapping software can theoretically differentiate between points as close as 1 metre apart, even with separations of 100 metres at the scale at which these maps are presented, some symbols may appear to overlap completely.

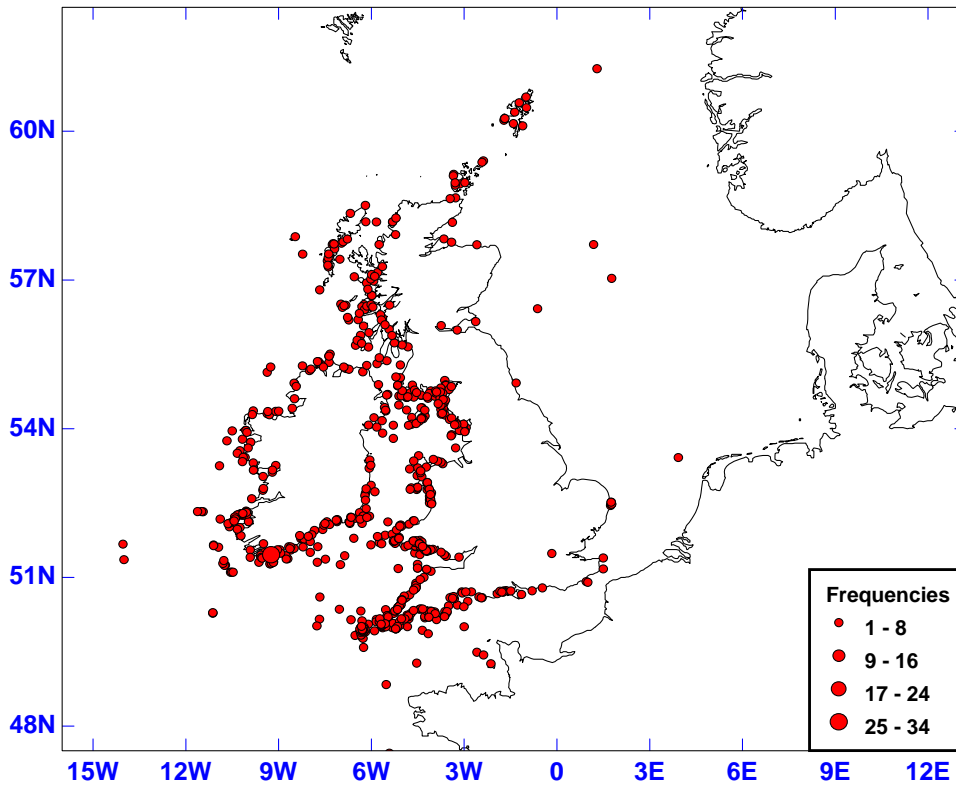


Figure 2. *All species sightings & strandings 1999-2009.*

All species, sightings & strandings over the eleven year period 1999-2009 have been plotted in **Figure 2.**

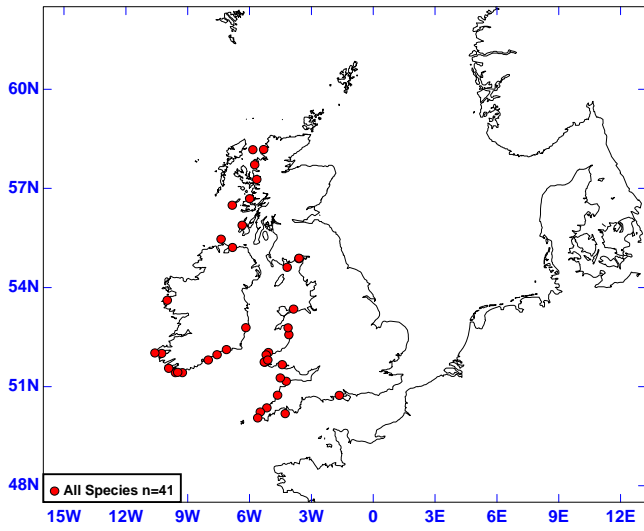


Figure 3. All species sightings & strandings 2007.

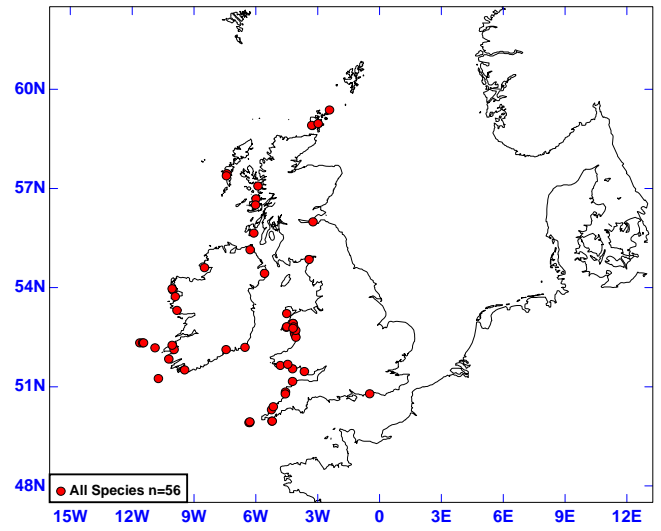


Figure 4. All species sightings & strandings 2008.

