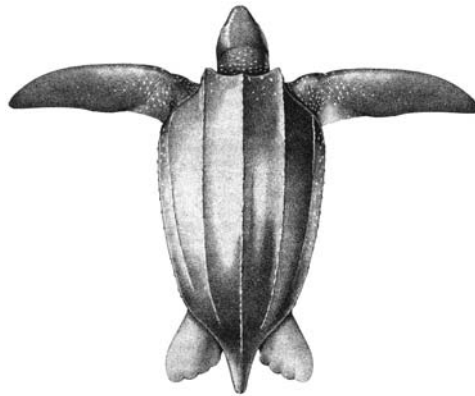


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British Isles & Republic of Ireland Marine Turtle Strandings &  
Sightings  
Annual Report 2012

R.S.Penrose & L.R.Gander. March 2013



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## **1. SUMMARY**

A total of 54 turtles were reported to TURTLE during the year 2012; One Kemp's ridley turtle, 4 loggerhead turtles, 45 leatherback turtles and 4 unidentified to species. One of the above loggerhead turtles was from outside the plotting area covered by TURTLE (by-caught dead at sea in the Bay of Biscay).

Of the 54 turtles, 1 Kemp's ridley, 3 loggerheads and 6 leatherback turtles were found stranded dead. Thirty-nine leatherbacks were reported as sightings at sea, 35 being alive and 4 dead. Four unidentified live turtle sightings were reported.

### **Live turtles (39)**

There were no live strandings this year. Thirty-five leatherbacks were reported as live sightings at sea and 4 turtles unidentified to species.

The geographical distribution of the 35 live leatherbacks being:- 12 England, 12 Eire, 9 Wales, 1 Scotland, 1 Offshore.

The live unidentified sightings being:- 2 England, 1 Scotland, 1 Eire.

### **Dead turtles (15)**

One Kemp's ridley, 3 loggerheads and 6 leatherbacks were stranded dead. Four leatherbacks and 1 loggerhead were sighted dead at sea.

The geographical distribution of the 15 dead turtles being:- 5 England, 4 Eire, 3 Wales, 1 Scotland, 1 Offshore, 1 Channel Islands.

### **Data sharing**

2011 TURTLE data has been uploaded to the NBN Gateway <http://www.nbn.org.uk/>

### **TURTLE record totals**

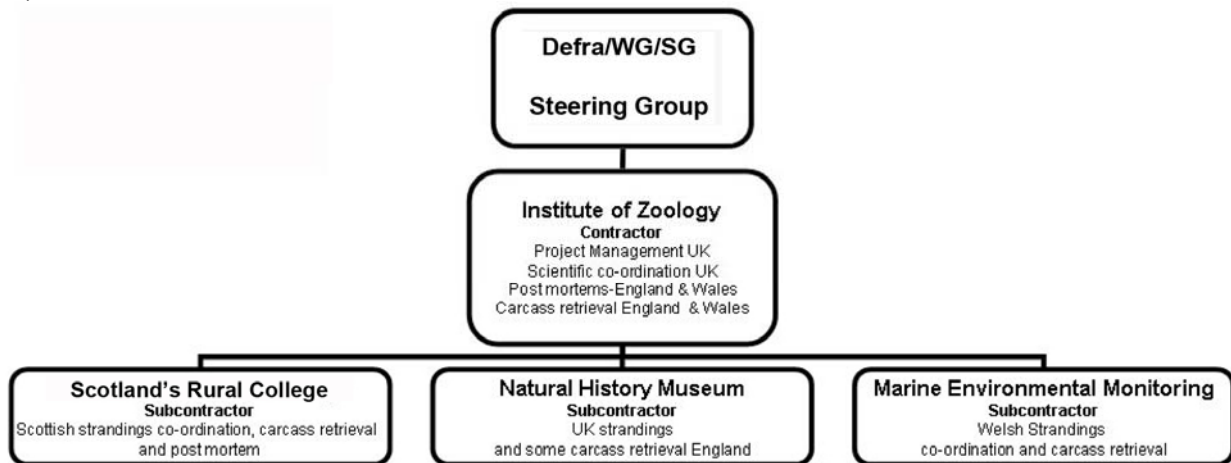
The current total of 2590 is broken down thus:

1294 Eire, 582 England, 377 Scotland, 241 Wales, 39 Northern Ireland, 32 Isle of Man, 13 Channel Isles, 12 Offshore.

## 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](http://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 was implemented by a group of organisations led by joint lead partners the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and the Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust<sup>1</sup> (ARC). The contact agency is Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The Turtle Implementation Group (TIG) consists of the following organisations:-

- **Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust<sup>1</sup>** is an authority on reptile and amphibian issues and was the Lead Partners or joint Lead Partners for all five of the reptile and amphibian Action Plans within the UK BAP [www.arc-trust.org](http://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*
- The **Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA)** 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.  
Contact: *Dr Fiona Gell, 01624 685835 [www.gov.im/defa](http://www.gov.im/defa)*
- **Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)** is the public body that advises the UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide and international nature conservation.  
Contact: *Kelly Macleod, 01224 266584*

<sup>1</sup> Formally Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT).



- **Marine Conservation Society (MCS)** is the UK charity dedicated to the protection of the marine environment and its wildlife. MCS was the joint Lead Partner of the Marine Turtles Grouped Species Action Plan and coordinates the TIG. [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org)  
Contacts: *Sue Ranger or Peter Richardson, 01989 566017*
- **Marine Environmental Monitoring (MEM)** is a member of the Defra “UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme”, [www.strandings.com](http://www.strandings.com) [www.ukstrandings.org](http://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. 01239 683033) [rodpenrose@strandings.demon.co.uk](mailto:rodpenrose@strandings.demon.co.uk)*
- **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](mailto:medasset@medasset.org)*
- **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)**, part of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 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: *Paul Edgar, 0300 060 1324.*
- **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 [j.houghton@qub.ac.uk](mailto:j.houghton@qub.ac.uk)*
- **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 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 Emeritus Professor of Zoology. He has worked on most species of sea turtles, but especially leatherbacks, since the early 1980s, conducting fundamental studies on their physiology and biomechanics. He is currently linked to turtle conservation in Bermuda, and conducts turtle research with colleagues in Nova Scotia, France and Hawaii.  
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 **01239 683033**, 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](mailto:info@strandings.demon.co.uk) (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 Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) **01463 243030**. Live strandings and entanglements should be reported to the SSPCA on **03000 999 999**.

For **Northern Ireland** all records of live or dead turtles should be reported to the Portrush Coastal Zone Centre on **028 7082 3600**.

In the **Republic of Ireland** all records should be reported to Dr Tom Doyle on **353-(0)21-4703119** (work) and **353-(0)87 1354938** (mobile). Sightings & strandings can also be reported online in the Republic of Ireland at [www.turtle.ie](http://www.turtle.ie)

UK turtle sightings and strandings can also be reported using the UK Turtle Code online at [www.euroturtle.org/turtlecode](http://www.euroturtle.org/turtlecode)

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

The following criteria are applied: -

### **3.1 Live Animals**

---

#### **(Condition code 1)**<sup>2</sup>

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](http://www.strandings.com/Turtlepage.html)

### **3.2 Dead Animals**

---

#### **(Condition code 2a extremely fresh as if just died)**<sup>2</sup>

#### **(Condition code 2b slight decomposition)**<sup>2</sup>

#### **(Condition code 3 moderate decomposition)**<sup>2</sup>

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)**<sup>2</sup>

#### **(Condition code 5 mummified carcass)**<sup>2</sup>

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.

---

<sup>2</sup> 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 2012.

