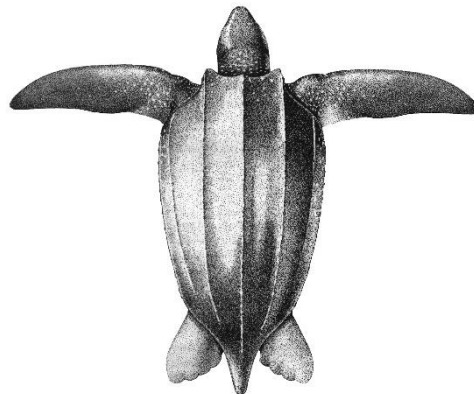


www.ukturtles.online
www.strandings.com

British & Irish Marine Turtle Strandings & Sightings Annual Report 2024

R.S. Penrose and M.J.B. Westfield. February 2025.



Marine Environmental Monitoring
Penwalk
Llechryd
Cardigan
Ceredigion
West Wales
SA43 2PS
e-mail: rodpenrose@strandings.com



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



Ariennir yn Rhannol gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Part Funded by
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1. SUMMARY

A total of 35 live and dead marine turtles were reported to TURTLE during 2024. Seven Kemp's ridley turtles; 10 leatherback turtles, 15 loggerhead turtles, 2 Green turtles and 1 Unidentified.

Live sightings

Eight turtles were sighted alive at sea. Six leatherbacks, 1 loggerhead and 1 Unidentified

Dead sightings

No dead sightings were reported in 2024.

Live stranded

There were 9 live stranded turtles reported in 2024. These were 6 loggerhead turtles; 4 in England, 2 in Wales. One Kemp's ridley in England and 2 Green turtles in Ireland.

Dead strandings

A total of 18 turtles were reported stranded dead.

Four leatherback turtles stranded dead. Two in England and 2 in Ireland.

Six Kemp's ridley turtles stranded dead. One in Scotland, 2 in England, 2 in Wales and 1 in Ireland.

Eight loggerhead turtles stranded dead. Three in Scotland, 3 in England, 1 in Jersey and 1 in Wales.

Post-mortem examination

Four loggerhead turtles and 2 Kemp's ridley turtles were recovered for post-mortem examination within the CSIP, SMASS, Cornwall Marine Pathology Team and Irish network.

Rehabilitation

Of the 9 live-strandings in 2024, 3 turtles survived in rehabilitation.

Repatriation

The 5 loggerhead turtles that failed to be repatriated in 2023 were joined by a sixth in 2024 and were kindly repatriated in the high seas close to the Azores courtesy of the Royal Navy.

T2024/06 the loggerhead turtle found stranded at Barrow-in-Furness with a non transmitting satellite tag, was flown to the Azores for release by Sea Life Centres.

TURTLE record totals

The current total of 2988 since 1748 is broken down thus:

1377 Ireland; 745 England; 439 Scotland; 313 Wales; 41 Northern Ireland; 37 Isle of Man; 21 Channel Islands; 15 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) (see **Figure 1**).