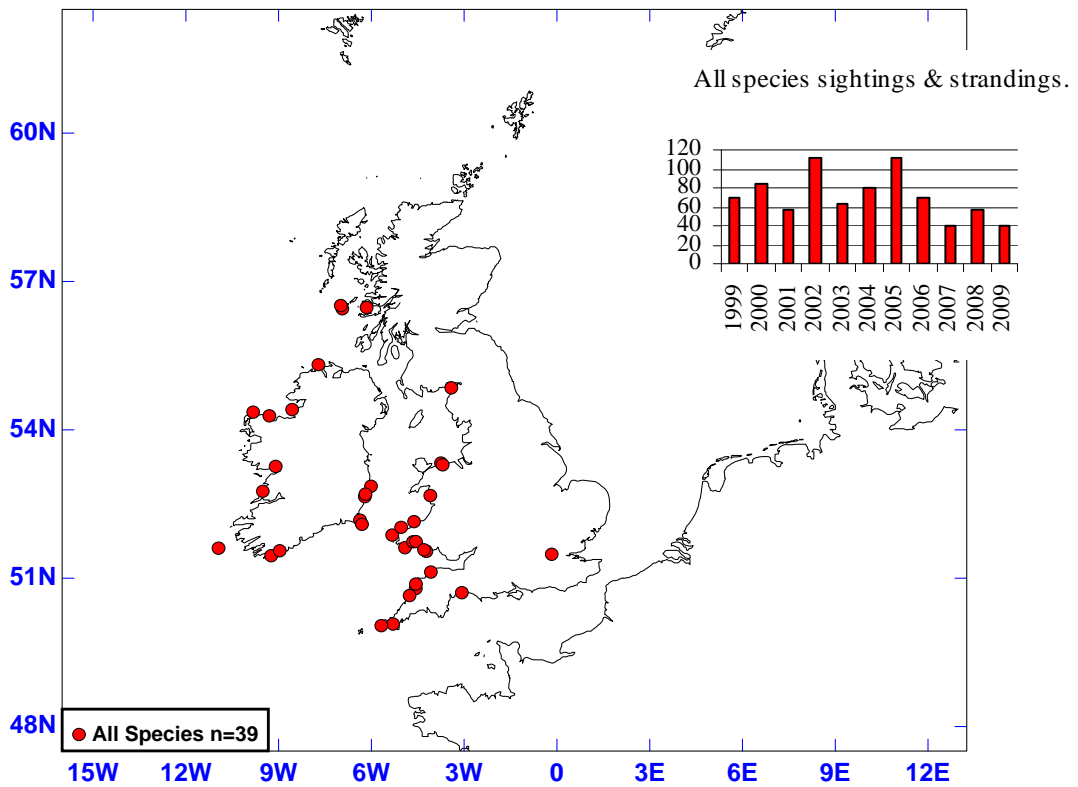


Figure 5. All species sightings & strandings 2009.

4.1 Sightings.

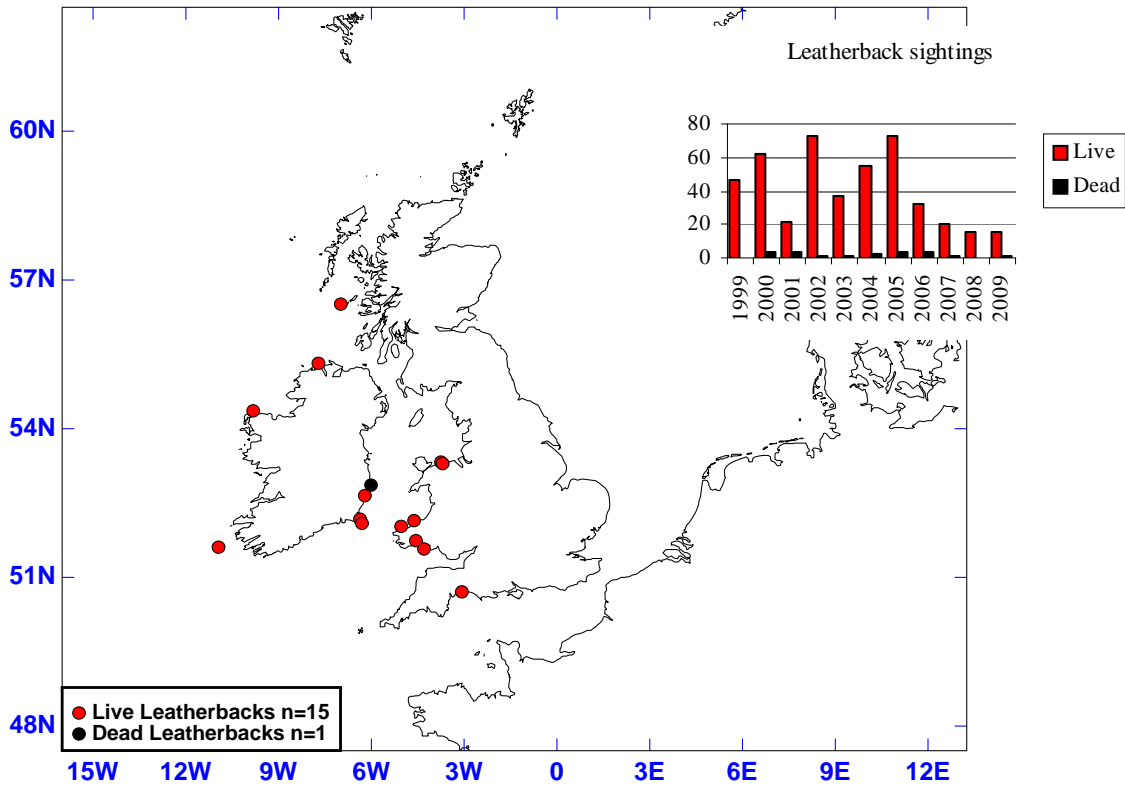


Figure 6. *Leatherback sightings 2009.*

No live or dead **loggerhead turtle** sightings were reported during 2009. However, ‘sightings’ of live loggerhead turtles have been recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 7**.

