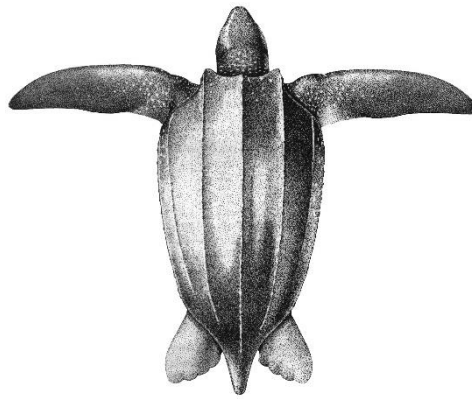


[www.strandings.com](http://www.strandings.com)

British Isles & Republic of Ireland Marine Turtle Strandings &  
Sightings  
Annual Report 2017

R.S.Penrose & L.R.Gander. May 2018



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## 1. SUMMARY

A total of 37 live and dead marine turtles were reported to TURTLE during 2017:

One Kemp's ridley turtle; Four loggerhead turtles; 28 leatherback turtles and four unidentified to species.

### Live Stranded

One Kemp's ridley turtle stranded alive in Cornwall and was taken for rehabilitation but died.

### Live sightings

Eight leatherback turtles were sighted at sea. Two in England; Two in Scotland; One in Wales; Two in the Republic of Ireland; One in the Isle of Man.

Two loggerhead turtles were sighted at sea off the English coast. One loggerhead was retrieved close to shore in the Republic of Ireland for repatriation.

Three unidentified turtles were sighted off the English coast.

### Dead sightings

Six leatherback turtles were sighted dead at sea. Two in England; One in Wales; Two in Scotland; One in Northern Ireland.

One unidentified turtle was sighted dead off the English coast.

### Dead Strandings

Fourteen leatherback turtles stranded dead: Two in England; Five in Wales; Five in the Republic of Ireland; Two in Scotland.

One loggerhead turtle stranded dead in the Republic of Ireland.

### Post mortem examination

One Kemp's ridley received a post mortem examination on behalf of the CSIP at the University of Exeter's Cornwall campus.

### Data Sharing

The TURTLE database is being adapted to enable it to be uploaded to the new NBN Atlas.

### Repatriation

**T2016/030** Olive ridley turtle is still being rehabilitated at Grand Canaria.

**T2017/013** Loggerhead turtle was released in the Atlantic off Gibraltar by the Irish Navy.

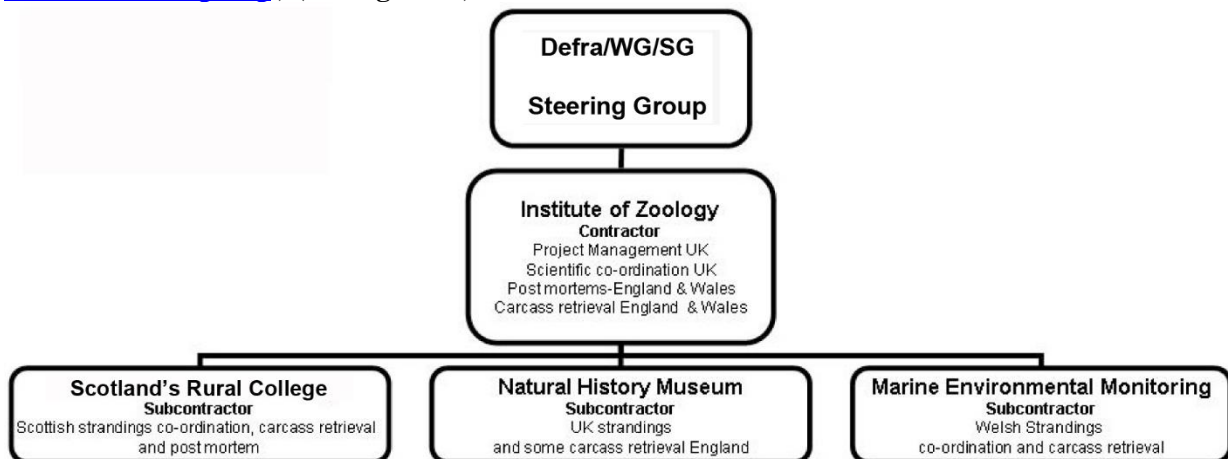
### TURTLE record totals

The current total of 2791 is broken down thus:

1336 Republic of Ireland; 668 England; 402 Scotland; 278 Wales; 41 Northern Ireland; 36 Isle of Man; 17 Channel Islands and 13 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.

Historically, 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 was part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and aimed 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 was Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The Turtle Implementation Group (TIG) now only communicate electronically and contribute to the project as a steering panel. TIG consists of the following organisations:-

- **Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust<sup>1</sup>** is an authority on reptile and amphibian conservation issues and is an active participant in Governmental and third sector nature conservation programmes across the UK [www.arc-trust.org](http://www.arc-trust.org)  
Contact: *Karen Haysom*, 01202 391319 [karen.haysom@arc-trust.org](mailto:karen.haysom@arc-trust.org)
- 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 Peter Duncan*, 01624 685884 [peter.duncan@gov.im](mailto:peter.duncan@gov.im)  
The Manx Wildlife Trust also record strandings on behalf of DEFA. Contact Dr Lara Howe on 01624 844432. [lara@manxwt.org.uk](mailto:lara@manxwt.org.uk)
- The **Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Marine & Fisheries Division** is responsible for protecting the marine environment while maximising the sustainable use of its resources, now and for future generations.  
Contact: *Gary Burrows*, 028 7082 3600. [gary.burrows@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:gary.burrows@daera-ni.gov.uk)
- **Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)** is the public body that advises the UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide and international nature conservation.

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

Contact: *Kelly Macleod, 01224 266584*

- **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)  
Contact: *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.com](mailto:rodpenrose@strandings.com)*
- **Marine Turtle Research Group** is based at the University of Exeter, Cornwall Campus and carries out fundamental and applied research on marine turtles in British waters, the Mediterranean, West Africa and throughout the UK Overseas Territories.  
Contacts: *Prof Brendan Godley & Prof Annette Broderick 01326 371 861.*
- **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 [medasset@medasset.org](mailto:medasset@medasset.org)*
- **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)**, part of the Department of Culture, 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 [ferdia.marnell@chg.gov.ie](mailto:ferdia.marnell@chg.gov.ie)*
- **Natural England (NE)** is the Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and natural features throughout England.  
Contact: *Paul Edgar, 02080 267708 [paul.edgar@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:paul.edgar@naturalengland.org.uk) or Gillian Benson, 02080 261060 [gillian.benson@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:gillian.benson@naturalengland.org.uk)*
- **Natural Resources Wales (NRW)** Natural Resources Wales is the largest Welsh Government Sponsored Body. Formed in April 2013, it took over the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales and the Environment Agency in Wales, as well as certain Welsh Government functions. Its purpose is to pursue sustainable management of natural resources in all of its work. This means looking after air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil to improve Wales’ well-being, and provide a better future for everyone.  
Contact: *Dr Tom Stringell, 03000 654912 [tom.stringell@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:tom.stringell@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk) or Ceri Morris, 03000 654913 [ceri.morris@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:ceri.morris@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)*
- **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: *Marine Monitoring Team, [MPA@snh.gov.uk](mailto:MPA@snh.gov.uk) 01463 725 000*
- **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 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, +44 (0)1392 926233 or Dr Tom Doyle +353-(0)87 1354938.*

### **3. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Contact details vary for different parts of the British Isles & Republic of Ireland and the Turtle Code (Appendix 2.) 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.com](mailto:info@strandings.com)

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 School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences, University College Cork **353-(0) 87 1354938** (mobile). Sightings & strandings can also be reported online in the Republic of Ireland via the National Biodiversity Data Centre's turtle sightings page: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/sea-turtles>

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 685835/685884** or directly to Dr Peter Duncan **07624 300525**.

The following criteria are applied: -

### **3.1 Live Animals**

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#### **(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**

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#### **(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.

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<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 2017.