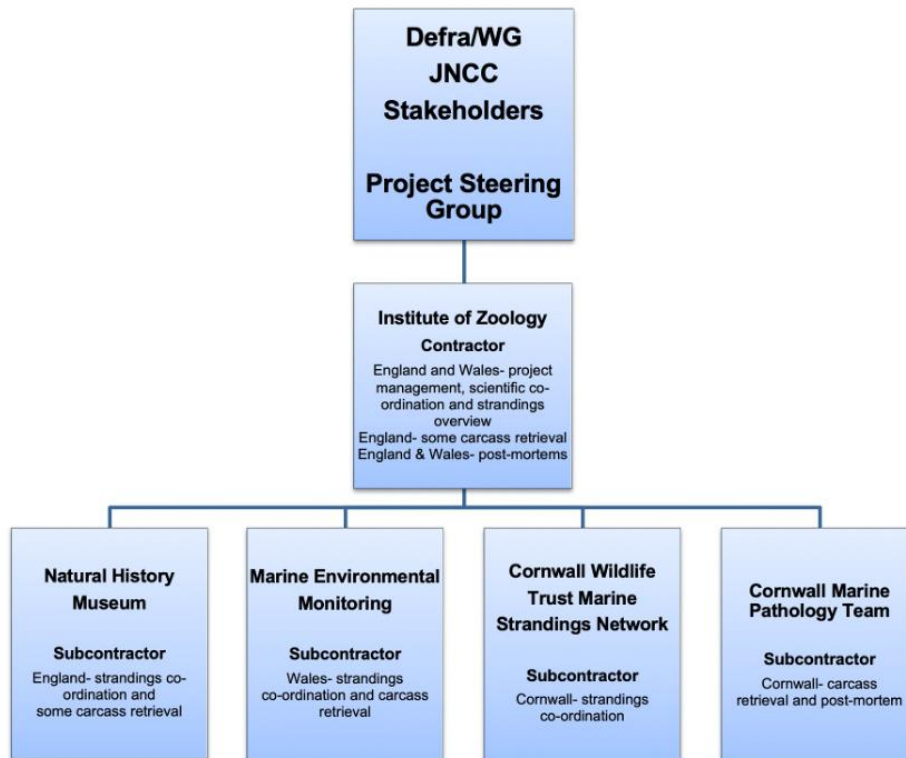


Figure 1. *Current technical co-ordination of the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP).*

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 Trust¹ (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:-

¹ Formally Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT).

- **Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust** 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.
Contact: *Dr Karen Haysom, 01202 391319* 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 or 07624 300525 (mob),* peter.duncan@gov.im
Manx Wildlife Trust also record strandings on behalf of DEFA.
Contact: *Dr Lara Howe on 01624 844432.* lara@mwt.im
- 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: *Dr Liz Pothanikat, 028 905 69421.* Liz.Pothanikat@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.
Contact: *Nikki Taylor, 01733 866902*
- **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
Contact: *Greg Wannell, 01989 566017*
- **Marine Environmental Monitoring (MEM)** is a member of the Defra "UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme", www.strandings.com www.ukstrandings.org MEM also manages 'TURTLE' the British Isles & Irish database holding both records of sightings and strandings of marine turtles dating back to 1748.
Contact: *Rod Penrose, rodpenrose@strandings.com or Mat Westfield mat.westfield@strandings.com (Reporting telephone No. 01239 683033.)*
- **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* B.J.Godley@exeter.ac.uk
- **MEDASSET**, founded in 1988, is an international environmental NGO registered as a Non Profit Organisation 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
- **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)**, part of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 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@npws.gov.ie
- **Natural England (NE)** is the Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and natural features throughout England.
Contact: *Tim Bernhard, 07775 026622* tim.bernhard@naturalengland.org.uk
- **Natural Resources Wales (NRW)** 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. 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 653000* tom.stringell@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk
- **NatureScot** is Scotland's nature agency providing advice to Scottish Government. NatureScot promotes the care, improvement, responsible enjoyment, understanding, appreciation and sustainable use of Scotland's natural heritage.
Contact: *Marine Monitoring Team, MPA@nature.scot 01463 725 018*
- **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
- **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** *Dr Tom Doyle*, School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences. 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>
Contact: *Dr Tom Doyle, 353-(0) 87 1354938 (mobile).*

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 Live strandings and entanglements should be reported to the RSPCA on **0300 1234 999** and/or British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) **01825 765546**.

For **Scotland** all records should be reported to the Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme (SMASS) **07979 245893** reports@strandings.org Live strandings and entanglements should be reported to the SSPCA on **03000 999 999** and/or British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) **01825 765546**.

For **Northern Ireland** all records of live or dead turtles should be reported to DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division on **028 905 69421** or [Marine Conservation Team | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

UK and Irish turtle sightings and strandings can also be reported using the UK & RoI Turtle Code online at <http://www.euroturtle.org/turtlecode/default.htm> or www.ukturtles.online

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

On the **Isle of Man** all marine animal strandings should be reported to DEFA (Fisheries) on **01624 685835/685884** or directly to Dr Peter Duncan **07624 300525**, or Dr Lara Howe **07624 450879**.