**Table 1.**

2012 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> )	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Leatherback turtle ( <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> )	1	0	0	0	1	0	14	19	9	1	0	0	45
Loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> )	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Unidentified	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Total animals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>54</b>

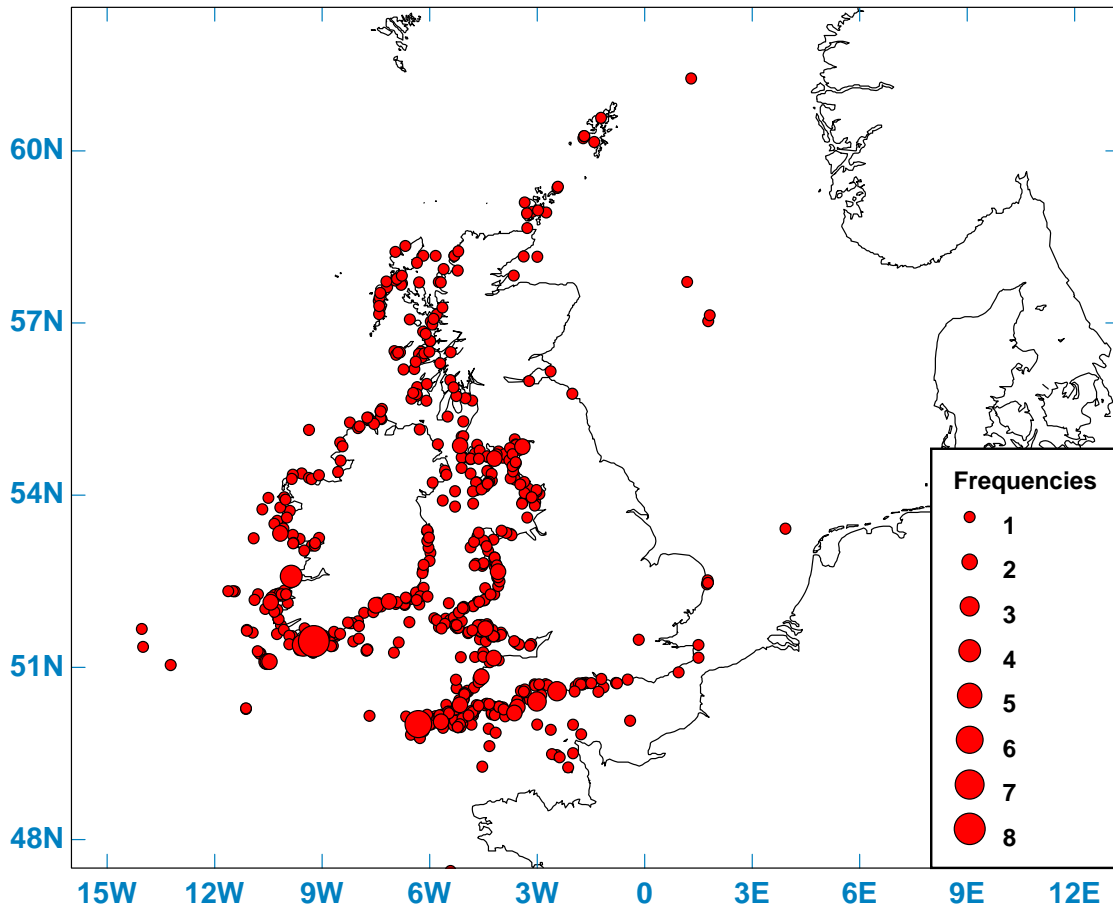
**Table 2.**

2012 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	0	12	15	8	0	0	0	35
Loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Total animals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>39</b>

**Table 3.**

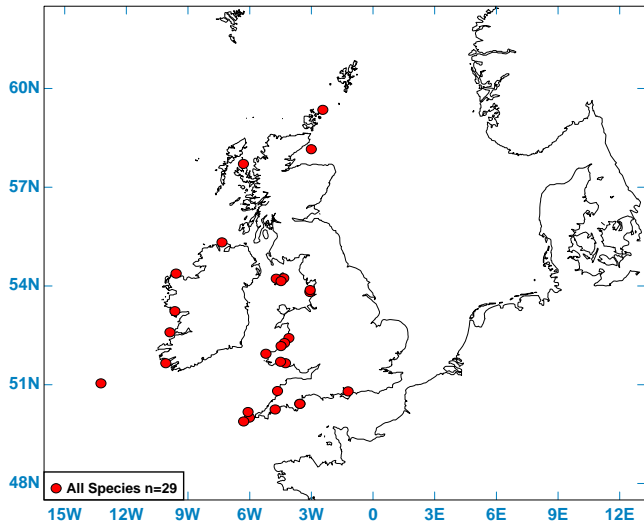
2012 Number of dead marine turtles.													
Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
Green turtle ( <i>Chelonia mydas</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawksbill turtle ( <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kemp's ridley turtle ( <i>Lepidochelys kempii</i> )	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Leatherback turtle ( <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> )	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	1	1	0	0	10
Loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> )	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Unidentified	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total animals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>

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.

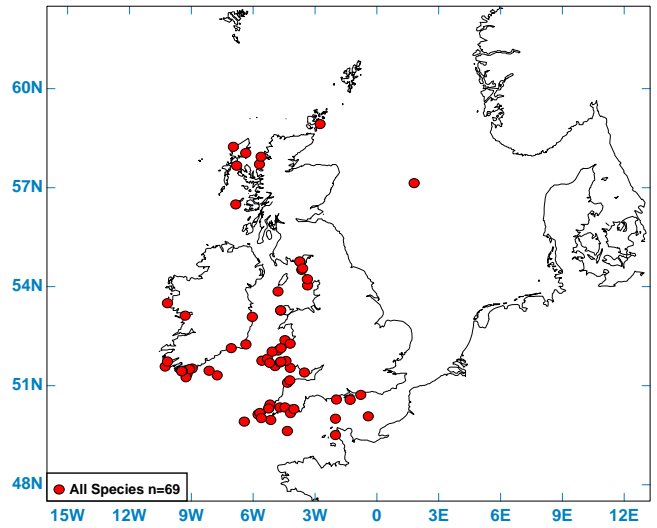


**Figure 2.** *All species sightings & strandings 2002-2012.*

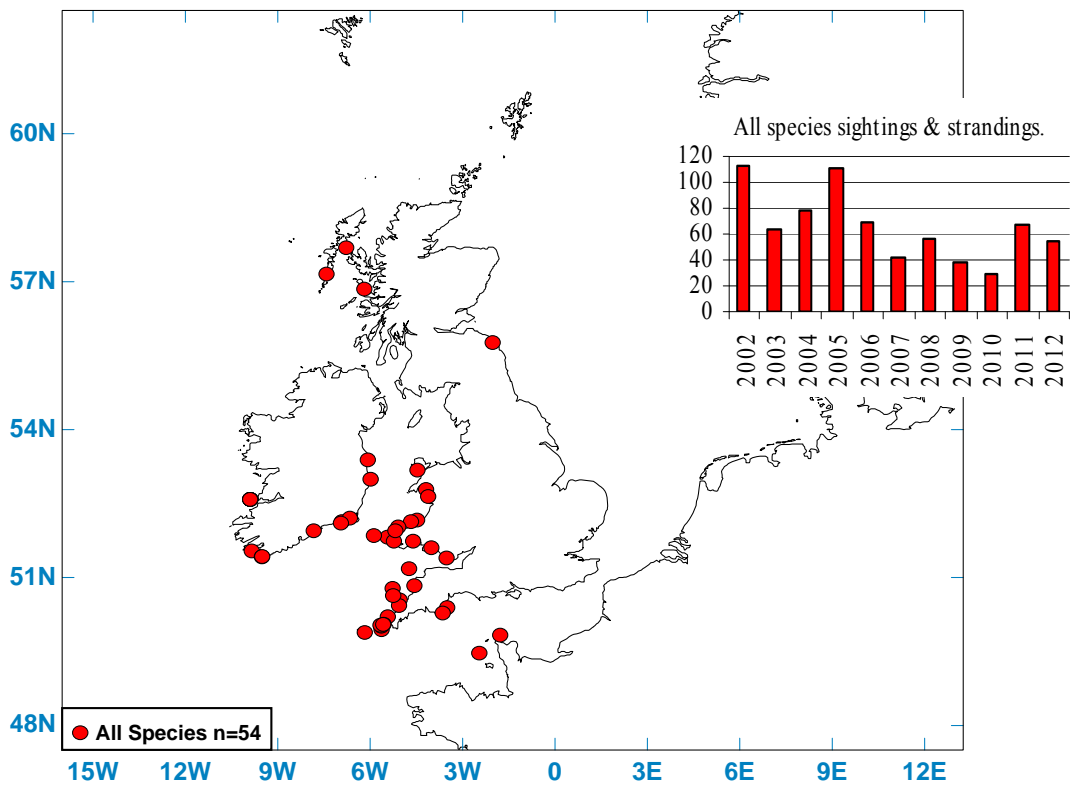
All species, sightings & strandings over the eleven year period 2002-2012 have been plotted in **Figure 2.**