**Table 1.**

2017 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	1	1
Leatherback turtle ( <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> )	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	10	3	3	2	28
Loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> )	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	4
Olive ridley turtle ( <i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
<b>Total animals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>37</b>

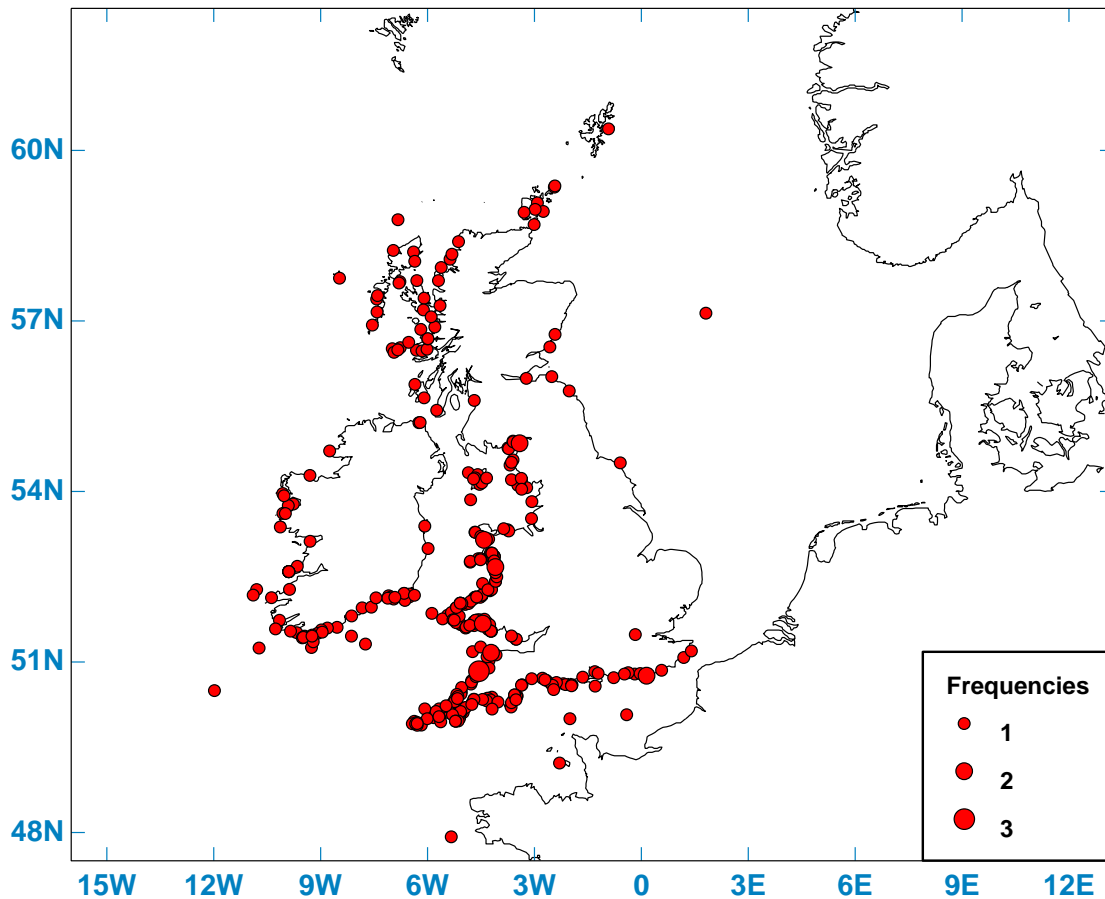
**Table 2.**

2017 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	1	1
Leatherback turtle ( <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	1	0	1	8
Loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> )	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
Olive ridley turtle ( <i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
<b>Total animals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>

**Table 3.**

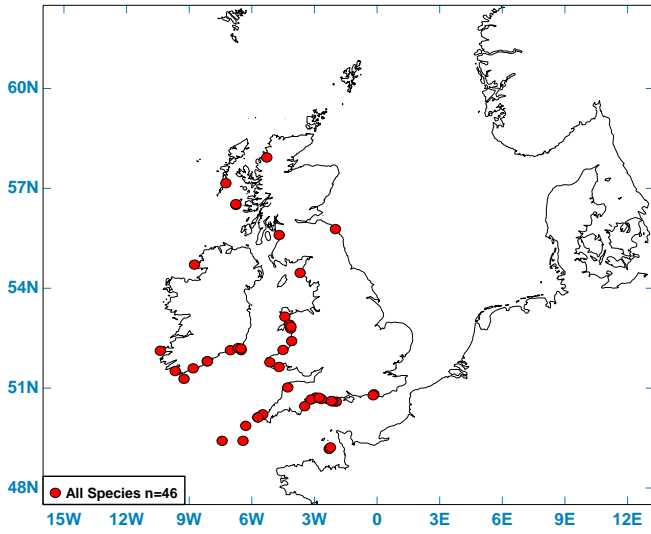
2017 Number of dead marine turtles.													
Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
Green turtle ( <i>Chelonia mydas</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawksbill turtle ( <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kemp's ridley turtle ( <i>Lepidochelys kempii</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leatherback turtle ( <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> )	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	2	3	1	20
Loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Olive ridley turtle ( <i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total animals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>22</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.

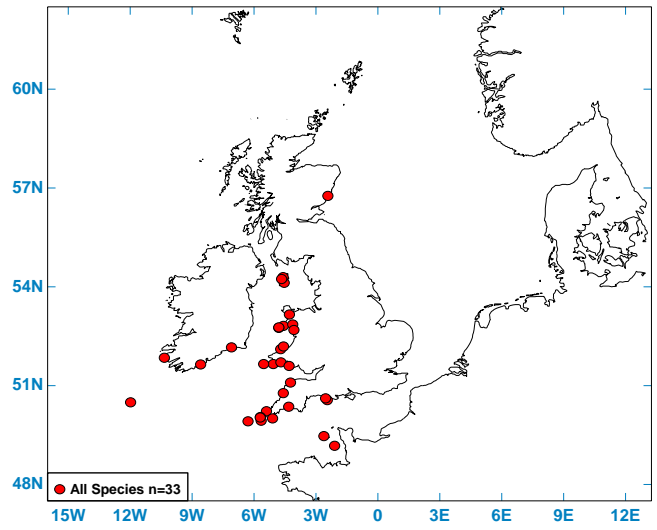


**Figure 2.** *All species sightings & strandings 2007-2017.*

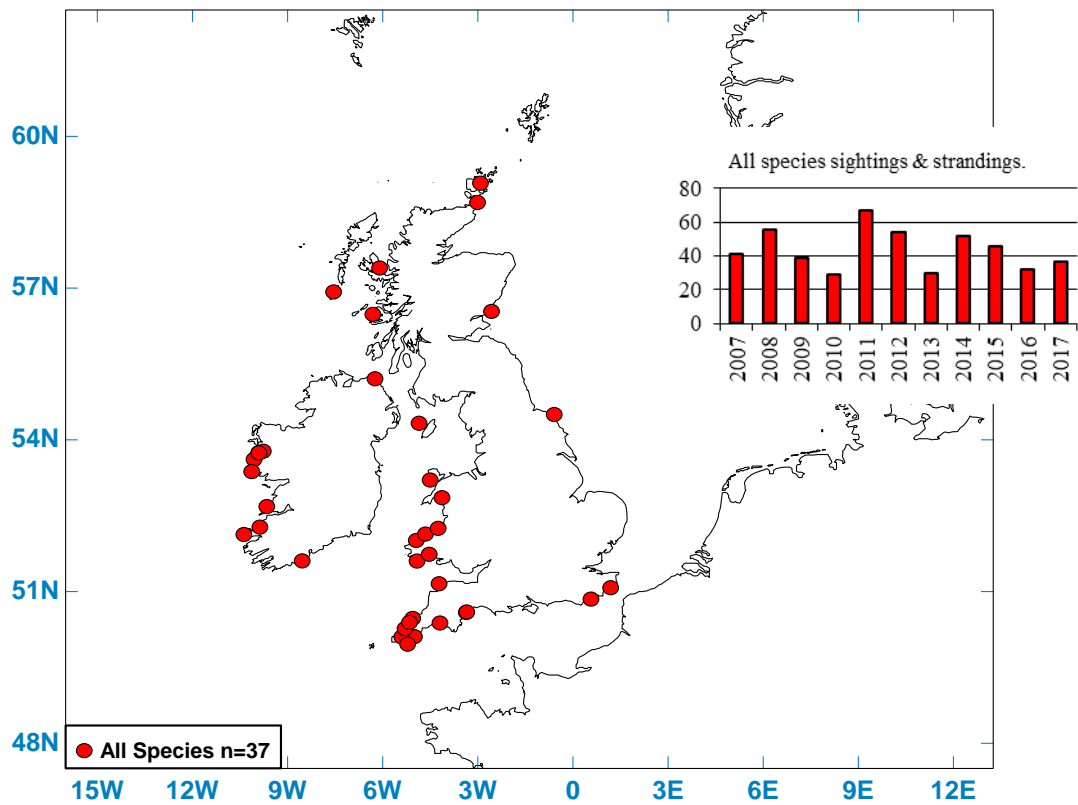
All species, sightings & strandings over the eleven year period 2007-2017 have been plotted in **Figure 2**.