The following criteria are applied: -

3.1 Live Animals

(Condition code 1) ²

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

Contacts and advice can be found in the UK Turtle Code (Appendix 2.).

3.2 Dead Animals

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

(**Condition code 2b** slight decomposition) ²

(**Condition code 3** moderate decomposition)²

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

(**Condition code 4** advanced decomposition)²

(**Condition code 5** mummified carcass)²

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

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

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

4. RESULTS

The following three tables include marine turtle ‘sightings’ and ‘strandings’ reported through 2024.

Table 1.

2024 Total number of reported marine turtles for the UK & Ireland. (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	1	0	0	1	2
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	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	7
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	3	0	1	10
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)	5	3	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	15
Olive ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total animals	6	5	2	3	0	1	1	4	3	3	1	6	35

Table 2.

2024 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	1	0	0	1	2
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	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	6
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	7
Olive ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total animals	2	1	0	2	0	1	1	4	2	1	1	2	17

Table 3.

2024 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	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	4
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)	3	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Olive ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total animals	4	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	4	18

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.

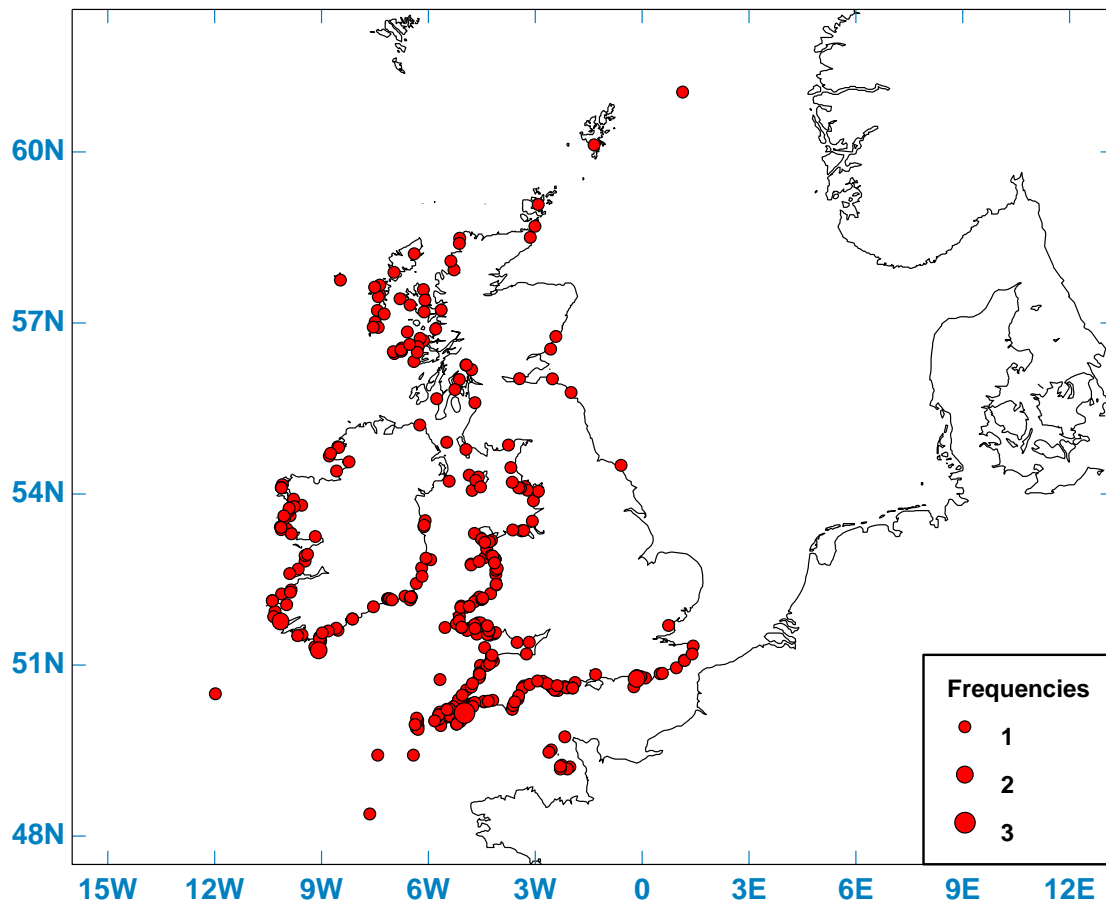


Figure 2. *All species sightings & strandings 2014-2024 live and dead.*

All species, sightings & strandings, live and dead over the eleven year period 2014-2024 have been plotted in **Figure 2.**