**Figure 3.** All species sightings & strandings 2010.



**Figure 4.** All species sightings & strandings 2011.



**Figure 5.** All species sightings & strandings 2012.

#### 4.1 Sightings.

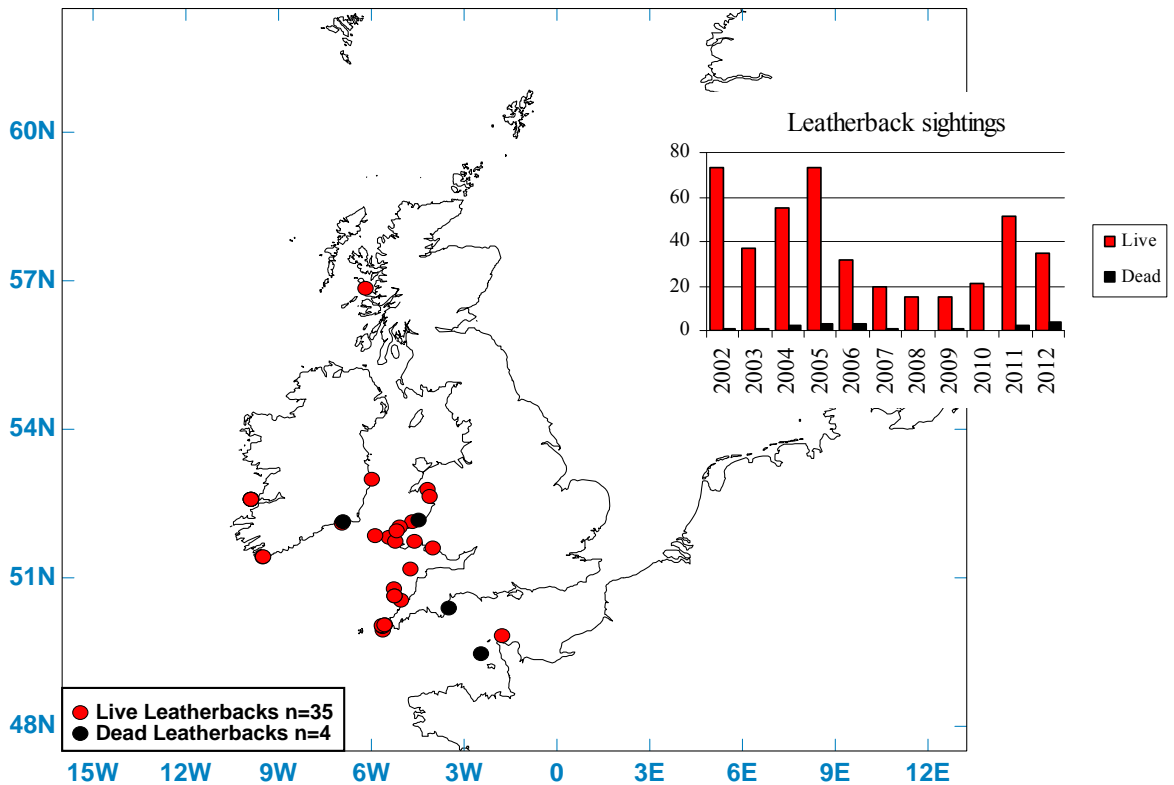


Figure 6. Leatherback sightings 2012.

One dead **loggerhead turtle** sighting was reported during 2012. However, the carcass was sighted in the Bay of Biscay and outside the range of the maps used in this report. The carcass was landed in Cork.

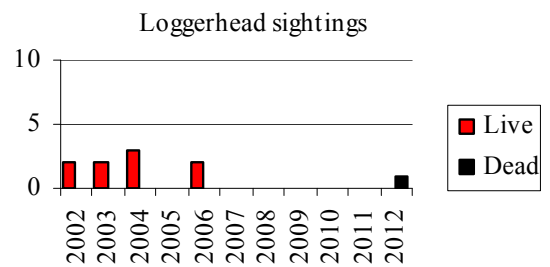
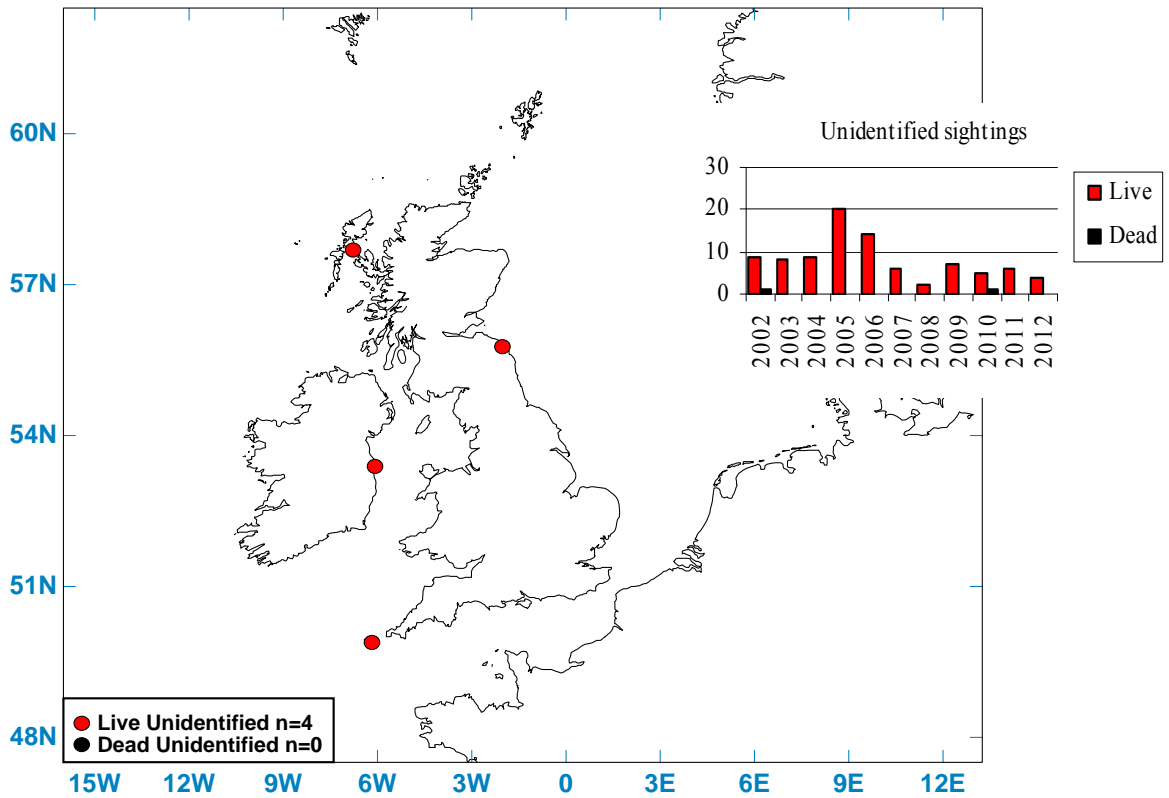


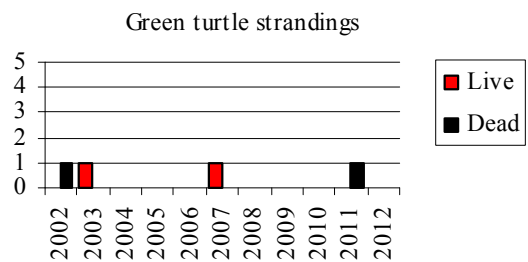
Figure 7. Loggerhead sightings 2012.



**Figure 8.** *Unidentified sightings 2012.*

#### 4.2 Strandings.

No live or dead **green turtle** strandings were reported during 2012. 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 2012.*

No live or dead **hawksbill turtle** strandings were reported during 2012. 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.