**Figure 3.** All species sightings & strandings 2015.



**Figure 4.** All species sightings & strandings 2016.



**Figure 5.** All species sightings & strandings 2017.

## 4.1 Sightings.

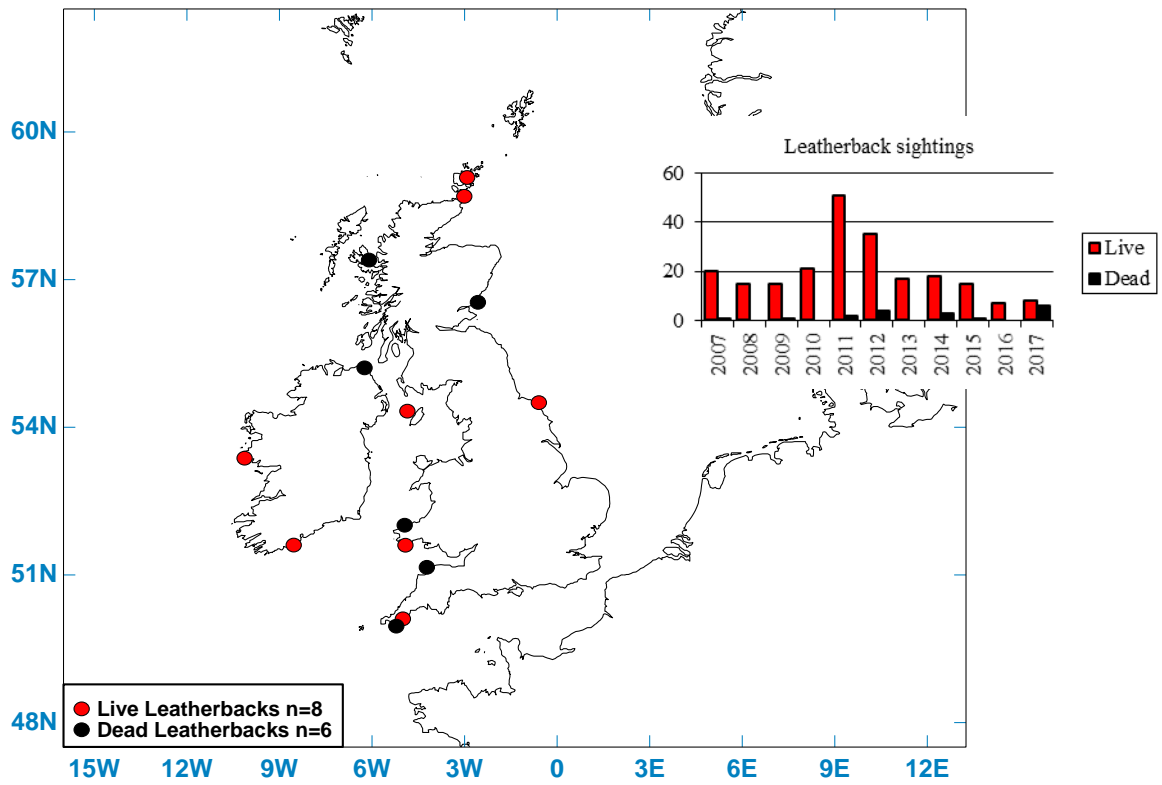


Figure 6. *Leatherback sightings 2017.*

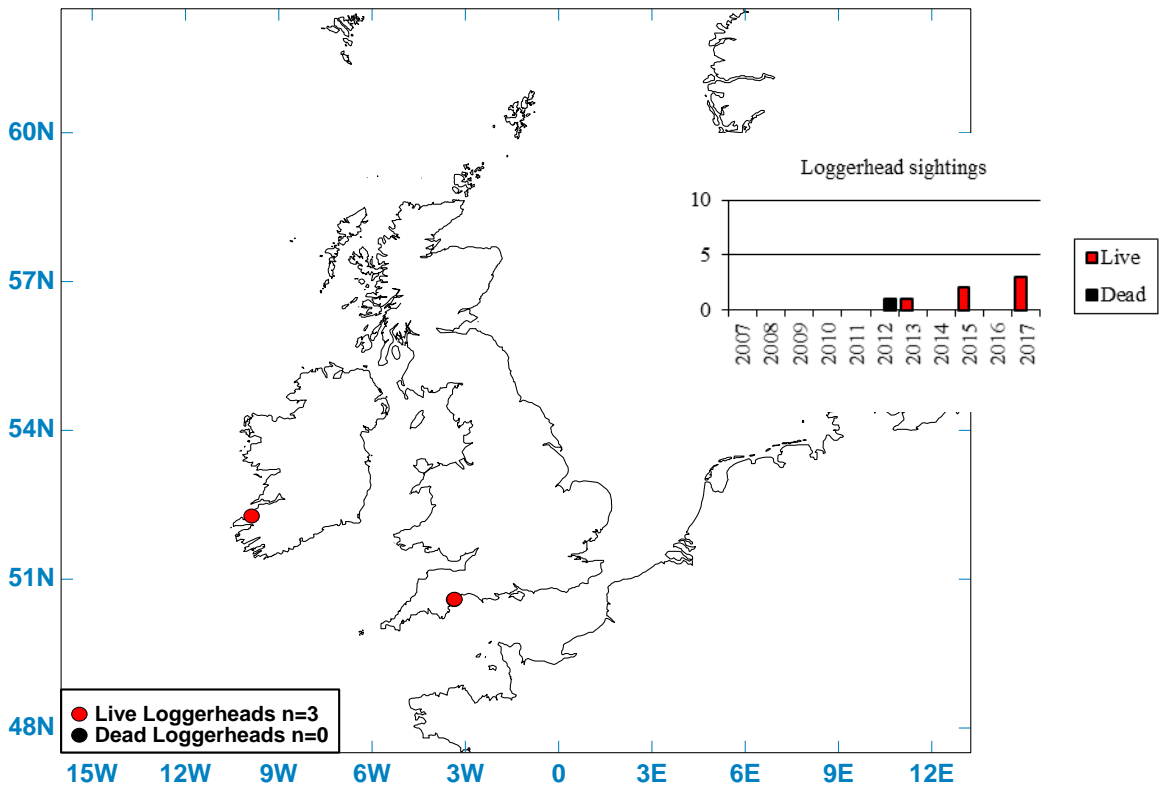
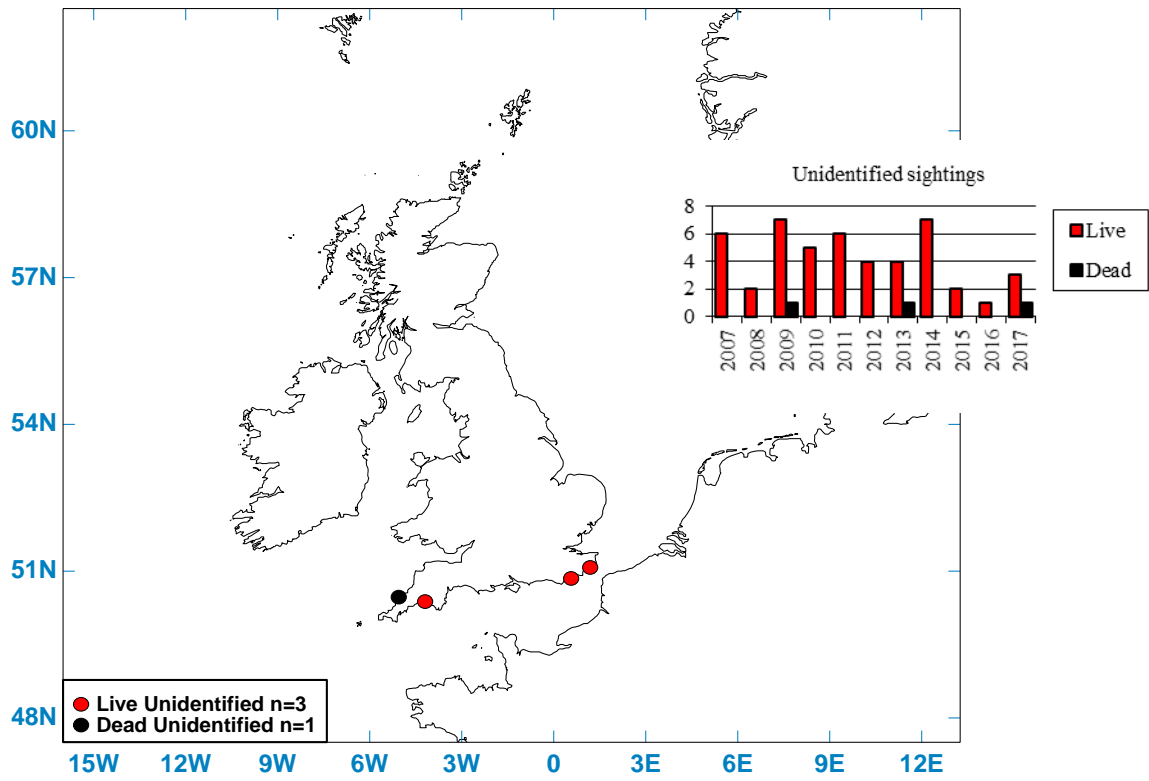