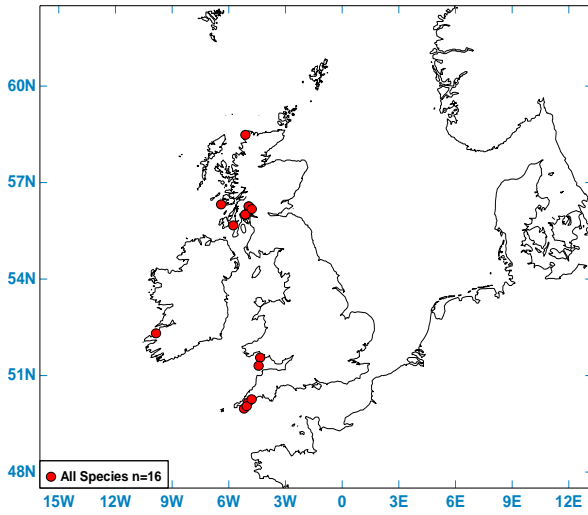


Figure 3. All species sightings & strandings 2022.

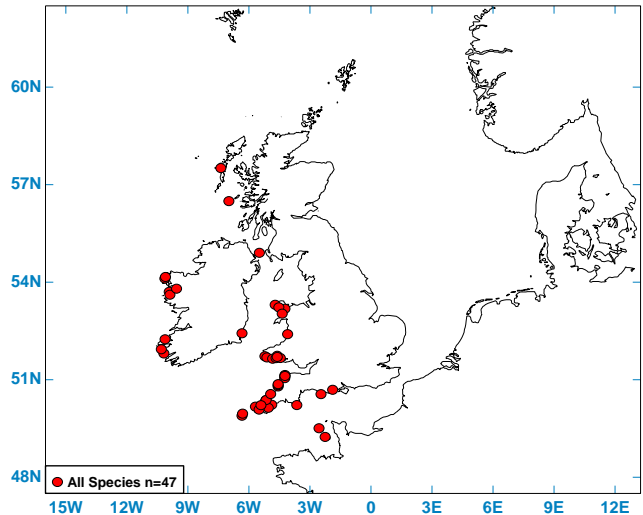


Figure 4. All species sightings & strandings 2023.