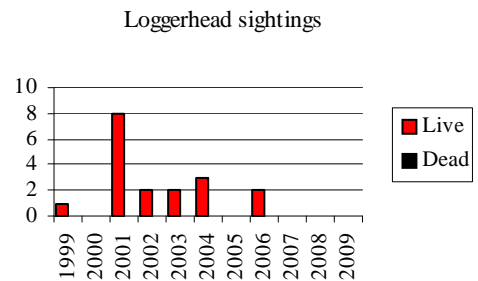


Figure 7. *Loggerhead sightings 2009.*

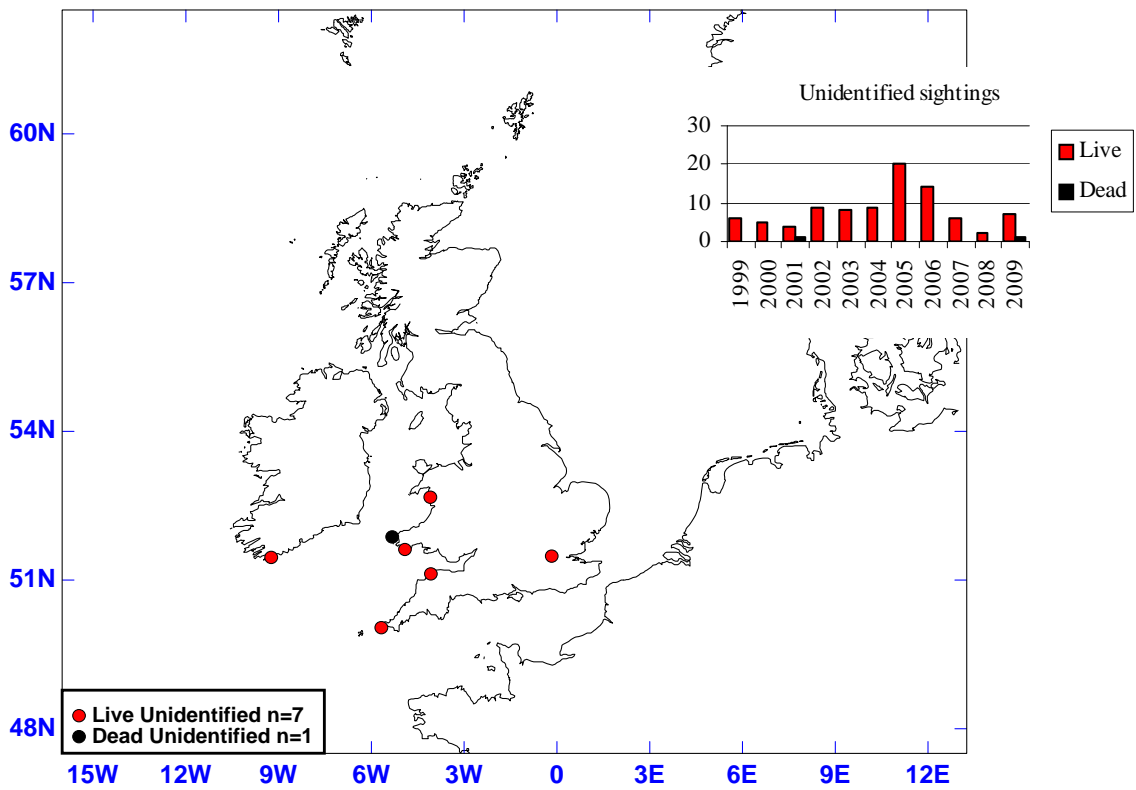


Figure 8. Unidentified sightings 2009.

4.2 Strandings.

No live or dead **green turtles** were reported during 2009. However, ‘strandings’ of both live and dead green turtles have been recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 9**.

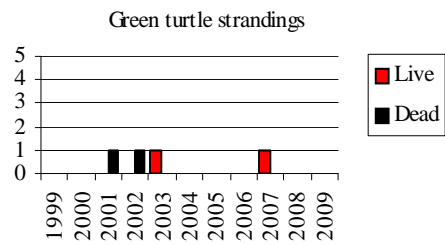


Figure 9. Green turtle strandings.

No live or dead **hawksbill turtle** strandings were reported during 2009. There have been no records of Hawksbill turtle “strandings” in the database. One “sighting” record exists off Cork Harbour in February 1983 when one was caught in a herring net and brought ashore alive.

No live or dead **Kemp's Ridley turtles** were reported during 2009. However, 'strandings' of both live and dead Kemp's Ridley turtles have been recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 10**.