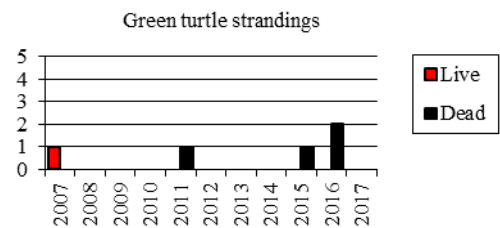
Figure 7. *Loggerhead sightings 2017.*



**Figure 8.** *Unidentified sightings 2017.*

#### 4.2 Strandings.

No live or dead green turtle strandings were reported during 2017. 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 2017.*

No live or dead **hawksbill turtle** strandings were reported during 2017. 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.

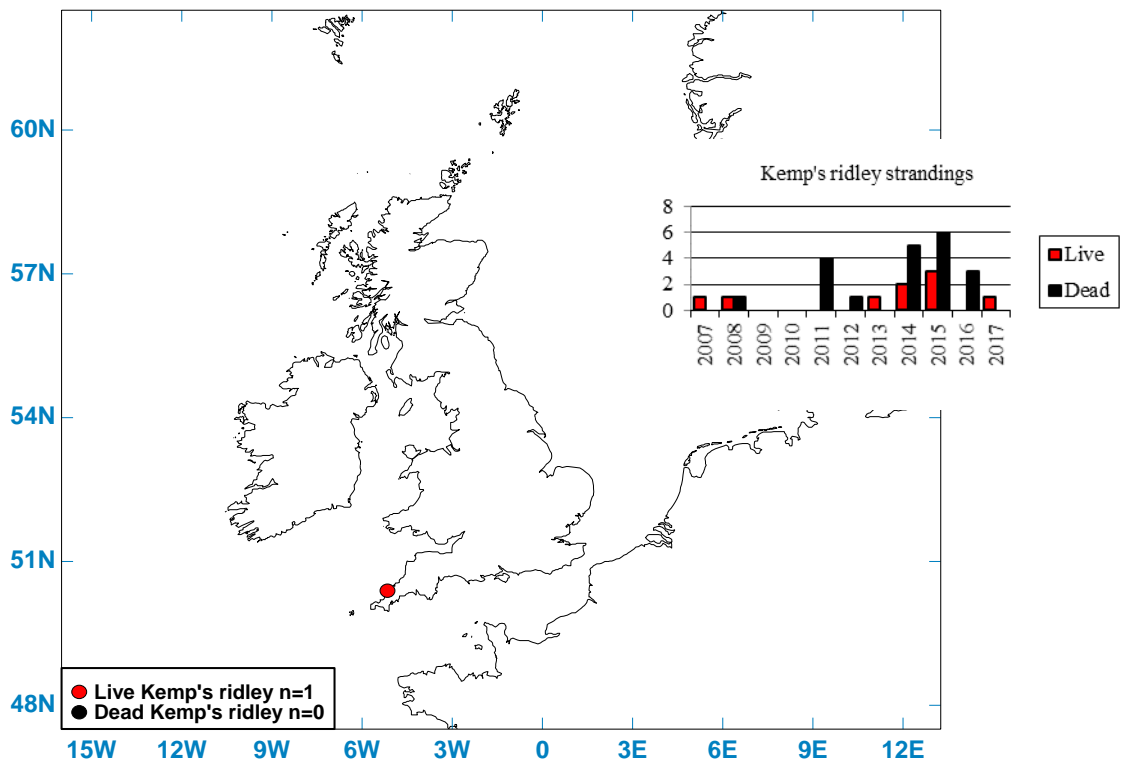


Figure 10. *Kemp's ridley strandings 2017.*

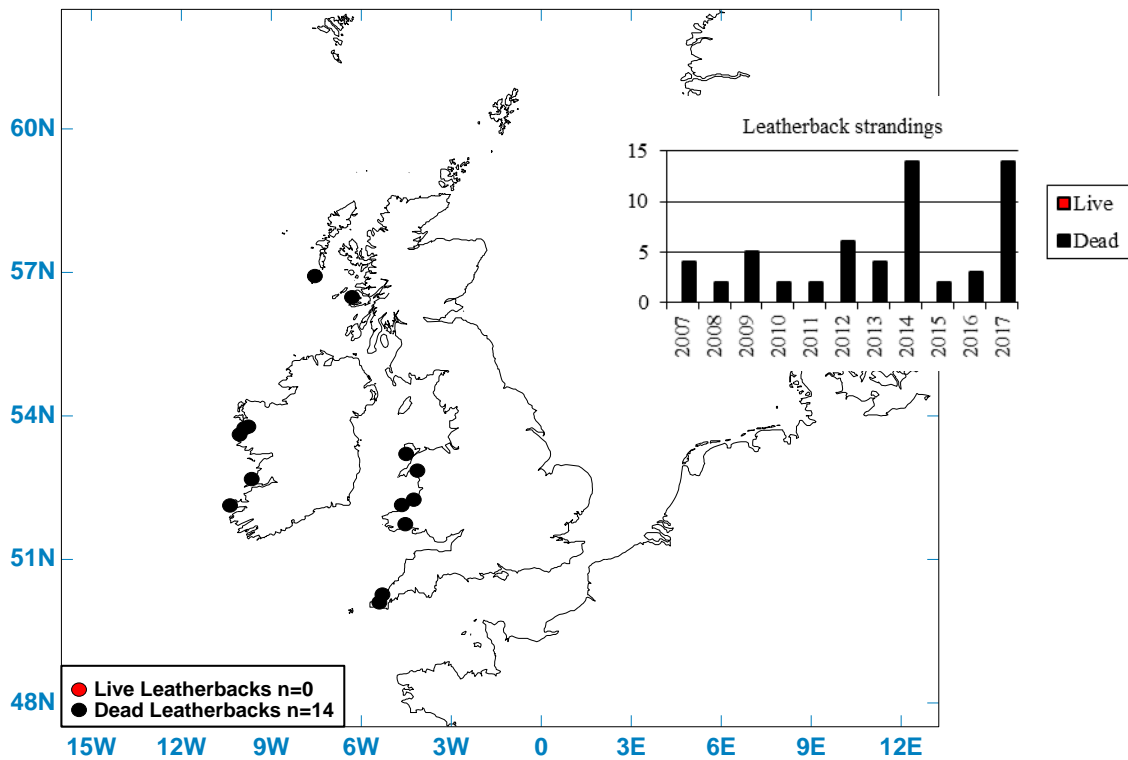
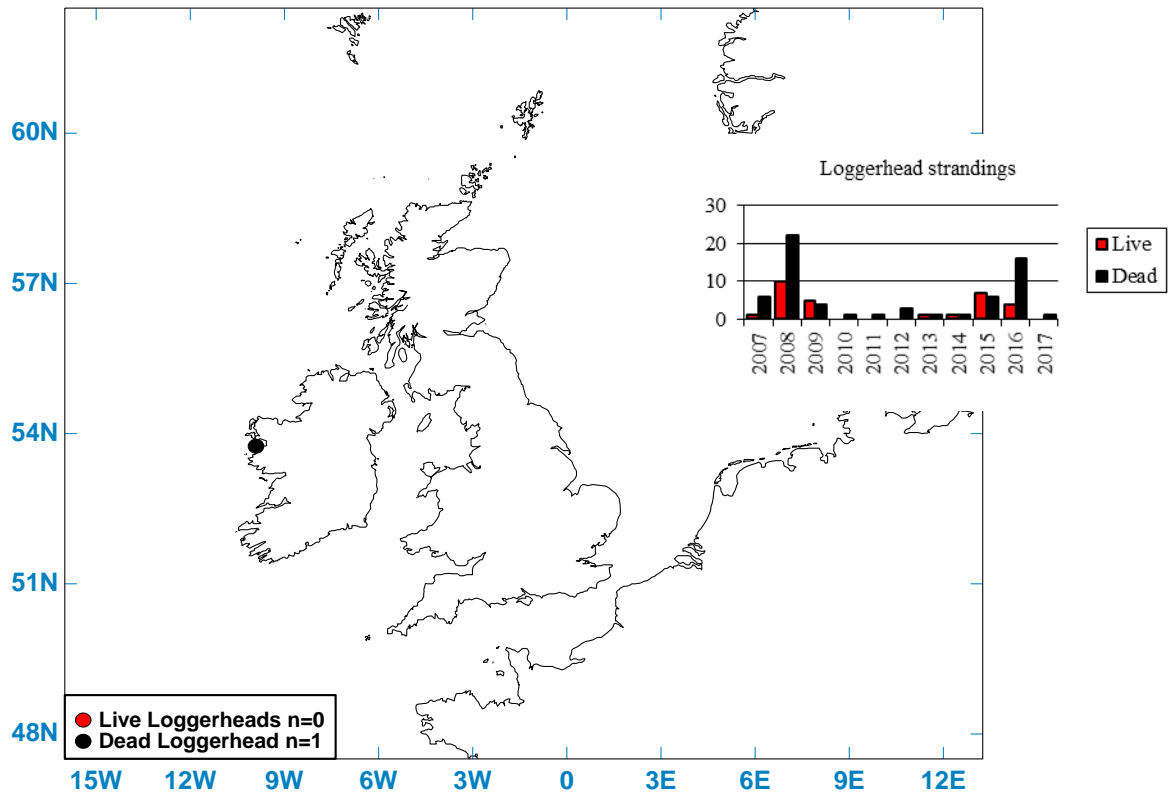
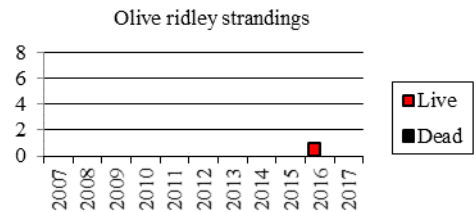


Figure 11. *Leatherback strandings 2017.*



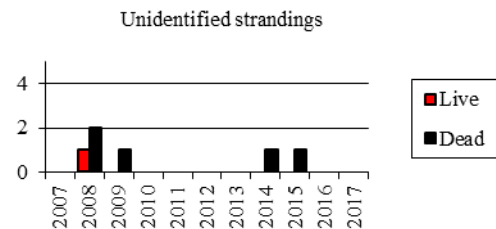
**Figure 12.** *Loggerhead strandings 2017.*

No live or dead olive ridley turtle strandings were reported during 2017. However, a live stranding of an olive ridley turtle was recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 13**.