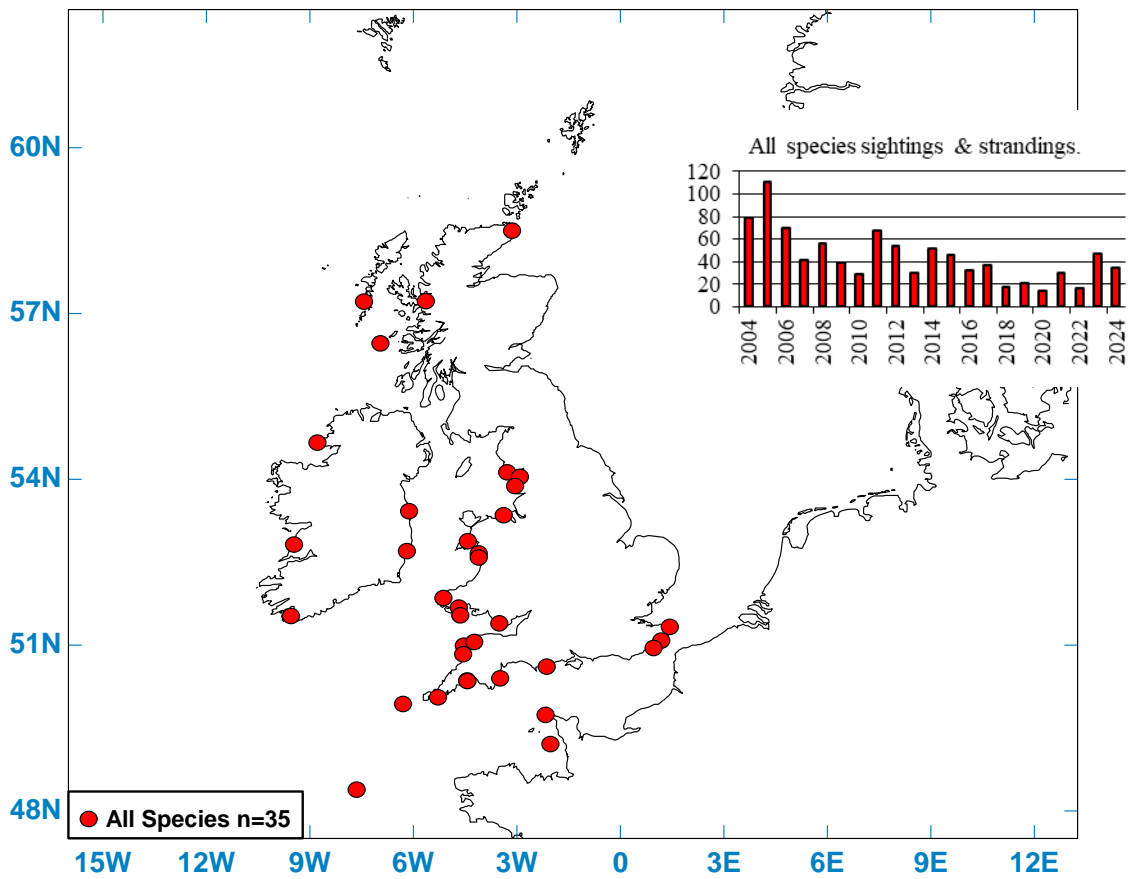


Figure 5. All species sightings & strandings 2024.

4.1 Sightings.

No live or dead Kemp’s ridley sightings were reported during 2024. However, sightings of a live Kemp’s ridley turtle has been recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 6**.

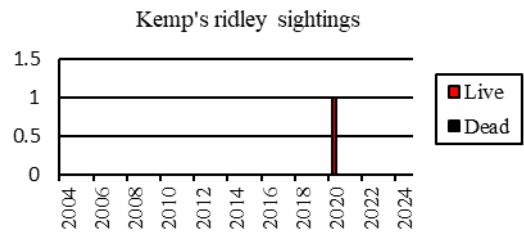


Figure 6. Kemp’s ridley sightings 2024.