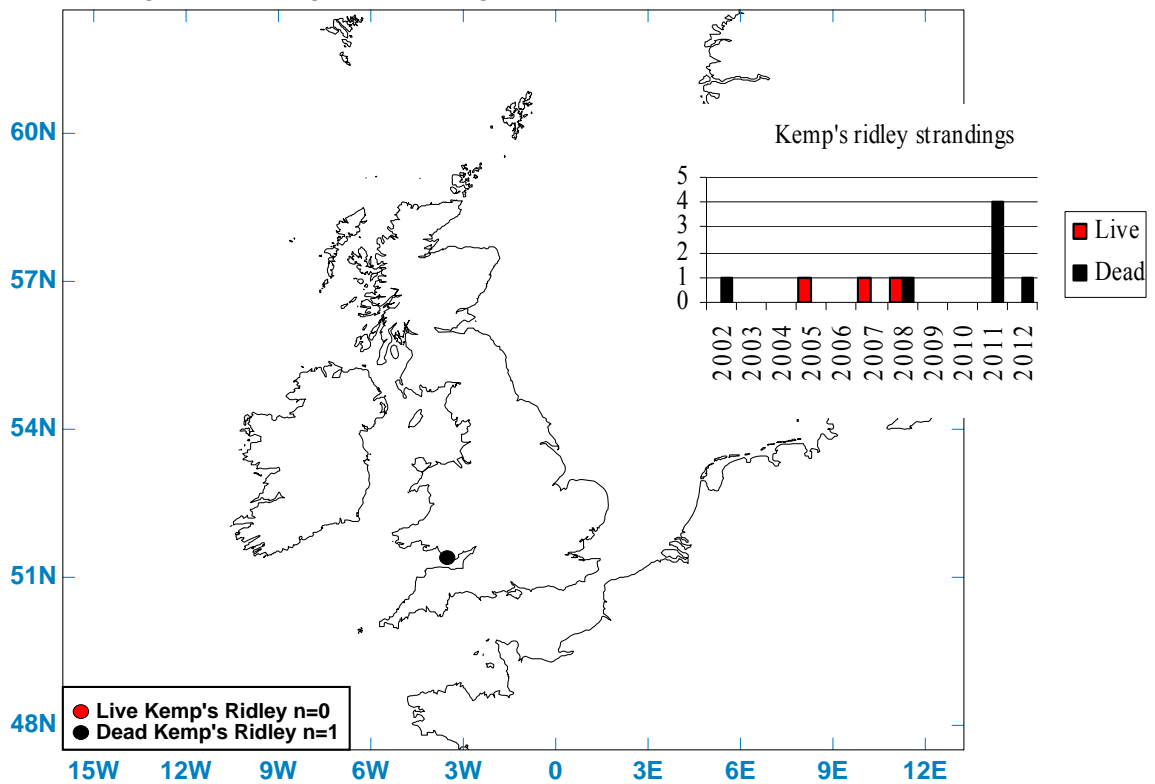


Figure 10. *Kemp's ridley strandings 2012.*

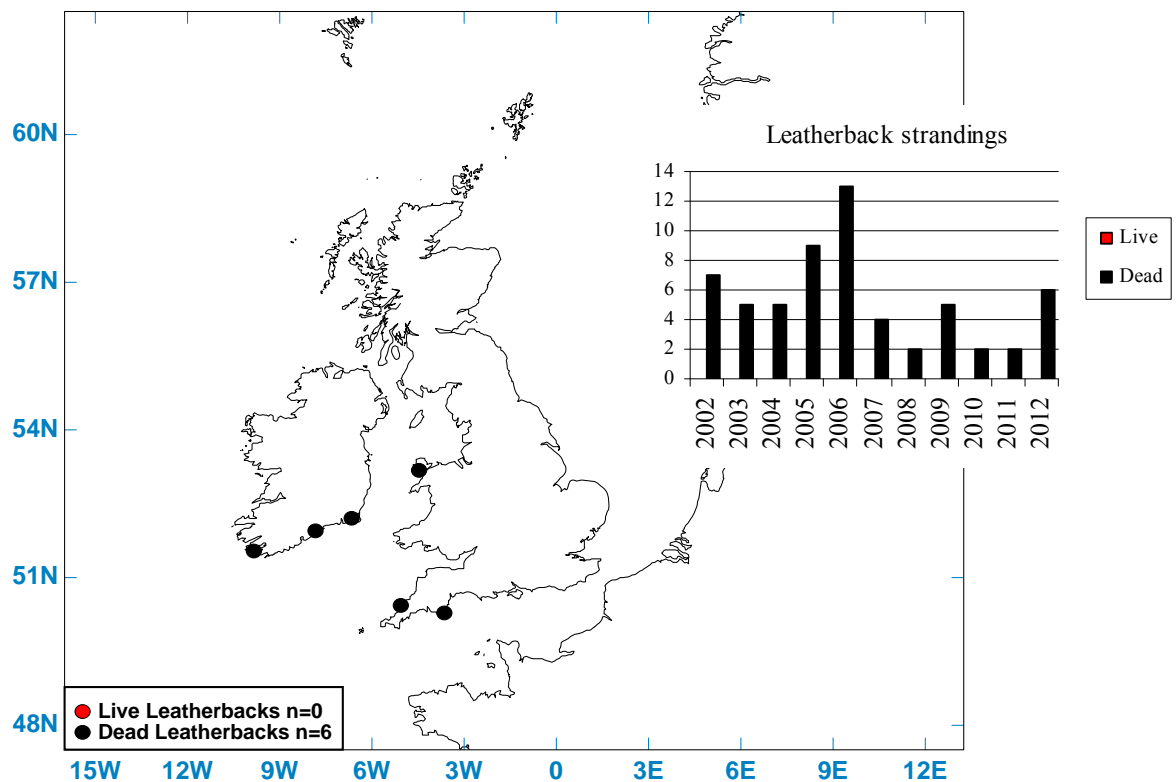


Figure 11. *Leatherback strandings 2012.*



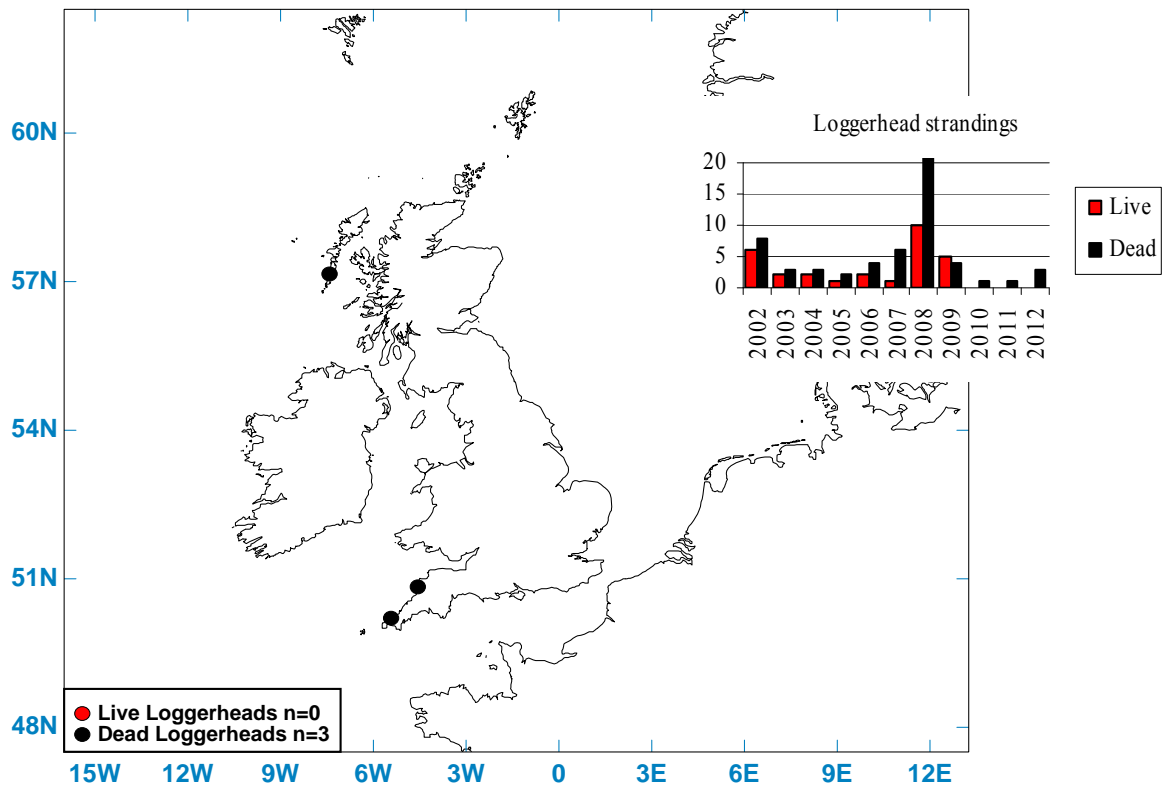


Figure 12. *Loggerhead strandings 2012.*

No live or dead **unidentified turtle** strandings were reported during 2012. However, strandings of both live and dead unidentified turtles have been recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 13**.