**Figure 13.** *Olive ridley strandings 2017.*

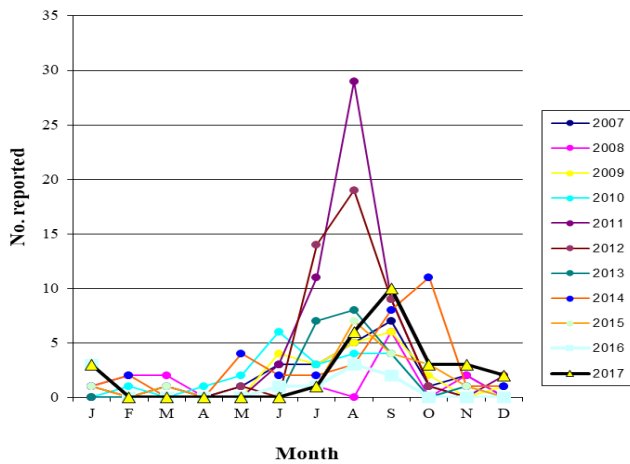
No live or dead unidentified turtle strandings were reported during 2017. However, strandings of both live and dead unidentified turtles have been recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 14**.



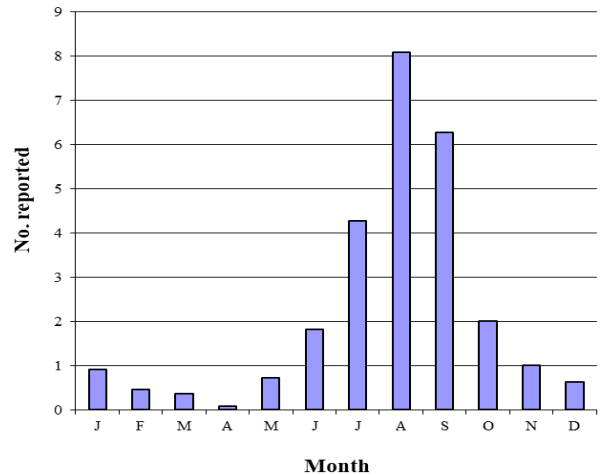
**Figure 14.** *Unidentified strandings 2017.*

All leatherback strandings and sightings, both dead and alive have been plotted by month for the period 2007 - 2017 (n=305) shown in **Figure 15**. The average figure was taken over 2007-2017 and plotted in **Figure 16**. 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.

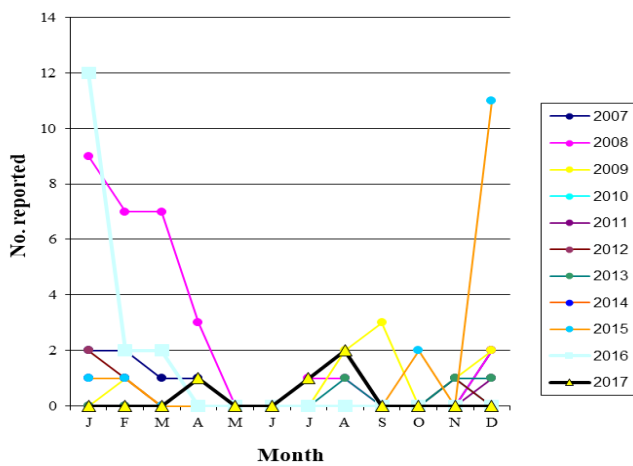
The records for the hard-shell species are more sporadic. Of the hard-shell species the most numerous recorded turtle over the 2007 - 2017 period is the loggerhead (n=94). The data for this species are plotted in **Figure 17** and **Figure 18**.