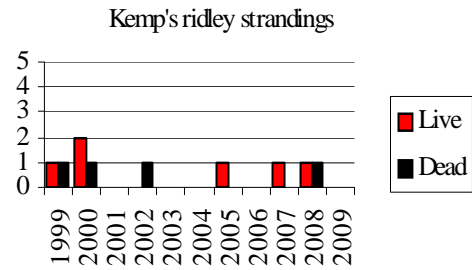


Figure 10. *Kemp's ridley strandings.*

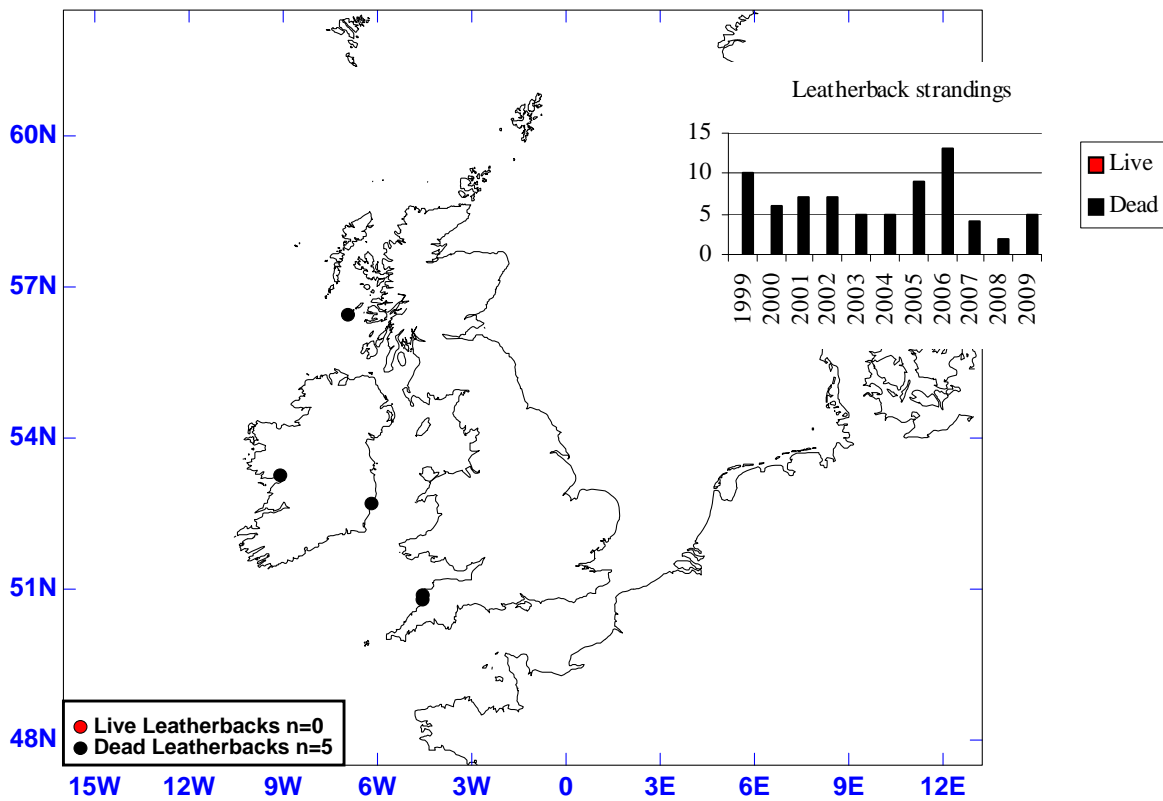


Figure 11. *Leatherback strandings 2009.*

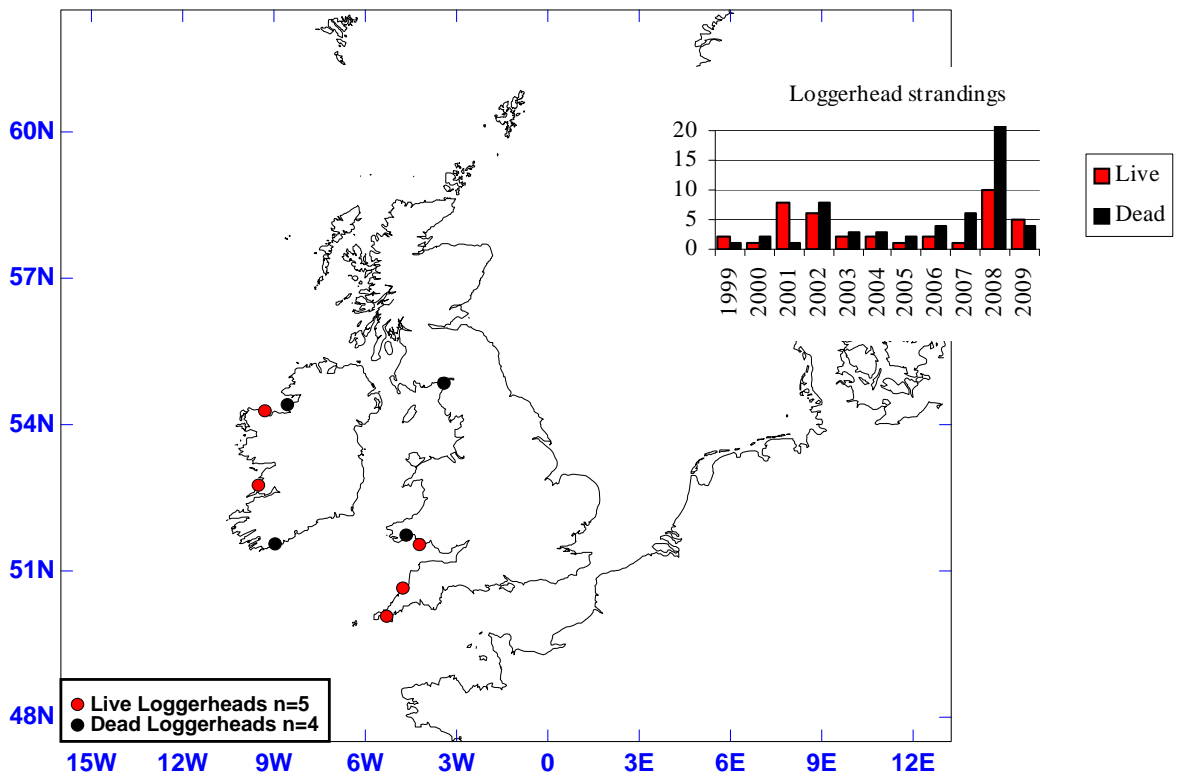


Figure 12. *Loggerhead strandings 2009.*

Only one Unidentified stranding was reported during 2009. This animal stranded on the Isle of Ulva, Argyll & Bute and is thought to be a loggerhead. The carcass is stored frozen at a Sea Life Centre and is awaiting a *post-mortem* examination.

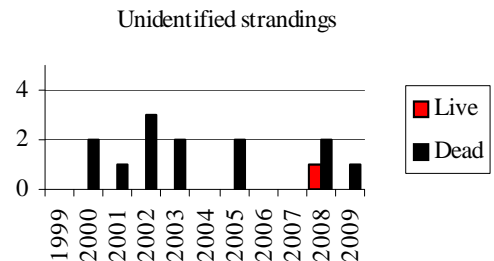


Figure 13. *Unidentified strandings 2009.*

All leatherback strandings and sightings, both dead and alive have been plotted by month for the period 1999 to 2009 shown in **Figure 14**. The average figure was taken over 1999-2009 and plotted in **Figure 15**. The graph clearly shows the increase in numbers through the summer months and gives a good indication on when to expect leatherbacks around the British Isles & Republic of Ireland coast. Numbers of leatherbacks recorded during 2009 were up on last year (15 in 2008 and 21 in 2009), the peak number recorded was in September (n=6) still within the expected temporal range as shown in **Figure 15**.

The records for the hard-shell species are more sporadic. Of the hard-shell species the most numerous recorded turtle is the loggerhead. The data for this species are plotted in **Figure 16** and **Figure 17**

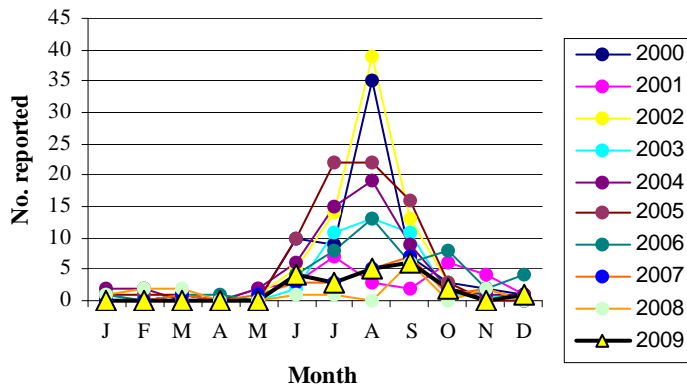


Figure 14. All leatherbacks by month.

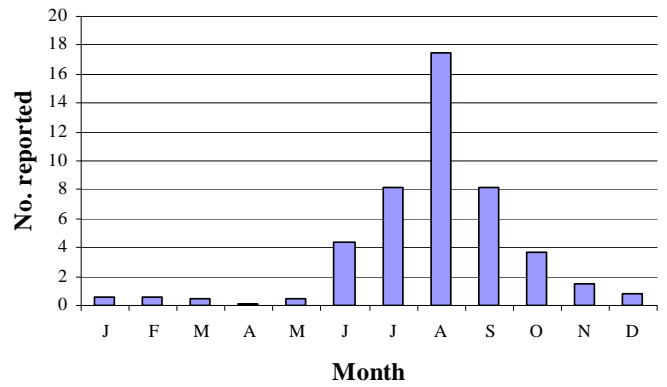


Figure 15. All leatherbacks average over 1999-2009

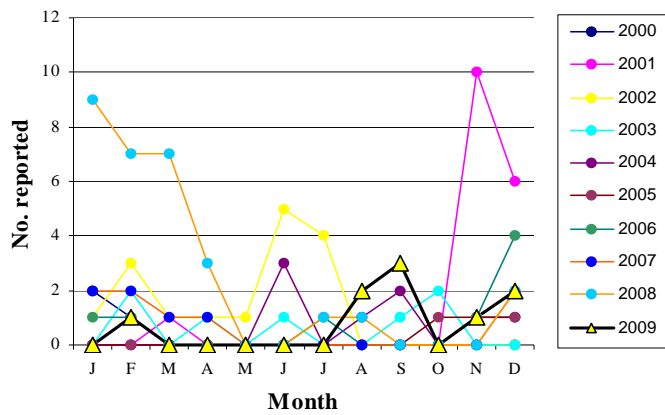


Figure 16. All loggerheads by month.