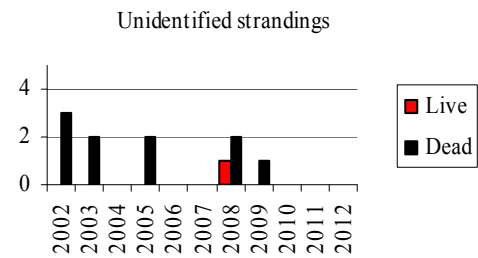
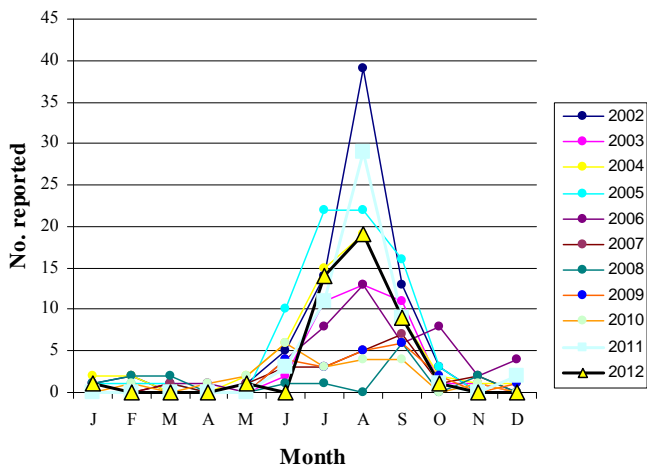
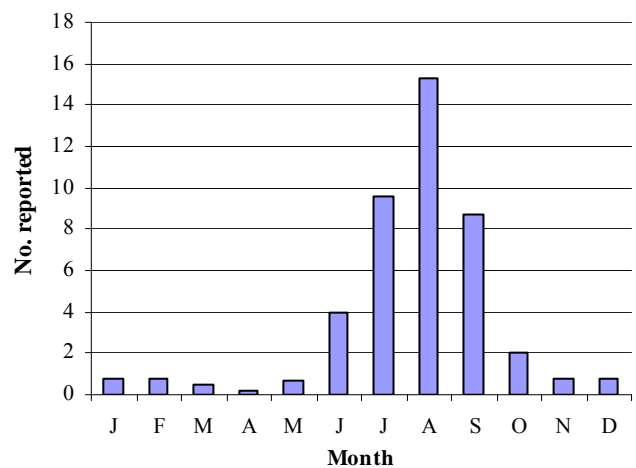


Figure 13. *Unidentified strandings 2012.*

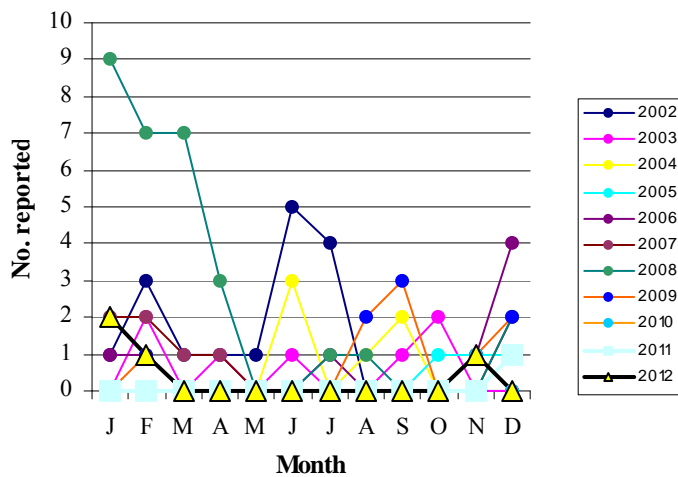
All leatherback strandings and sightings, both dead and alive have been plotted by month for the period 2002 - 2012 (n=516) shown in **Figure 14**. The average figure was taken over 2002-2012 and plotted in **Figure 15**. The graph clearly shows the increase in numbers through the summer months and gives a good indication on when to expect leatherbacks around the British Isles & Republic of Ireland coast. The records for the hard-shell species are more sporadic. Of the hard-shell species the most numerous recorded turtle over the 2002 - 2012 period is the loggerhead (n=97). The data for this species are plotted in **Figure 16** and **Figure 17**.



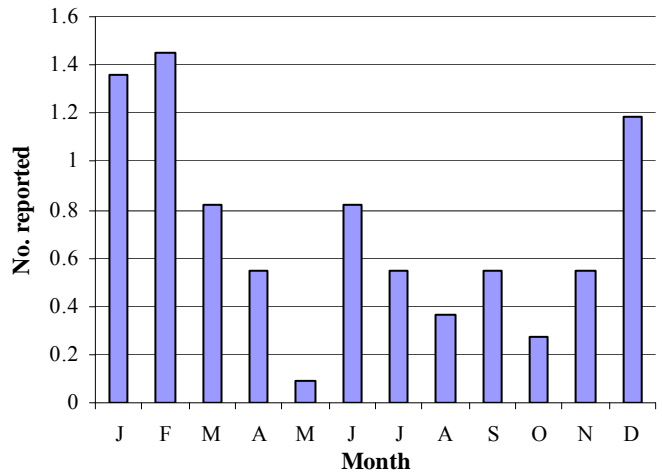
**Figure 14.** All leatherbacks by month.



**Figure 15.** All leatherbacks average over 2002-2012



**Figure 16.** All loggerheads by month.



**Figure 17.** All loggerheads average over 2002-2012.

**Table 4.**

Cumulative number of records.		
Country	All Species	
	2012	1748 - 2012
Rep. of Ireland	17	1294
England	19	582
Scotland	3	377
Wales	12	241
N. Ireland	0	39
Isle of Man	0	32
Channel Islands	1	13
Offshore	2	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>2590</b>

The ‘Offshore’ row in **Table 4.** includes records of turtles where it is difficult to attribute a county ie, animal far from shore or nearer to Europe than UK.

Countries are listed in **Table 4.** by descending order of total number of records shown in the year **1748 – 2012** column.

**Table 5.**

Species Comparison.												
Country	<i>1992 - 2002</i>											
	<b>2002 - 2012</b>											
	GT	HB	KR	LBT	LOG	UNI	GT	HB	KR	LBT	LOG	UNI
England	2	0	0	0	5	3	149	162	16	24	25	56
Scotland	2	2	0	0	0	2	96	74	14	26	14	11
Rep. of Ireland	0	1	0	0	1	1	396	173	22	30	24	15
Wales	0	0	0	0	2	4	65	80	1	15	9	11
Channel Islands	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	2
N. Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	5	0	0	2	2
Isle of Man	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	15	0	0	2	4
Offshore	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>102</b>

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

**Table 6.**

<b>TURTLE Database Species Totals (1748 - 2012).</b>	
<b>Species</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Green turtle ( <i>Chelonia mydas</i> )	<b>10</b>
Hawksbill turtle ( <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> )	<b>1</b>
Kemp's ridley turtle ( <i>Lepidochelys kempii</i> )	<b>41</b>
Leatherback turtle ( <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> )	<b>1949</b>
Loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> )	<b>220</b>
Unidentified	<b>369</b>
<b>Total animals</b>	<b>2590</b>

The total records held in TURTLE are 2605 (end of 2012). However, some records with inadequate year data have been excluded in this report and show as a discrepancy compared to previous years in some totals presented in Table 6.

A breakdown of records for each country is shown in **Table 4**. However, the eleven year comparison, 1992-2002 / 2002-2012 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 1992-2002 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 2012.

T1987/015	Leatherback sighted between Daunt Rock and Roberts Cove , Wicklow during July 1987
T1998/058	Leatherback sighted off Arklow Harbour, Wicklow during July 1998
T2003/065	Leatherback sighted off Land's end Cornwall, during August 2003
T2008/057	An unidentified hardshell sighted outside Wexford Harbour during July 2008
T2009/041	Leatherback sighted alive feeding on jellyfish 28 miles off Fairway Buoy on 11th September 2009
T2011/068	Leatherback sighted alive off Land's end, Cornwall on 29th August 2011
T2011/069	Leatherback sighted alive in South Bay, Rosslare, Wexford some time in July 2011

## **6. LIVE STRANDING EVENTS 2012.**

There were no live-strandings of marine turtles reported in 2012.

### **6.1 Rehabilitation**

There were no marine turtles reported undergoing rehabilitation in 2012.

### **6.2 Repatriation.**

There were no marine turtles repatriated in 2012.

## **7. BYCATCH.**

Two marine turtles were reported as by-caught during 2012, one leatherback and one loggerhead, the details are listed below.