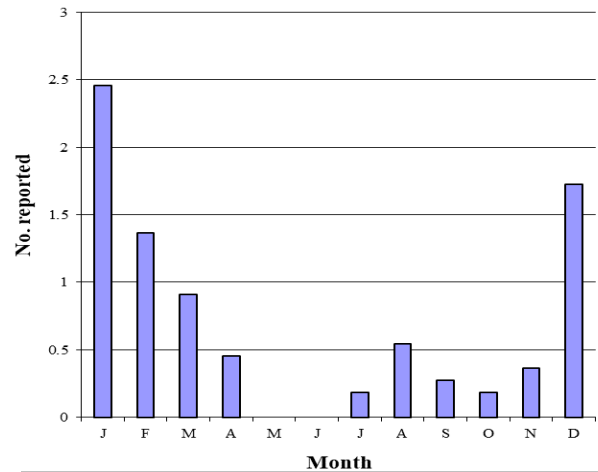
**Figure 15.** All leatherbacks by month.



**Figure 16.** All leatherbacks average over 2007-2017



**Figure 17.** All loggerheads by month.



**Figure 18.** All loggerheads average over 2007-2017.



**Table 4.**

<b>Cumulative number of records.</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>All Species</b>	
	<b>2017</b>	<b>1748 - 2017</b>
Rep. of Ireland	9	1336
England	13	668
Scotland	6	402
Wales	7	278
N. Ireland	1	41
Isle of Man	1	36
Channel Islands	0	17
Offshore	0	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2791</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 – 2017** column.

**Table 5.**

<b>Species Comparison.</b>														
<b>Country</b>	<i>1997 - 2007</i>													
	<b>2007 - 2017</b>													
	<b>GT</b>	<b>HB</b>	<b>KR</b>	<b>LBT</b>	<b>LOG</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>UNI</b>							
England	2	0	0	0	7	12	179	92	20	31	0	0	50	32
Scotland	2	1	0	0	2	4	102	41	28	9	0	0	14	7
Rep. of Ireland	1	1	0	0	0	3	226	84	19	29	0	0	18	9
Wales	0	3	0	0	2	10	71	73	6	19	0	1	9	5
Channel Islands	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	0	0	2	0
N. Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	4	0	0	0	0	2	1
Isle of Man	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	5	0	3	0	0	4	1
Offshore	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>56</b>

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

**Table 6.**

<b>TURTLE Database Species Totals (1748 - 2017).</b>	
<b>Species</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Green turtle ( <i>Chelonia mydas</i> )	<b>13</b>
Hawksbill turtle ( <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> )	<b>1</b>
Kemp's ridley turtle ( <i>Lepidochelys kempii</i> )	<b>66</b>
Leatherback turtle ( <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> )	<b>2062</b>
Loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> )	<b>258</b>
Olive ridley turtle ( <i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i> )	<b>1</b>
Unidentified	<b>390</b>
<b>Total animals</b>	<b>2791</b>

The total records held in TURTLE are 2806 (end of 2017). 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, 1997-2007 / 2007-2017 shown in **Table 5**, shows a marked decline in leatherback turtles recorded for most countries, this decline in sightings of LBTs is likely to be a reflection of reduced effort.

## **5. MATTERS ARISING.**

Menai, the olive ridley turtle **T2016/030**, continued to improve and it was agreed that if we could get her to a warmer climate it may aid her recovery. On the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017, Thomson Airways with the help of AIA Cargo, flew Menai with her carers to Gran Canaria free of charge where she is still being held. Unfortunately, after showing great improvement at Anglesey Sea Zoo, Menai's health appears to be deteriorating in Gran Canaria.

### **5.1 Retrospective Reports.**

No retrospective reports were received during 2017.

## **6. LIVE STRANDING EVENTS 2017.**

Technically, there was only one live-stranding reported in 2017 but additionally a loggerhead turtle was found "at sea" and recovered for rehabilitation.

**T2017/013** Loggerhead turtle found alive by divers on the seabed at Fenit, Co Kerry, Ireland on 20<sup>th</sup> April.

**T2017/027** Kemp's ridley turtle found alive at Holywell Bay, Cornwall on the 8<sup>th</sup> December.

## 6.1 Rehabilitation

**T2017/013** (named Sally) Although technically not a live-stranding, on the 20<sup>th</sup> April a local diving club found a loggerhead turtle on the seabed in 5 metres of water at Fenit, Co Kerry, Ireland. The turtle was missing its left front flipper (healed injury), damage to the plastron and appeared lethargic. It was recovered and taken to Dingle Aquarium for assessment. The turtle was released with the aid of the Irish Navy in October 2017 (See 6.2 Repatriation).



**Plate 1.** **T2017/013** (Sally) showing damage to plastron.

Photo by: Louise at Dingle Aquarium

**T2017/027** was a Kemp's ridley turtle found at Holywell Bay, Cornwall on the 8<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017 and recovered to Blue Reef Aquarium where it sadly died on the 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017. The carcass was recovered for post-mortem examination on behalf of the CSIP at the University of Exeter's Cornwall campus. (see 8. SAMPLES & POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS).

## 6.2 Repatriation.

Of the two live strandings currently held, **T2016/030** Menai, the olive ridley turtle is still being held at Gran Canaria and unfortunately after showing great improvement at Anglesey Sea Zoo, Menai's health appears to be deteriorating in Gran Canaria.

**T2017/013** (named Sally) was PIT and flipper tagged ready for release and kindly taken by the Irish Navy and released back into the Atlantic off Gibraltar on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017.



**Plate 2.** **T2017/013** (Sally) being transported by the Irish Navy.

Photo by: Louise at Dingle Aquarium

## **7. BYCATCH.**

Only two turtles were reported as being by-caught during 2017 with a further two reported as possibles.

*T2017/003 was a dead unidentified turtle seen at sea off Magwn Porth, Cornwall on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The report stated it was observed from land for 30 mins and may have been entangled in netting.*

*T2017/012 was a dead leatherback turtle seen at sea off Putsborough Sands. Devon on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017. The report stated it was floating close to shore possibly entangled.*

**T2017/019** was a dead leatherback turtle at sea entangled in creel lines off Arbroath, Angus, Scotland on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Report states it was too heavy to haul so cut free from creel lines.

**T2017/028** was a live leatherback turtle at sea entangled in creel lines off Shapinsay, Orkney, Scotland on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The animal was released alive.

## **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.

Only one turtle was recovered for post-mortem examination in 2017.

**T2017/027** was a 33cm SOL (straight overall length) female Kemp's ridley turtle which live-stranded at Holywell Bay, Newquay, Cornwall on the 8th Dec 2017 and recovered to Blue Reef Aquarium where it sadly died on the 12th Dec 2017. The carcass was recovered for post-mortem examination on behalf of the CSIP at the University of Exeter's Cornwall campus. The turtle was estimated to be around 2 to 3 years of age, when its carapace length is compared with published data. A parasite was located in the coelomic cavity which was still alive at the time of the post mortem examination. The cause of death was given as starvation/hypothermia pending bacteriology and parasitology results.

## **9. DATA SHARING.**

The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway permanently closed on 31st March 2017 superseded by the NBN Atlas which went live on 1st April 2017. The TURTLE database will be transferred to this platform once it has been adapted to meet the new validation process required for the NBN Atlas. It is hoped this work will be completed in 2018.

## **10. UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES.**

There were no unusual occurrences in 2017.

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

Posters and leaflets produced to increase awareness of the project have continued to be distributed.

As stated above the NBN Gateway permanently closed on 31st March 2017. Marine turtle records will now be posted on the NBN Atlas once the new validation process is completed. The NBN Atlas will now be the preferred outlet for the TURTLE database.

## **12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

Marine Environmental Monitoring wishes to acknowledge the following;

Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Marine Conservation Society, Dr Tom Doyle, the Irish Navy, Louise Overy Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, Frankie Hobro Anglesey Sea Zoo, THOMSON AIRWAYS, AIA Cargo, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG), Blue Reef Aquarium, University of Exeter's Cornwall campus and Veterinarian Pascual Calabuig.

Natural England, National Parks & Wildlife Service and the Welsh Government for financial support towards the British Isles & Republic of Ireland TURTLE database.

## **13. APPENDICES.**

- Appendix 1. 2017 TURTLE data.
- Appendix 2. UK Turtle Code.
- Appendix 3. Morphometrics.