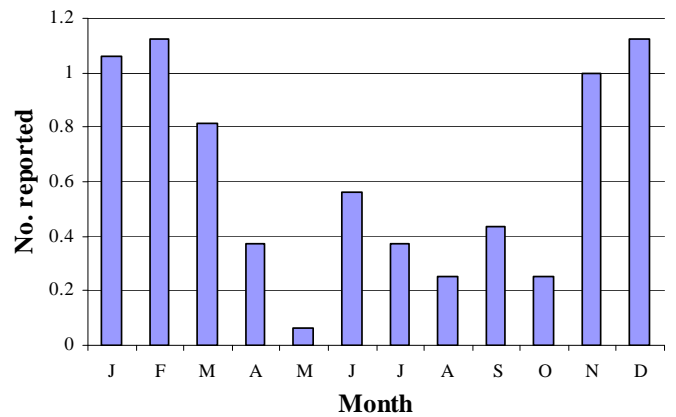


Figure 17. All loggerheads average over 1999-2009.

Table 4.

Cumulative number of records.		
Country	All Species	
	2009	1748 - 2009
Rep. of Ireland	15	1246
England	9	532
Scotland	3	366
Wales	12	203
N. Ireland	0	39
Isle of Man	0	28
Channel Islands	0	12
Offshore	0	7
Total	39	2433

An additional row has been added to **Table 4.** (Offshore), this includes records from the Bay of Biscay and another sighted whilst on passage to Iceland.

Countries are listed in **Table 4.** by descending order of total number of records shown in the year **1748 – 2009** column.

Table 5.

Species Comparison.												
Country	<i>1989 - 1999</i>											
	1999 - 2009											
	GT	HB	KR	LBT	LOG	UNI						
England	<i>1</i>	1	<i>0</i>	0	<i>2</i>	6	<i>101</i>	165	<i>8</i>	31	<i>12</i>	53
Scotland	<i>1</i>	2	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	1	<i>78</i>	92	<i>6</i>	35	<i>17</i>	13
Rep. of Ireland	<i>0</i>	1	<i>0</i>	0	<i>2</i>	0	<i>468</i>	189	<i>24</i>	32	<i>35</i>	19
Wales	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>1</i>	3	<i>53</i>	68	<i>4</i>	16	<i>8</i>	14
Channel Islands	<i>0</i>	1	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>1</i>	1	<i>0</i>	2
N. Ireland	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>11</i>	13	<i>0</i>	0	<i>4</i>	2
Isle of Man	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>3</i>	13	<i>0</i>	0	<i>2</i>	3
Offshore	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>2</i>	5	<i>0</i>	0	<i>1</i>	0
Total	<i>2</i>	5	<i>0</i>	0	<i>5</i>	10	<i>716</i>	545	<i>43</i>	115	<i>79</i>	106

GT = Green turtle, **HB** = Hawksbill turtle, **KR** = Kemp's ridley turtle, **LBT** = Leatherback turtle, **LOG** = Loggerhead turtle, **UNI** = Unidentified turtle.

Table 6.

'TURTLE' Database Species Totals (1748 - 2009).	
Species	TOTAL
Green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>)	9
Hawksbill turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	1
Kemp's ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>)	36
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	1812
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)	216
Unidentified	359
Total animals	2433

The total records held in TURTLE are 2433 (end of 2009). A breakdown of records for each country is shown in **Table 4.** However, the eleven year comparison, 1989-1999 / 1999-2009 shown in **Table 5,** shows a marked decline in leatherback turtles recorded for the Republic of Ireland compared with increases for nearly all other countries, the high numbers in 1989-1999 are a result of the concerted efforts of Gabriel King in investigating and collecting historical records around the Irish coast.

5. MATTERS ARISING.

5.1 Retrospective Reports.

The following retrospective records were added to the TURTLE database during 2009.

T1990/118	Leatherback turtle, dead at sea in fishing gear, August 1990, Half mile off Rosses Bay, Donegal, Eire
T1997/34	Green turtle, stranded dead, 13th July 1997, at Crouch Comer, Foulness, England
T2002/110	Loggerhead turtle, sea alive, 15th February 2002, NW979564, England
T2002/111	Leatherback turtle, sea alive, 7th October 2002, half mile west of St Bees Head, England
T2005/111	Leatherback turtle, sea alive, July 2005, 7 miles NE Kinsale Gas Station, Cork
T2007/039	Unidentified turtle, sea alive, 26th August 2007, Cape Clear, Cork
T2007/040	Leatherback turtle, sea alive, 16th August 2007, Ram Head, Ardmore, Waterford
T2007/041	Leatherback turtle, sea alive, July 2007, Brownstown Head, Waterford
T2008/053	Leatherback turtle, sea alive, July 2008, Carmarthen Bay, Wales
T2008/054	Leatherback turtle, sea alive, July 2008, Carmarthen Bay, Wales
T2007/036	Green turtle. Stranded alive, but died, Nov/Dec 2007, Dingle area. Originally reported and entered as Loggerhead.

We are pleased to note that the publication ‘Marine turtles in Irish waters’ by Gabriel L. King and Simon D. Berrow has finally been printed as a Special Supplement in the Irish Naturalists’ Journal in 2009. ISSN 0021-1311

5.2 Repatriation.

T2008/033 a loggerhead turtle named ‘Flash’ was found alive at Ogmore by Sea in the Vale of Glamorgan, south Wales on the 19th July 2008. The turtle was relayed to Blue Reef Aquarium, Newquay, Cornwall by the RSPCA and British Divers Marine Life Rescue. The animal was successfully flown together with loggerhead turtles T2008/035 and T2008/036 (below) to Gran Canaria for release.

PIT tag number 985121004870188 was inserted in the left shoulder prior to being prepared for transportation. The flight took place on the 9th

February 2009 with staff from Blue Reef Aquarium in attendance. We are extremely grateful to Gran Canaria State Veterinarian Pascual Calabuig for receiving this animal and to Thomas Cook and PBS International for flying these animals and producing the Airway Bill free of charge.