**T2012/045** was a live leatherback turtle seen dragging a buoy on the surface off the coast of Wicklow, R.o.I., on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2012. The turtle was hauled on deck and released alive by fishermen.

**T2012/055** was a dead loggerhead turtle found entangled in unspecified fishing gear in the south Bay of Biscay on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The carcass was landed in Cork.

## **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.

The two Kemp's ridley turtles found stranded in 2011, T2011/051 and T2011/053, are held frozen awaiting examination at ZSL.

The Kemp's ridley found stranded in January 2012, T2012/001, has also been stored frozen at ZSL pending post-mortem examination.

## **9. DATA SHARING.**

The TURTLE database was uploaded to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) <http://www.nbn.org.uk/> to include the 2011 data.

## **10. UNUSUAL OCCURENCES.**

Following a small number of dead Kemp's ridley turtles stranding on the British Isles in December 2011 / January 2012 (5 to date) a request was sent to NOAA asking if turtles recovered and released from the BP Deep Water Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico were tagged.

Details of tags and tagging location were supplied and as a result the three Kemp's ridley turtles currently awaiting post-mortem examination at the ZSL have been scanned for PIT tags. No tags were found.

## **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/](http://www.strandings.com/)

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

Marine turtle 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 TURTLE database and the database on the strandings.com web-site will no longer be maintained.

An updated UK Turtle Code was produced by MCS in 2011 funded by Natural England and the Scottish Natural Heritage <http://www.mcsuk.org/downloads/wildlife/turtlecode.pdf> a copy is also attached as Appendix 2.

## **12. TAGGING.**

No marine turtles underwent rehabilitation or repatriation during 2012 so therefore no tagging was required to be carried out.

## **13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

Marine Environmental Monitoring wishes to acknowledge the following;

Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Marine Conservation Society, Medasset, Tom Doyle (Coastal and Marine Research Centre (CMRC)), and G.L. King for supplying data to the database.

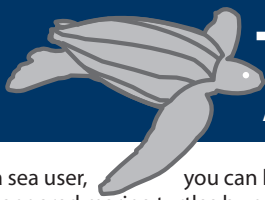
Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural England, National Parks & Wildlife Service and the Countryside Council for Wales for financial support towards the British Isles & Republic of Ireland TURTLE database.

## **14. APPENDICES.**

Appendix 1. 2012 TURTLE data.  
Appendix 2. UK Turtle Code.

Appendix 1.

RecordKey	Species	LifeStage	Alive/Dead	EndDate	Country	County	Location	Notes
T2012/001	KR	ST	DEAD	03/01/2011	WALES	Vale of Glamorgan	Tresilian Bay, nr Llantwit Major	dead on beach
T2012/002	LOG	ST	DEAD	09/01/2012	ENGLAND	Cornwall	Bude, Widemouth Bay	on rocks on beach - perfect condition. On back.
T2012/003	LBT	ST	DEAD	15/01/2012	WALES	ANGLESEY	Aber Ffraw	Decomposed only 3 ridges visible
T2012/004	LOG	ST	DEAD	14/01/2012	ENGLAND	Cornwall	Hayle	
T2012/005	LOG	ST	DEAD	22/02/2012	SCOTLAND	Western Isles	Kilpheder, South Uist	
T2012/006	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	23/04/2012	ENGLAND	Northumberland	Tweed Estuary, Berwick upon Tweed	Saw head alongside quay whilst launching canoe
T2012/007	LBT	SEA	DEAD	21/05/2012	WALES	Ceredigion	Ynys Lochlyn, Llangrannog	Seen floating near rocky shore - partially decomposed. Disappeared.
T2012/008	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	27/05/2012	SCOTLAND	Highland	Off Isle of Skye	Seen from cruise boat 100m - paddled and dived
T2012/009	LBT	SEA	DEAD	25/07/2012	ENGLAND	Cornwall	Brixham	Floating dead 100m off the bay near Brixham breakwater. Seen from 1 metre.
T2012/010	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	25/07/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Off Scillies	Seen from the Skybus. Size of punt, long front flippers, green/grey heading towards the islands. 4/5 miles ESE,
T2012/011	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	26/07/2012	WALES	Ceredigion	Between Cardigan Island and Mwrnt	Seen 10 m from observer (Bay to Remember inflatable). Dived.
T2012/012	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	04/07/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	offshore Lands' End	Seen to make two dives of between 5 and 10 minutes. Water depth 50 - 60m. Foraging. Size 2.5m.
T2012/013	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	24/07/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Offshore Newquay	Seen by tourist Shark trip boat
T2012/014	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	25/07/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	off Trevoise Head, between Padstow and Newquay	Seen by commercial fishing boat - reported to A Lowe
T2012/015	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	27/07/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Offshore Newquay	2 Seen by tourist Shark trip boat. Approx 50m apart initially, diving and surfacing for over 30 mins
T2012/016	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	27/07/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Offshore Newquay	2 Seen by tourist Shark trip boat. Approx 50m apart initially, diving and surfacing for over 30 mins
T2012/017	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	25/07/2012	ENGLAND	ISLES OF SCILLY	8.5 miles east of Wolf Rock Lighthouse	Seen 10m from boat, swimming. Breathed noisily and dived.
T2012/018	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	21/07/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	offshore Lands' End	Turtle swimming westwards regularly diving for short periods. Size 2m+
T2012/019	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	24/07/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	offshore Lands' End	Turtle swimming westwards surfacing every 5 minutes or so. Size 2m+
T2012/020	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	08/08/2012	WALES	CARMARTHENSHIRE	200m off Marros Sands	Seen fully 5m from stationary fishing boat. Surfaced twice. C.1.5-2m long.
T2012/021	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	09/08/2012	WALES	Gwynedd	off Barmouth	Seen from boat
T2012/022	LBT	ST	DEAD	15/08/2012	ENGLAND	Devon	Slapton Sands, near Torcross	Beached, no shell or head. Large front flippers. Advanced decay.
T2012/023	LBT	SEA	DEAD	04/07/2012	Channel Islands	Guernsey	east of Herm	Dead, decaying. Seen by fishermen. C. 1.5m long.
T2012/024	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	18/08/2012	WALES	Gwynedd	Llangelynnin	Seen 10m from coast, 50m from the observer stood near the church using strong bins.
T2012/025	LBT	SEA	DEAD	10/08/2012	EIRE	Wexford	Slade Harbour, Hook Head	Found drifting off Saltee by Hook Subaqua and towed into Slade Harbour. Samples taken 1/8/12, Head retained by Hook Lighthouse for future exhibition. CCL 162cm, CCW 126cm.
T2012/026	LBT	ST	DEAD	16/08/2012	EIRE	Wexford	Ballyteige Beach	Samples taken on 20th. CCL 143cm, CCW 96cm.
T2012/027	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	23/08/2012	WALES	PEMBROKESHIRE	4 miles SW off Ramsey Island	6/7 feet long. Seen close from boat for 10 mins heading southerly before it dived.
T2012/028	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	22/08/2012	WALES	PEMBROKESHIRE	Marloes towards Musselwick	Seen from land approx 80 m. Ridges seen. (further two reported, pics taken but not conclusive thought to be sunfish - as reported by CCW).
T2012/029	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	T2012/029	SCOTLAND	Highland	1.5miles NE of Isle of Muck, Arisaig	Seen approx 20 metres from observer on boat.
T2012/030	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	01/09/2012	WALES	PEMBROKESHIRE	100 metres east of Strumble Head Observatory	Seen from clifftops, 250m from observer.
T2012/031	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	09/09/2012	OFFSHORE		offshore Cherbourg	Seen whilst travelling from Cherbourg in French waters
T2012/032	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	05/09/2012	WALES	SWANSEA	Llangland Bay	Seen 10 metres behind fishing boat half mile out in Llangland Bay swimming away from shore
T2012/033	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	13/09/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	West of Lundy, Ilfracombe	Seen 1 metre from fishing boat
T2012/034	LBT	ST	DEAD	17/09/2012	EIRE	Cork	Sheep's Head	IWDG website no further details - photos taken
T2012/035	LBT	ST	DEAD	19/08/2012	EIRE	Waterford	Youghal Harbour, Ferryport	IWDG website no further details - photos taken, CMRC report found by walker Chris Forker, Carbery Sailing.
T2012/036	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	18/09/2012	WALES	PEMBROKESHIRE	Porthgain	50 metres off coast by a birder. Huge.
T2012/037	LBT	ST	DEAD	16/10/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Whipsiderry Beach	Decomposed carapace only. Samples were taken to AHVLA.
T2012/038	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	08/07/2012	EIRE	WICKLOW	half a kilometer outside Howth Harbour, Dublin	Seen 15 m from yacht SHEDIR. About half a metre in length. Had seen hardshells off Cyprus in past.
T2012/039	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	05/08/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	offshore Penzance	Foraging. Stayed in area did two dives of 5 mins.
T2012/040	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	09/08/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	offshore Penzance	Seen briefly at surface.
T2012/041	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	28/08/2012	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	offshore Penzance	Dived for 10 mins then surfaced on other side of boat for 1 min before diving and not seen again.
T2012/042	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	10/09/2012	EIRE	CORK	Cape Clear Island	Seen c150 metres off Blannan during bird course at Beehive. Good view ridges on carapace. Slow travelling west.
T2012/043	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	31/07/2012	EIRE	WEXFORD	offshore	Seen from deck of ferry crossing to Pembroke from rosslare, 150m from boat.
T2012/044	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	25/07/2012	EIRE	WEXFORD	offshore near Lincolnshire ship wreck	Seen at surface 15 miles south of Tramore by diver on his way to dive site ,
T2012/045	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	14/08/2012	EIRE	WICKLOW	coastal	Was dragging bouy on surface. Hauled on deck and then released alive by fishermen.
T2012/047	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	09/08/2012	EIRE	CLARE	Bridges of Ross	one of two seen in two hours showing well at surface
T2012/048	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	09/08/2012	EIRE	CLARE	Bridges of Ross	one of two seen in two hours showing well at surface
T2012/049	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	20/08/2012	EIRE	CLARE	Bridges of Ross	one of three seen during the day superb views
T2012/050	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	20/08/2012	EIRE	CLARE	Bridges of Ross	one of three seen during the day superb views
T2012/051	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	20/08/2012	EIRE	CLARE	Bridges of Ross	one of three seen during the day superb views
T2012/052	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	29/08/2012	EIRE	CLARE	Bridges of Ross	one surfaced 8 times
T2012/053	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	31/07/2012	EIRE	CORK	Cape Clear, Blannan	Spotted from Blannan headland
T2012/054	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	13/09/2012	EIRE	CORK	Bridges of Ross	one surfaced 7 times
T2012/055	LOG	SEA	DEAD	026/11/201	offshore	landed Cork	south Bay of Biscay	Caught by fishing boat . Now held at Union Hall freezer.