RecordKey	Species	Ch	Str	ive	Dea	EndDate	Country	County	Location	Notes
T2017/001	LBT	SEA	DEAD	15/01/2017	WALES	PEMBROKES	Aber Grugog Bay 100m from land		Seen through binoculars from cliff top. Gull predation.	
T2017/002	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	27/01/2017	ENGLAND	DEVON	Off Millbay dock, Plymouth		Observed from boat at 50m. Have emailed for further info if poss.....	
T2017/003	UNI	SEA	DEAD	29/04/2017	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Magwn Porth		Observed from land for 30 mins floating. Possibly entangled in netting.	
T2017/004	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	07/05/2017	ENGLAND	KENT	near Folkstone Harbour arm		seen from land. At least a metre long. Swam along inshore side of harbour arm and then out to sea.	
T2017/005	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	13/08/2017	ISLE OF MAN	ISLE OF MAN	10 miles off Peel		seen 8-10m from yacht.	
T2017/006	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	15/08/2017	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	4 miles off Falmouth Bay		seen from fishing boat at 20 m. Surfaced breathing , dived and headed west.	
T2017/007	LOG	SEA	ALIVE	27/08/2017	ENGLAND	DEVON	2000m offshore Exe mouth		Seen 1m from boat. Photos taken.	
T2017/008	LOG	SEA	ALIVE	27/08/2017	ENGLAND	DEVON	1500m offshore Exe mouth		Seen 4m from boat. Photos taken. Probably same turtle as 007.	
T2017/009	LBT	SEA	DEAD	31/08/2017	SCOTLAND	WESTERN ISL	Sound of Raasay		Seen floating dead by Brigadoon Boat trips	
T2017/010	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	27/08/2017	WALES	PEMBROKES	600M offshore near Stackpole Quay.		Seen briefly 3m from fishing boat as it surfaced.	
T2017/011	LBT	SEA	DEAD	01/09/2017	NORTHERN IRELAN	ANTRIM	Ballycastle Bay. 30m offshore. Midway between		Seen floating dead . Poor dondition, 2 metres long. Sample and measurements taken by Gary Burrows.	
T2017/012	LBT	SEA	DEAD	12/09/2017	ENGLAND	DEVON	Putsborough Sands		Floating dead decomposed, possibly entangled, close to shore - Become beached seen by four further individual reports.	
T2017/013	LOG	SEA	ALIVE	20/04/2017	EIRE	KERRY	Fenit		Strong swimming, but lethargic. Missing left front flipper. Old injury. Taken to vets for treatment. And released. Pit tagged and Rear flipper tags provided by MEM.	
T2017/014	LBT	ST	DEAD	03/09/2017	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Kenneggy Sand, Helston		Battered, tail and head partially missing. Approx 5feet. Probably washed in day before during storm. Second report on 7/9/2017 to MCS Anita Streek.	
T2017/015	LBT	ST	DEAD	08/09/2017	WALES	GWYNEDD	Harlech Beach		Carapace only	
T2017/016	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	11/09/2017	SCOTLAND	HIGHLAND	Near Pentland firth		6 miles offshore. Seen from North Link Ferry at 100m . Heading east through the firth towards North Sea	
T2017/017	LBT	SEA	DEAD	12/09/2017	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	in bay near Lizard Point, next to old lifeboat st		In surf no head. No shell so considered to be LBT.	
T2017/018	LBT	ST	DEAD	22/09/2017	SCOTLAND	WESTERN ISL	Vatersay		Large LBT on beach. Picked up on Facebook - Beachcombing. CSIP report missing pectoral flippers.	
T2017/019	LBT	SEA	DEAD	22/09/2017	SCOTLAND	ANGUS	Arbroath		Too heavy to haul, cut loose from creel lines.	
T2017/020	LBT	ST	DEAD	15/09/2017	WALES	CEREDIGION	MWNT		NT PROPERTY, NO VEHICULAR ACCESS.	
T2017/021	LBT	ST	DEAD	08/09/2017	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	PORTREATH		IN HARBOUR	
T2017/022	LBT	ST	DEAD	14/10/2017	WALES	CARMARTHEN	PENDINE		on MOD beach. Limbs appear missing in pic, head still attached. MEM unable to access beach.	
T2017/023	LBT	ST	DEAD	17/10/2017	WALES	ANGLESEY	Cable bay			
T2017/024	LBT	ST	DEAD	11/11/2017	WALES	CEREDIGION	Aberaeron North Beach		Seen by walking birders in surf . Was left stranded on beach. Advanced decomposition no limbs. Appros 5ft.	
T2017/025	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	20/10/2017	ENGLAND	YORKSHIRE	a mile SE of Whitby Nth Cardinal mark		Seen by boat on passage from Scarborough to Whitby. Approx 6ft with ridges and bumps, long flippers squat head. Following coast northwards.	
T2017/026	UNI	SEA	ALIVE	15/11/2017	ENGLAND	SUSSEX	near Hastings pier		Seen from the pier. Sizeable presumed leatherback?	
T2017/027	KR	ST	ALIVE	08/12/2017	ENGLAND	CORNWALL	Holywell Bay		Found by Dave Hudson, taken to Blue Reef Aquarium, died Tuesday 12th Dec, pm'd Weds night 13th Dec.	
T2017/028	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	10/12/2017	SCOTLAND	ORKNEY	just off Shapinsay		leatherback turtle entangled in the end line of creel pots in Orkney. The animal was about 5ft long and released alive (10/12/17). Grid ref HY 47864 21224, just off Shapinsay. O	
T2017/029	LBT	ST	DEAD	27/12/2017	SCOTLAND	ARGYLL & BU	Isle of Gometra		Skeletal and carapace remains. Reported 9th Jan 2018.	
T2017/030	LBT	ST	DEAD	22/01/2017	EIRE	CLARE	Kilkee			
T2017/031	LBT	ST	DEAD	30/08/2017	EIRE	GALWAY	Renvyle			
T2017/032	LBT	ST	DEAD	14/11/2017	EIRE	KERRY	Ventry			
T2017/033	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	05/07/2017	EIRE	GALWAY	2 miles south of Bunowen Pier.Ballyconneely.		Observed for 15 minutes. Surfaced a dozen times. Further details with Tom Doyle.	
T2017/034	LOG	ST	DEAD	29/07/2017	EIRE	MAYO	Emlagh beach, Louisburgh			
T2017/035	LBT	ST	DEAD	14/01/2017	EIRE	MAYO	Old Head beach, Westport.		Partially decomposed, mostly buried in sand. Head appeared to be missing	
T2017/036	LBT	ST	DEAD	10/11/2017	EIRE	MAYO	Between Doughmakeon and Carrowiskey be			
T2017/037	LBT	SEA	ALIVE	03/08/2017	EIRE	CORK	Old head of Kinsale			



# The United Kingdom & RoI Turtle Code

## Appendix 2.

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 Peter Duncan  
DEFA - Isle of Man Government  
01624 685835 (main)  
Marine Operations Centre  
01624 686628 (24hrs)

### SCOTLAND

**ALL RECORDS**  
Marine Monitoring Team,  
Scottish Natural Heritage,  
01463 725009

### DEAD STRANDINGS

Nick Davison, Scottish Rural College (SRUC)  
01463 243030  
07979 245893  
[strandings@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:strandings@sruc.ac.uk)

### LIVE STRANDINGS/ ENTANGLEMENTS

SSPCA 03000 999999

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**ALL RECORDS**  
The Portrush Coastal Zone (DAERA)  
028 7082 3600

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**ALL RECORDS**  
Dr Tom Doyle  
School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences,  
University College Cork.  
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 & RoI