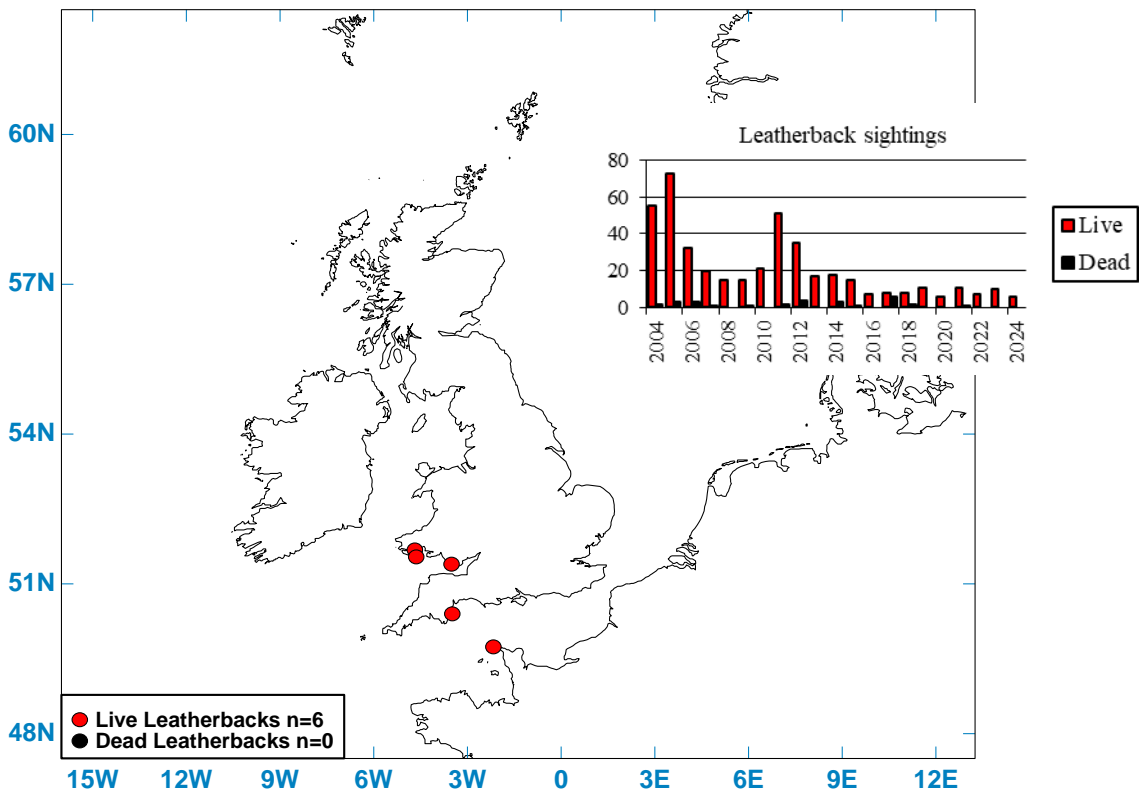


Figure 7. Leatherback sightings 2024.

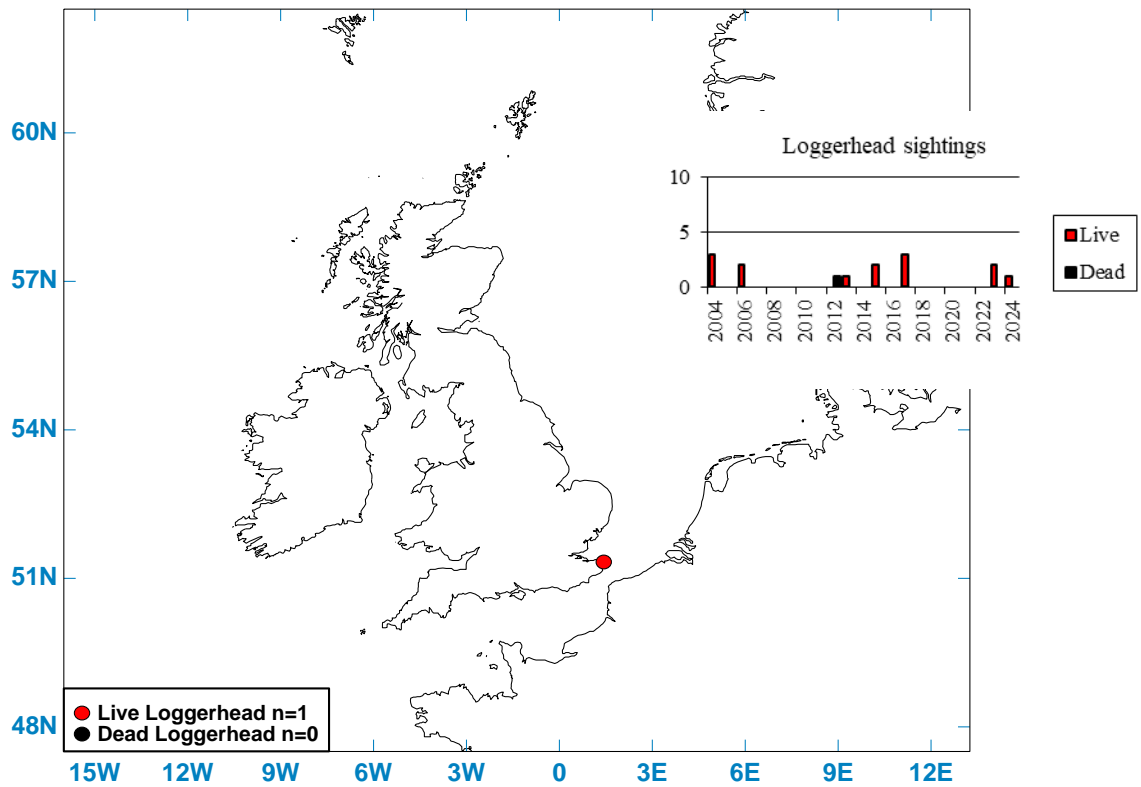


Figure 8. *Loggerhead sightings 2024.*

One Unidentified live sighting was reported during 2024 in Looe Bay, Cornwall, England.