# The United Kingdom Turtle Code

Advice for sea users on how to deal with marine turtle encounters

As a sea user, you can help in the effort to protect endangered marine turtles by providing information about your encounters with these spectacular creatures in UK waters.

## MARINE TURTLES ARE LEGALLY PROTECTED

There is no offence if turtles are caught accidentally in fishing gear. Nor is it an offence to help turtles if entangled or stranded, or temporarily to hold dead turtles for later examination by experts.

## However, marine turtles are protected in Britain.

### This means that:

- turtles may not be deliberately killed or caught
- live turtles may not be landed unless for the purpose of tending them or enabling their subsequent release
- dead turtles or shells obtained from turtles in UK waters may not be possessed unless the animal was lawfully acquired
- turtles and their derivatives may not be sold or offered for sale without UK government permission, unless they are antiques acquired before 1st June 1947 (with documented proof)
- turtles and their derivatives may not be imported or exported without UK government permission.

### The following legislation pertains to marine turtles:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), in England and Wales.
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, in England and Wales.
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended, in Scotland.
- Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007.
- Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations (1997) as amended, in the UK.
- Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.
- Isle of Man Wildlife Act 1990.

## PLEASE REPORT ALL TURTLE ENCOUNTERS

### ENGLAND/WALES

#### ALL RECORDS

Rod Penrose, Marine Environmental Monitoring  
01239 683033 (24hrs)  
[www.strandings.com](http://www.strandings.com)

#### LIVE STRANDINGS/ ENTANGLEMENTS

RSPCA 0300 1234999  
BDMLR 01825 765546

### ISLE OF MAN

Dr Fiona Gell  
DEFA - Isle of Man Government  
01624 685835 (main)  
Marine Operations Centre  
01624 686628 (24hrs)

### SCOTLAND

#### ALL RECORDS

Laura Clark, Marine Monitoring Officer,  
Scottish Natural Heritage  
01463 725237

#### DEAD STRANDINGS

Nick Davison  
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC).  
01463 243030/  
07979245893

#### LIVE STRANDINGS/ ENTANGLEMENTS

SSPCA 03000 999999

### NORTHERN IRELAND

#### ALL RECORDS

The Coastal Zone Centre at Portrush (DOENI)  
028 7082 3600

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

#### ALL RECORDS

Dr Thomas Doyle  
Coastal & Marine Research Centre, University College Cork  
00353 (0) 21 4703119 (Direct)  
00353 (0) 87 1354938 (24hrs)

Report online at: [www.euroturtle.org/turtlecode](http://www.euroturtle.org/turtlecode) & [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org)

### RECORD THE FOLLOWING DETAILS

All information is valuable, but the following details are particularly useful:

- A description** of the turtle (alive or dead), identification of species (at least to leatherback/hard-shelled level) and overall straight length. Note any damage (e.g. cuts, scars) and **take photographs** when possible.
- Location** (longitude & latitude/ OS grid reference), **date** and **time** of sighting.
- Other observations**, such as turtle's behaviour, whether caught in fishing gear (including exact nature of entanglement, gear involved) etc.
- Presence of tags**. Many conservation projects place plastic or metal tags on turtles' flippers, which display identification numbers and a return address. Record any tag details if this can be done without causing disturbance to the turtle.

**Please report all dead turtles, even if they have to be discarded at sea. Records from diaries or logbooks, however old, are also of interest.**

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A SICK OR ENTANGLED TURTLE

Immediately report the turtle to the relevant contact. Marine turtles will drown if trapped underwater, but prompt action can save them. A turtle that is entangled or trapped is likely to be stressed. Large turtles deliver a serious bite and a blow from a flipper can be painful, so be careful. Due to possible health risks involved in handling turtles, always wear rubber gloves.

### TURTLES ENTANGLED AT SEA

Approach calmly and cautiously and ensure first of all that the turtle's head is above water so that it can breathe if it is alive.

**ALIVE: AVOID TOWING TURTLES TO SHORE. They should be disentangled and released at sea whenever possible.**

#### If alert & active

- Do not use a gaff to pull the turtle alongside and do not haul leatherbacks aboard.
- Avoid pulling hard on the turtle's flippers as they may dislocate or break.
- Carefully disentangle the turtle, making sure that as much net and line as possible has been removed before the animal is released.
- Make sure that the vessel is stopped and out of gear before carefully sliding the turtle back into the water.
- Ensure that the turtle is clear of the vessel before moving away.

**ONLY if disentanglement at sea is impossible should the turtle be brought ashore.**

Tow leatherbacks very slowly and make sure the animal's head is above water so that it can breathe. Release leatherbacks in shallow water, not on land. Other species should be retained and reported.

#### If traumatised/inactive

**(no or slight movement, limbs flexible and limp, no decomposition)**

Severely traumatised hard-shelled turtles can be saved if they are small enough to fit on your boat.

- Wrap the turtle in a towel soaked in seawater. Do not cover the nostrils.
- Place the animal in a sheltered and secure place on its belly. To drain the lungs, raise the back end of the shell so the turtle is resting at approximately 30°. Keep it in this position until you return to shore.
- Leatherbacks should **not** be hauled aboard. If inactive, they can be towed to shore very slowly, ensuring they are able to breathe at all times.

**DEAD:** There may be serious health risks involved in handling dead turtles.

Inexperienced individuals are advised not to touch them. Where possible, record the details listed above and, only if the specimen is fresh, bring it back to shore and place in cold storage. Always wear rubber gloves when handling turtles.

### TURTLES STRANDED ON LAND

#### Leatherback turtles

Leatherbacks found stranded on beaches are usually very weak, dead or dying, but might still be saved.

#### If apparently uninjured:

- Carefully drag the turtle back to the sea and release it (enlist the help of several people and pull the shell rather than the flippers).
- Do not drag the animal over rocks, as this will cause severe damage.
- If stranded on rocks, it may be better to wait for the incoming tide to provide some buoyancy before dragging the turtle back to sea.

#### Other species (hard-shelled)

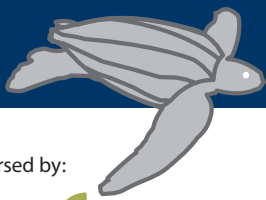
Loggerhead, Kemp's ridley, green and hawksbill turtles encountered on UK shores are usually cold stunned juveniles and should not be placed back in the sea.