Plate 1. ‘Flash’ being released off Gran Canaria.

T2008/035 a loggerhead turtle named '**Nemo**' was recovered alive off Port Eynon on the Gower Peninsular, south Wales on the 2nd August 2008 by David & Mike Tong of 'Gower Coast Adventures'. The turtle was found floating amongst seaweed and relayed to Blue Reef Aquarium, Newquay, Cornwall by the RSPCA and British Divers Marine Life Rescue. The animal was successfully flown together with loggerhead turtles T2008/033 and T2008/036 to Gran Canaria for release.

PIT tag number 985121004979882 was inserted in the left shoulder prior to being prepared for transportation. The flight took place on the 9th



Plate 2. State veterinarian Pascual Calabuig releasing '**Nemo**'.

February 2009 with staff from Blue Reef Aquarium in attendance. We are extremely grateful to Gran Canaria State Veterinarian Pascual Calabuig for receiving this animal and to Thomas Cook and PBS International for flying these animals and producing the Airway Bill free of charge.

T2008/036 a loggerhead turtle named '**Saor**' was found alive at Inch Strand, Co Kerry in the Republic of Ireland on the 4th March 2008. The turtle was taken to Dingle Oceanworld, RoI for rehabilitation and later relayed to Blue Reef Aquarium, Newquay, Cornwall by Maria Laguna from Oceanworld and the UK leg by Rod Penrose and Dave Jarvis BDMLR on the 2nd December 2008. The animal was successfully flown together with loggerhead turtles T2008/033 and T2008/035 (above) to Gran Canaria for release. PIT tag number 965800000401062 was inserted in the left shoulder at Dingle prior to being prepared for transportation. The flight took place on the 9th February 2009 with staff from Blue Reef Aquarium in attendance. We are extremely grateful to Gran Canaria State Veterinarian Pascual Calabuig for receiving this animal and to Thomas Cook and PBS International for flying these animals and producing the Airway Bill free of charge.

The repatriation of all three loggerhead turtles was covered by BBC Breakfast TV.

T2007/001 was a Kemp's ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys kempi*) found live-stranded at Woolacombe Beach, Devon on the 6th of January 2007. Luckily the turtle was found by Sarah Gardiner and Steve Hunt, two members of British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR), who managed to stop members of the public from returning the animal to the sea. The turtle was relayed to the RSPCA Centre at West Hatch by RSPCA Inspector Shaun Clements where it was stabilised before being transported to Weymouth Sea Life where it was named 'Willy'. The Kemp's ridley responded well to treatment and was soon fit for release. Current repatriation protocol for Kemp's ridleys is to return them to the US for release. This is unfortunately more involved than returning loggerheads to Gran Canaria as CITES Permits are required for movements of these species outside of Europe. Dr Matthew Godfrey, North Carolina Sea Turtle Program Co-ordinator was contacted who kindly offered to co-ordinate the US side and organise the US CITES Import Permit application. The Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre <http://www.seaturtlehospital.org/> in North Carolina was selected as the recipient for the animal. A PIT tag 958000001122311 was inserted in the left shoulder of the turtle in readiness for the journey.

Unfortunately, due to a 30 day consultation period required in the US before the process of a CITES Permit can even be started, the sea temperatures at North Carolina started to drop below those recommended for a release. As a result the repatriation was postponed and the animal held back at Weymouth Sea Life.

The attempt to return this animal back to the US for release was restarted in 2008 only to be met again by delays in issuing the relevant paperwork. In frustration I wrote to the United States Ambassador Robert Tuttle at the American Embassy in London who immediately responded and allocated US Embassy, Environment, Science, Technology and Health Counselor Mr Jock Whittlesey to the project. Mr Whittlesey monitored the application process and the US CITES Import Permit was finally issued but, unfortunately, we missed the sea temperature ‘window’ again off the North Carolina coast. However, the US CITES Import Permit is valid for 12 months and, once issued, the UK CITES Export Permit is valid for 6 months. On the 22nd April, ‘Willy’ underwent its final veterinary health check at Weymouth and the first UK tag series flipper tags were attached to the rear flippers.

The turtle was flown out of Heathrow Airport (LHR) direct to Raleigh-Durham (RDU) by American Airlines, free of charge, on 23rd April 2009 accompanied by Weymouth Sea Life carer Claire Little and a BBC One Show film crew together with presenter Mike Dilger.

Generally, all wildlife (including parts and products) must be imported or exported through designated ports in the US and unfortunately Raleigh-Durham (RDU) is not one of them. Negotiations between Dr Matthew Godfrey, US Fish & Wildlife Service and US Customs and Border Patrol enabled an exemption to be granted for the entry of this Kemp’s Ridley into Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina.

The turtle was met with various US TV News teams

<http://abclocal.go.com/wtvd/story?section=news/local&id=6777196> and the event was also covered in a 3 part special transmitted on the BBC One Show.

the one show **TURTLE RELEASE** **BBC ONE**
 6th May 2009
 BBC ONE 7 - 8pm

In 2007 one of the rarest turtles in the world, a Kemp's Ridley Turtle, washed up on British shores. Rescued from a beach in Devon, Willy was transferred to a turtle sanctuary in Weymouth and now, after two years, it's finally time to go home, back to the USA. Join us for this moving trilogy of films as it's time to Free Willy!

Presenter: Mike Dilger
Director: Dominic Weston
Camera: Sean O'Driscoll, James Bickersteth
Editor: Thomas Kelpie
Researcher/Coordinator: Abi Hobden
Executive Producer: Laura Marshall
Production Manager: Claire Whitby-Smith
Executive Producers for the BBC: Owen Gay and Seb Illis

ICONFILMS

Plate 3. *BBC flyer for the One Show.*



Plate 4. *Mike Dilger, 'Willy' and Jean Beasley at Topsail Island.*

Photo by: KBSTRR

After being held at The Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre for a short period to enable the turtle to acclimatise, the turtle was finally released back to the wild on the 6th May 2009.

6. LIVE STRANDING EVENTS 2009.

There were 5 live-strandings of marine turtles reported in 2009.

T2009/009 was a small 15cm straight carapace length (SCL) loggerhead turtle found at Loe Bar, Porthleven, Cornwall on 10th August. The turtle was taken to Blue Reef Aquarium for rehabilitation.