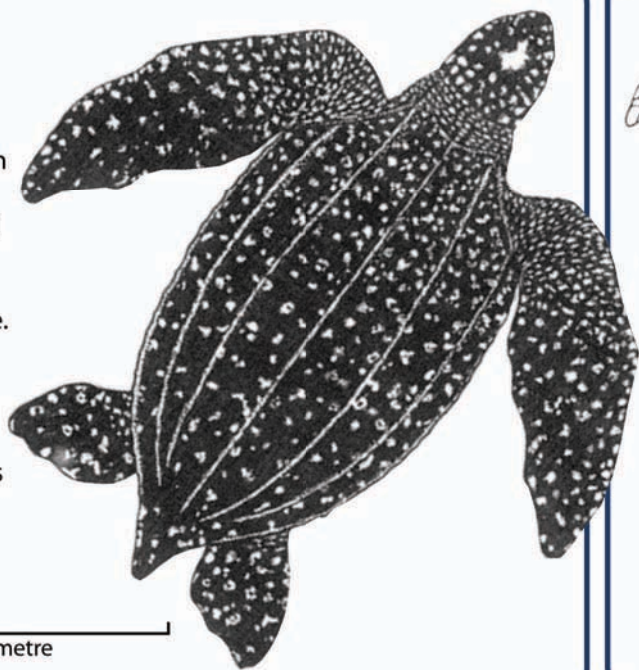
Endorsed by:



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

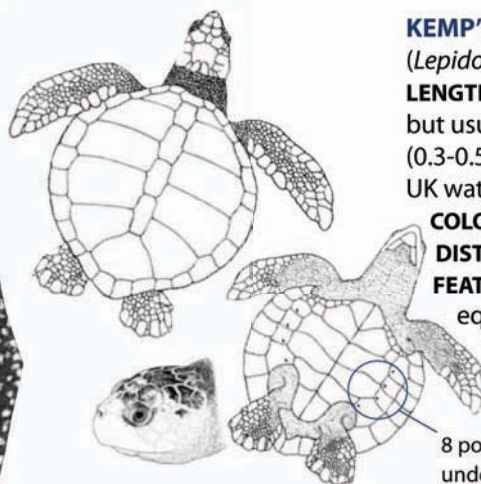
*(Dermochelys coriacea)*  
Most frequently recorded species in UK waters.  
**LENGTH:** up to 2.91 metres.  
**COLOUR:** black, spotted with white.  
**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** large, up to 916 kg, pronounced longitudinal ridges on shell, which tapers to a blunt spike.



SCALE 1 metre

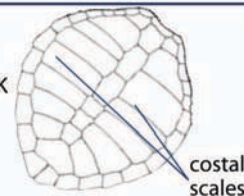
## KEMP'S RIDLEY TURTLE

*(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.



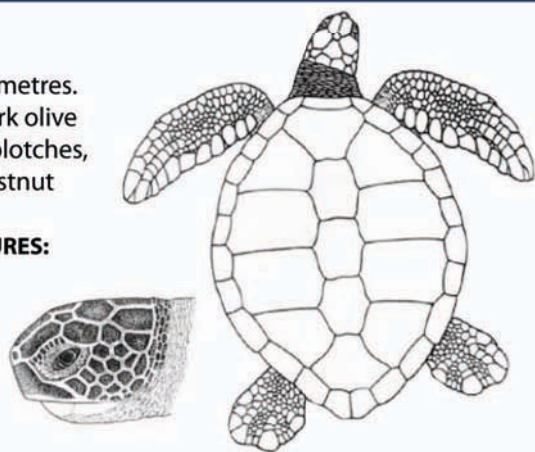
8 pores visible on underside (4 either side)

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.



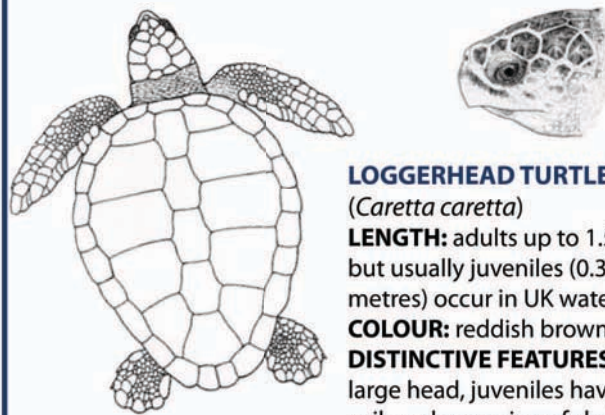
## GREEN TURTLE

*(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).



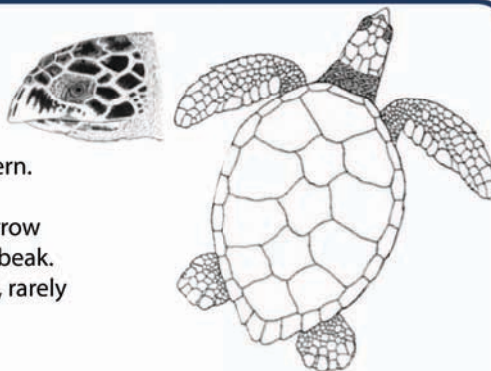
## LOGGERHEAD TURTLE

*(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

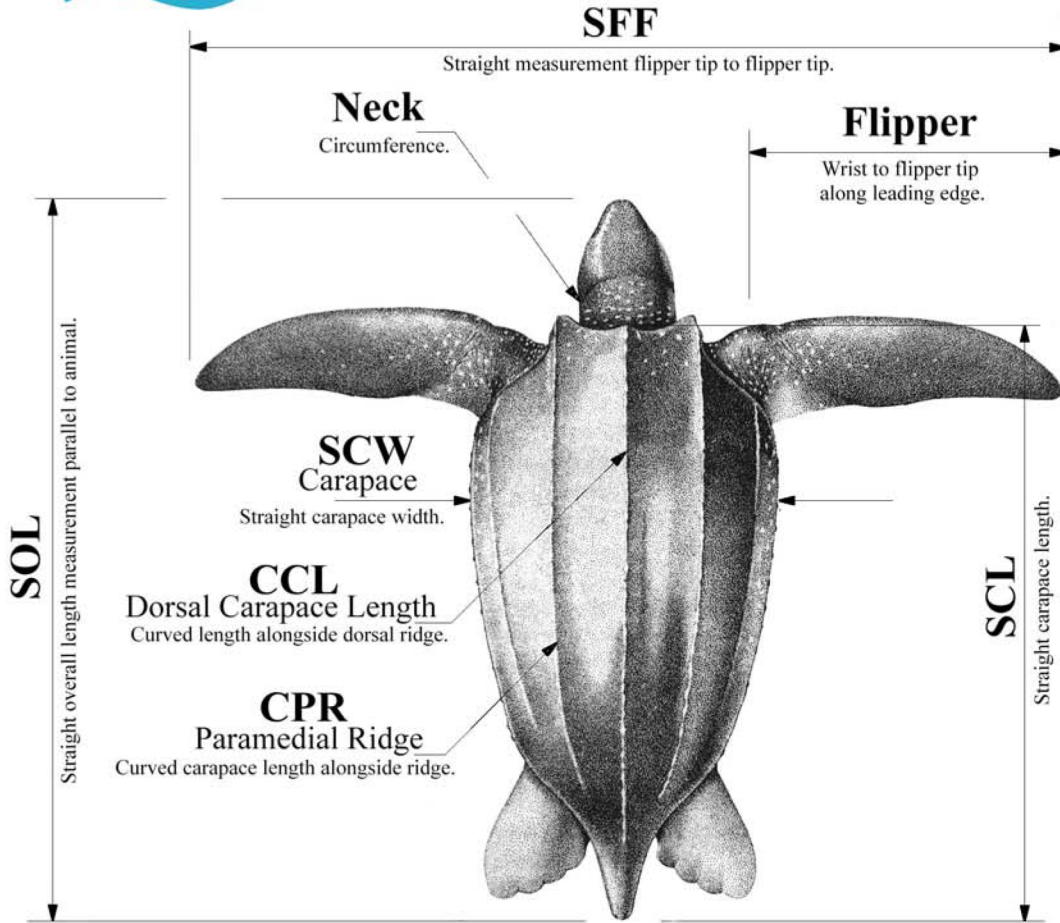
In UK waters threats include:

- **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, KL, KA. Bjorndal, FA. 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.





### Other Measurements Required.

- COL** Curved Overall Length.
- CFF** Curved Flipper tip to Flipper tip over Animal.
- CCW** Curved Carapace Width.
- DMAX** Maximum Body Depth. (Straight).
- TTL** Total Tail Length from Plastron.
- PTL** From Centre of Cloacal Opening to end of Tail.
- WEIGHT** In Kilograms.
- SEX** If Known.