- Wrap the turtle in a towel soaked in seawater, do not cover the nostrils
- Place the animal in a sheltered and secure place on its belly. If inactive, raise the back end of the shell so the turtle is resting at approximately 30° to drain the lungs. Report the turtle as soon as possible.

**Dead turtles** of all species are valuable for research and should be reported as soon as possible. Fresh specimens should be preserved in a cold store where possible. These animals will undergo a full post-mortem examination within the DEFRA-funded UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Project (CSIP).



# Marine Turtles in the UK



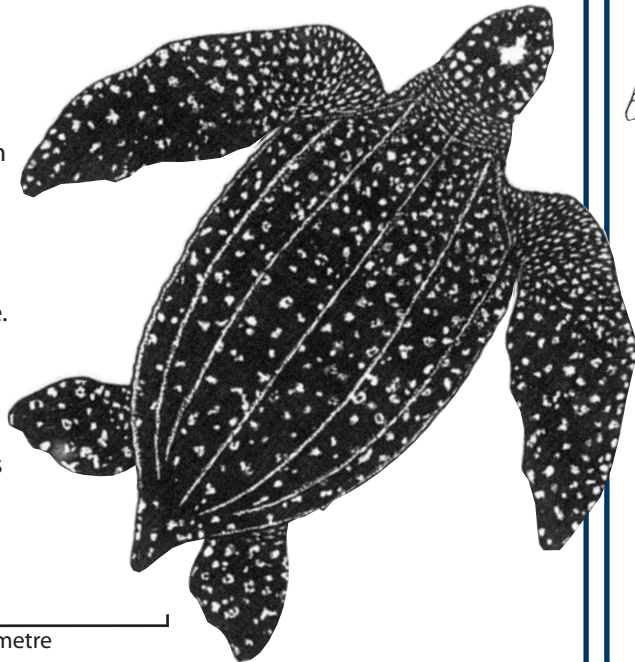
Endorsed by:



Of the world's seven marine turtle species, five have been recorded in UK waters. They are the leatherback, loggerhead, Kemp's ridley, green and hawksbill turtles. The leatherback, the largest marine turtle, is the species most frequently recorded in UK waters. Leatherbacks have a flexible, leathery shell and are unique among reptiles in that they are able to metabolically raise their body temperature above that of their immediate environment, allowing them to survive in colder waters. Each summer leatherbacks migrate to UK waters where they feed on jellyfish. The other four species have hard shells and are less frequently encountered in UK waters, where they usually occur as stray juveniles carried by currents from warmer seas.

## LEATHERBACK TURTLE

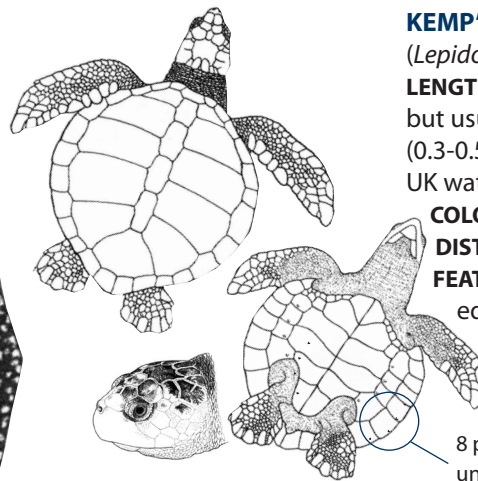
*(Dermochelys coriacea)*  
Most frequently recorded species in UK waters.  
**LENGTH:** up to 2.91 metres.  
**COLOUR:** black, spotted with white.  
**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** large, up to 916 kg, pronounced longitudinal ridges on shell, which tapers to a blunt spike.



SCALE 1 metre

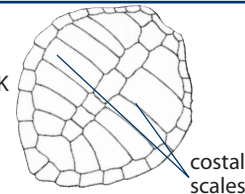
## KEMP'S RIDLEY TURTLE

*(Lepidochelys kempii)*  
**LENGTH:** up to 1 metre, but usually juveniles (0.3-0.5 metres) occur in UK waters.  
**COLOUR:** grey/olive.  
**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** shell width equal to or greater than shell length.



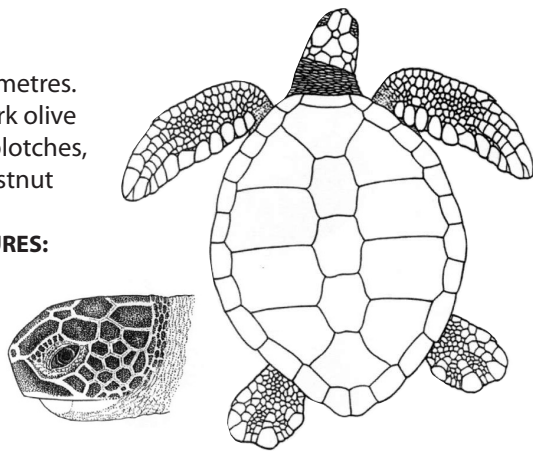
8 pores visible on underside (4 either side)

**NB:** The olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) occurs in the Atlantic, but has not been recorded in UK waters to date. Similar to Kemp's ridley with 8 pores on underside, but has 5-9 pairs of costal scales on shell.



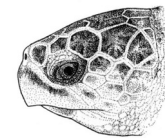
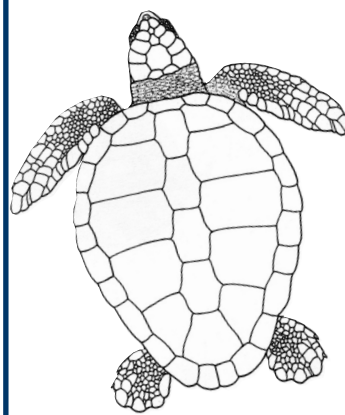
## GREEN TURTLE

*(Chelonia mydas)*  
**LENGTH:** up to 1.5 metres.  
**COLOUR:** adults dark olive or grey with dark blotches, juveniles have chestnut coloured shell.  
**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** smooth shell, rounded facial profile (not angular).



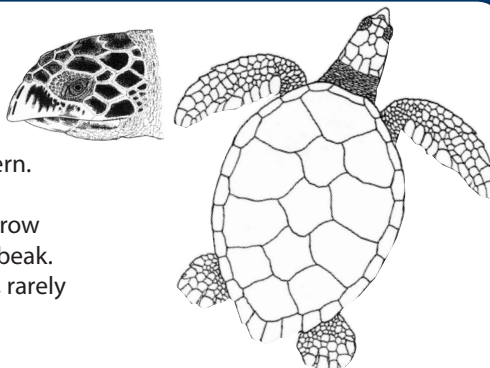
## LOGGERHEAD TURTLE

*(Caretta caretta)*  
**LENGTH:** adults up to 1.5 metres, but usually juveniles (0.3-0.5 metres) occur in UK waters.  
**COLOUR:** reddish brown.  
**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** large head, juveniles have small spikes along spine of shell.



## HAWKBILL TURTLE

*(Eretmochelys imbricata)*  
**LENGTH:** up to 1.2 metres.  
**COLOUR:** brown, amber and black tortoiseshell pattern.  
**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** shell scales overlapping, narrow tapered head with bird-like beak. Largely tropical distribution, rarely encountered in UK waters.



## MARINE TURTLES ARE THREATENED

In UK waters threats include:

- **Accidental entanglement in fishing gear.** Although turtles can dive to great depths, they become stressed and drown when trapped underwater by fishing gear. Fishing gear discarded at sea may also entangle and kill turtles.
  - **Marine litter,** especially plastic, which turtles mistake for jellyfish. Once ingested, plastic can block a turtle's gut leading to starvation.
  - **Boat collisions.** Turtles often bask and must surface regularly to breathe, leaving them vulnerable to boat strike.
- PLEASE BE VIGILANT, AND DO NOT DISCARD FISHING GEAR OR LITTER AT SEA.**



Illustrations are taken, with permission, from: 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.

THIS DOCUMENT WAS PRODUCED BY THE MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (MCS) IN 2011 WITH SUPPORT FROM NATURAL ENGLAND AND SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE AND IN COLLABORATION WITH THE TURTLE IMPLEMENTATION GROUP OF THE UK MARINE TURTLES GROUPED SPECIES ACTION PLAN.