T2009/010 was a loggerhead turtle found stranded on Overton beach, Gower, south Wales on the 16th August. The animal was returned to the sea by a member of the public.

T2009/016 was a loggerhead turtle found stranded on Trebarwith Strand, Tintagel, Cornwall on the 4th September. The turtle was taken to Blue Reef Aquarium for rehabilitation.

T2009/025 was a loggerhead turtle found stranded on Doughmore beach, Doonbeg, Co Clare on 8th December 2009. The turtle was taken to Lahinch Aquarium for rehabilitation but unfortunately died on the 11th December.

T2009/039 was a loggerhead turtle found stranded on Teelin, Donegal on the 27th November. The turtle was taken to Dingle Oceanworld but died 2 days later.

6.1 Rehabilitation

Four live-stranded loggerhead turtles **T2009/009**, **T2009/016**, **T2009/025** and **T2009/039** listed above were taken into care. Unfortunately T2009/025 and T2009/039 died after a few days.

It is hoped that **T2009/009**, **T2009/016** can be flown to Gran Canaria and released within the first few months of 2010.

7. BYCATCH.

Only one turtle, a leatherback, was reported as by-caught during 2009, details below.

T2009/032 was a leatherback turtle found dead entangled in the buoy rope of a whelk fishery near Wicklow Head, Republic of Ireland on the 28th September 2009. The carcass was not recovered.

8. SAMPLES & POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS.

The normal procedure for the taking of samples is from fresh animals that have been taken for *post-mortem* examination within the CSIP or the Irish Strandings project.

No turtles were examined in Ireland or within the CSIP during 2009, however, one unidentified turtle, thought to be a loggerhead, has been stored frozen at a Sea Life Centre in Scotland awaiting transportation to the SAC post-mortem laboratory at Inverness.

9. DATA SHARING.

The TURTLE database was uploaded to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) <http://www.nbn.org.uk/> to include the 2008 British Isles & Republic of Ireland data.

10. UNUSUAL OCCURENCES.

T2007/036 was originally reported as a small loggerhead turtle. It had live stranded and was taken to Dingle Oceanworld where it soon died and was then stored frozen. On collection by Declan Quigley, Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, it was identified to be a green turtle. This may be the first green turtle to have been recorded stranded in Irish waters. King and Berrow list 3 reports of green turtles from the Irish coast in the 'Irish Naturalists' Journal' Special Supplement 2009, 2 were sightings at sea and the third record unconfirmed.

On the 19th August I received a report from British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) of a small hard-shell turtle swimming up the Thames towards Battersea. A search was conducted with two lifeboats a police launch and shore-based watches from BDMLR. London Zoo and the London Aquarium were both contacted in case the animal was found and needed rehabilitation. Nothing was found and it was assumed the report to be a hoax.

On the 4th September a report was received of a hard-shell turtle swimming down the Thames under Chelsea bridge apparently seen by many people. Unfortunately, the only photographic evidence was poor quality camera-phone images. This event has been recorded in the database as **T2009/018**.

11. PUBLICITY.

The Strandings Web-site has been maintained to provide details of the CSIP. Although this is intended primarily for Wales, key contact details are given for England, Scotland and Ireland. The pages can be viewed at www.strandings.com/

Annual reports and other turtle related publications are available at www.strandings.com/Turtlepage.html
Posters and leaflets produced to increase awareness of the project have continued to be distributed.

Records are posted on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway and these can be accessed at <http://www.searchnbn.net/> The NBN is now the preferred outlet for the database and the database on the strandings.com web-site will no longer be maintained but will be linked to the NBN in future.

12. TAGGING.

In April 2009, as a contribution to the UK Marine Turtles Grouped Species Action Plan (SAP), the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) purchased the UK's first ever metal flipper tag and PIT tag series for marine turtles live-stranded and rescued in the UK. There are two sizes of monel metal flipper tags. The smaller tags are marked with code numbers SUK (number), and the larger tags are marked with LUK (number). Both sets of tags are also marked: 'REWARD. SEND TO MARINE CONSV. SOC. (MCS), UK. WWW.MCSUK.ORG

Fifty PIT tags and a PIT tag reader were also purchased and all tags and applicators are now kept with Marine Environmental Monitoring. It has been agreed that only turtles measuring 35cm curved carapace length (CCL) or larger will be flipper and PIT tagged. Unless there are medical reasons for not doing so, all turtles above this size will be PIT tagged in the left shoulder. All turtles fitted with the smaller flipper tags will be tagged in both rear flippers, while larger turtles will be tagged with the larger tags in the front flippers as per international marine turtle tagging best practice. The first turtle to be fitted with the UK flipper tags was 'Willy' the repatriated Kemp's ridley turtle.

13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Marine Environmental Monitoring wishes to acknowledge the following:

Jemma and Ray Lerwill and Robin Pratt for providing support and base of operations at Fishguard. Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Marine Conservation Society and Tom Doyle for supplying data to the database. 'RSPCA', Dave Jarvis and other members of British Divers Marine Life Rescue for transportation of live turtles.

Blue Reef Aquarium and Sea Life Centres in the UK for rehabilitation of cold-stunned turtles.

Gary Costello of PBS International for producing Airway Bills and Customs Declarations free of charge.

Thomas Cook Airways for transporting turtles to Gran Canaria free of charge.

Ambassador Robert Tuttle American Embassy, Jock Whittlesey American Embassy, Dr Matthew

Godfrey, Jean Beasley, Richard Hedges of American Airlines, Sue Thornton of International Zoo

Veterinary Group, Mark Oakley of Merlin Entertainments, Sarah Leaney and Claire Little of Weymouth

Sea Life, Shaun Clements RSPCA, Sarah Gardiner and Steve Hunt BDMLR, Maria Laguna, Virginia

Tejaro, Ray Dennis, Chris Booth, Sea Watch, IWDG, Scapa Scuba and Pascual Calabuig.

Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural England, National Parks & Wildlife Service and the Countryside Council for Wales for financial support towards the British Isles & Republic of Ireland TURTLE database.

14. APPENDICES.

Appendix 1. 2009 Turtle data.

Appendix 1.

RecordKey	Species	Cght	Str	liveDea	EndDate	Country	County	Location	Notes
T2009/001	LOG	ST	DEAD	18/02/2009	ENGLAND	CUMBRIA	SILLOTH		Approx 2 ft long reddish brown. Possibly same animal as T2008/047? Shell taken to Tullies House.
T2009/002	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	02/06/2009	WALES	GWYNEDD	Llwyngwriil, Barmouth		Photos taken. Two turtles seen feeding metres off the coast. Seen from land.
T2009/003	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	02/06/2009	WALES	GWYNEDD	Llwyngwriil, Barmouth		Photos taken. Two turtles seen feeding metres off the coast. Seen from land.
T2009/004	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	02/06/2009	WALES	CEREDIGION	Mwrnt		seen for 45 mins from shore
T2009/005	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	26/06/2009	WALES	CONWY	Colwyn Bay, Llandudno		Seen 10 metres into bay from balcony of house - like an upturned hull of boat. (approx 30 metres) seen for 5 mins.
T2009/006	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	14/06/2009	ENGLAND	DEVON	West of river Axe, towards Beer.		200m west of River Axe. 150m from shore. Length 4 & half feet. 9inch head.
T2009/007	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	13/06/2009	WALES	PEMBROKESHIRE	east of Stackpole		Large turtle seen alive pm.
T2009/008	UNI	SEA	DEAD	26/06/2009	WALES	PEMBROKESHIRE	Ramsey sound moving south towards St Brides' Bay		Bloated 36 cms shell length. Gull feeding on neck. Thought to be a loggerhead.
T2009/009	LOG	ST	ALIVE	10/08/2009	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Loe Bar, Porthleven		Small animal 6 ins. Appeared dead. Taken to Blue Reef Aquarium for possible rehab.
T2009/010	LOG	ST	ALIVE	16/08/2009	WALES	SWANSEA	Overton, Gower		45cm. Put back in sea!
T2009/011	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	21/08/2009	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	near Hayle harbour		Seen for 4 mins approx 2 metres from observer on land. Less than foot long with yellow edge back of shell !
T2009/012	LBT	ST	DEAD	21/08/2009	SCOTLAND	ARGYLL & BUTE	West Hynish, Isle of Tiree		mod/adv decomposition. 200cm long
T2009/013	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	24/08/2009	SCOTLAND	ARGYLL & BUTE	nr Hough Bay, Isle of Tiree		Seen for 10 minutes, approx 35m from observer who was on land. 5 - 6 ft long.
T2009/014	LBT	ST	DEAD	07/09/2009	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Wanson Mouth, between Widemouth Bay and Millock, Bude		Carapace intact but fins and head very decomposed. Small diameter rope disappearing into torso. Samples taken by CWT.
T2009/015	LOG	ST	DEAD	07/09/2009	WALES	PEMBROKESHIRE	Telpyn, Amroth		Dead and decomposing. Approx 1 ft long.
T2009/016	LOG	ST	ALIVE	04/09/2009	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Trebarwith Strand, Tintagel, Delabole		Live - taken to Blue Reef Aquarium
T2009/017	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	20/09/2009	WALES	CARMARTHENSHIRE	Nr Pendine		4 - 6 ft alive
T2009/018	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	04/09/2009	ENGLAND	LONDON	by Chelsea Bridge		Seen by several people in choppy water - lifted its head to look around. Reported as loggerhead.
T2009/019	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	20/09/2009	WALES	PEMBROKESHIRE	Between Fishguard and Strumble Head		seen from land 60 m away . It was floating then dived and resurfaced and swam away.
T2009/020	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	13/07/2009	WALES	SWANSEA	Rhossili		seen whilst surfing
T2009/021	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	14/10/2009	WALES	CONWY	Penrhyn Bay		Seen approx 150m from shore, headed towards Little Ormes Head then out to see. Initial views good. Carapace approx 1.4m
T2009/022	LOG	ST	DEAD	11/09/2009	EIRE	SLIGO	Streedagh Strand		57 cm (no further info)
T2009/023	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	27/06/2009	EIRE	WEXFORD	Carnsore Point		Seen from land while sea watching with bins and scope. Large carapace and head.
T2009/024	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	11/06/2009	EIRE	CORK	Cape Clear		Seen from land with bins. Small about 2ft across. Swimming slowly.
T2009/025	LOG	ST	ALIVE	08/12/2009	EIRE	CLARE	Doughmore beach, Doonbeg		Live stranded. Carapace 50cm. Taken to Lahinch Aquarium for rehab. Died on 11/12/2009
T2009/026	LOG	ST	DEAD	09/12/2009	EIRE	CORK	Long Strand, Nr Clonakilty		Carapace c. 30cm. Found dead in good condition with living parasitic crab under carapace.
T2009/027	LBT	ST	DEAD	30/12/2009	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Wren beach, Nr Coombe, Bude		adv decomposition. C. 1.2m Carapace and kneck bone only. Possibly remains of T2009/014
T2009/028	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	10/07/2009	EIRE	OFFSHORE	due south of Mizen Head		many LBTs seen on surface whilst trolling for tuna
T2009/029	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	29/08/2009	EIRE	WEXFORD	off Courttown		Video was taken using a camera phone. Observed turtle for 30-40 mins, dived quite a lot, surface 5-6 times
T2009/030	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	28/09/2009	EIRE	MAYO	Stags of Broadhaven, nearest town = Bellmullet		observation made by a kayaker. Carpet of jellyfish (pelagia) in the strand near by. Pink mark on back of head.
T2009/031	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	28/09/2009	EIRE	WEXFORD	east of Saltees		seen by a fisherman who has seen one before
T2009/032	LBT	SEA	DEAD	28/09/2009	EIRE	WICKLOW	near Wicklow Head		found dead entangled in buoy rope of whelk fishery. Carcass may have washed up on Wexford coast several weeks later (T2009/036).
T2009/033	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	19/08/2009	EIRE	KERRY	west of Dingle		swimming
T2009/034	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	16/08/2009	EIRE	DONEGAL	near Limeburner rock		swimming
T2009/035	LBT	ST	DEAD	29/07/2009	EIRE	GALWAY	Salthill Strand		washed up dead, taken to Atlantaquaria
T2009/036	LBT	ST	DEAD	18/10/2009	EIRE	WEXFORD	small cove c2km N of Ballymoney North Beach, Wexford		kayaker found it, could be lbt found dead in fishing gear off Wicklow 28/09/2009 (T2009/032)
T2009/037	UNI	ST	DEAD	21/10/2009	SCOTLAND	ARGYLL & BUTE	Isle of Ulva, west side		currently frozen at Sealife Centre
T2009/038	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	02/06/2009	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Porthgwarra		seen from land whilst sea watching. Appox. 1.5-2feet. Swimming towards shore.
T2009/039	LOG	ST	ALIVE	27/11/2009	EIRE	DONEGAL	Teelin		taken to Dingle Oceanarium but died after 2 days