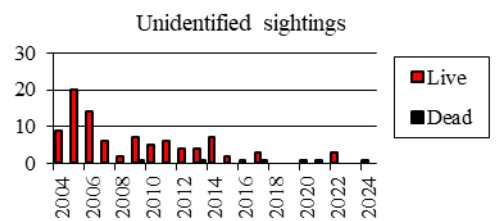


Figure 9. *Unidentified sightings 2024.*

4.2 Strandings.

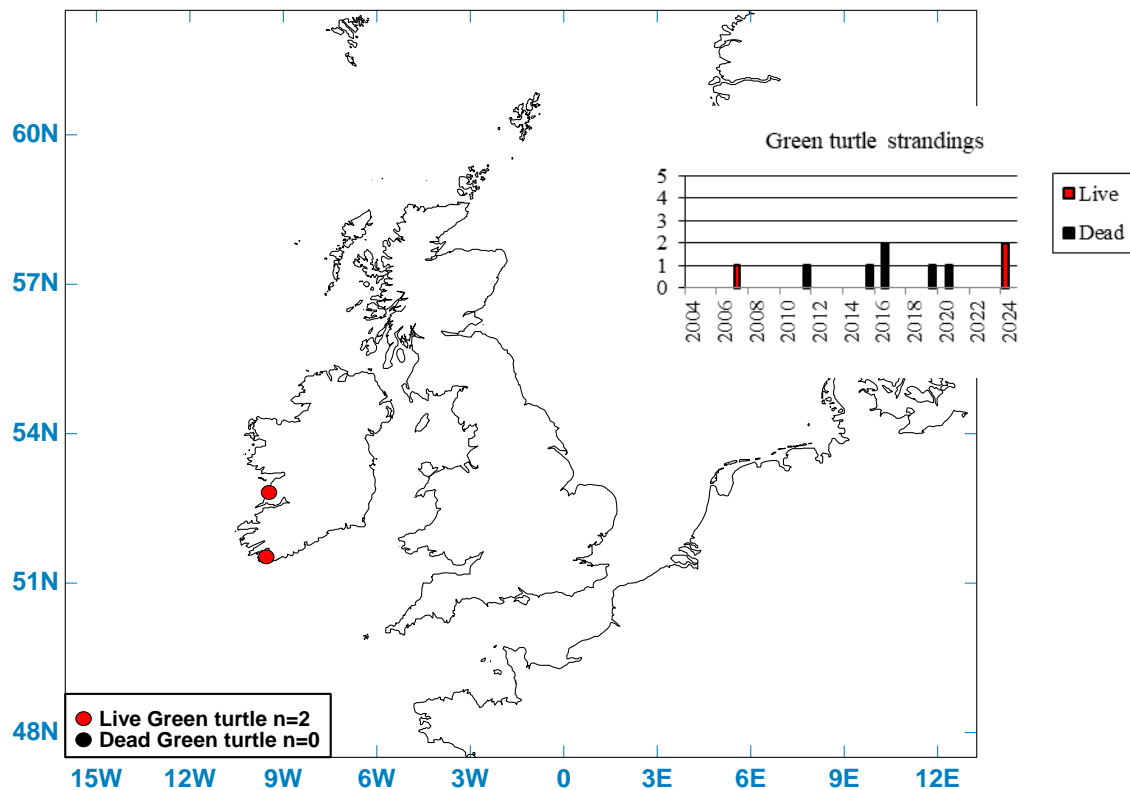


Figure 10. Green turtle strandings 2024.

No live or dead hawksbill turtle strandings were reported during 2024. 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.

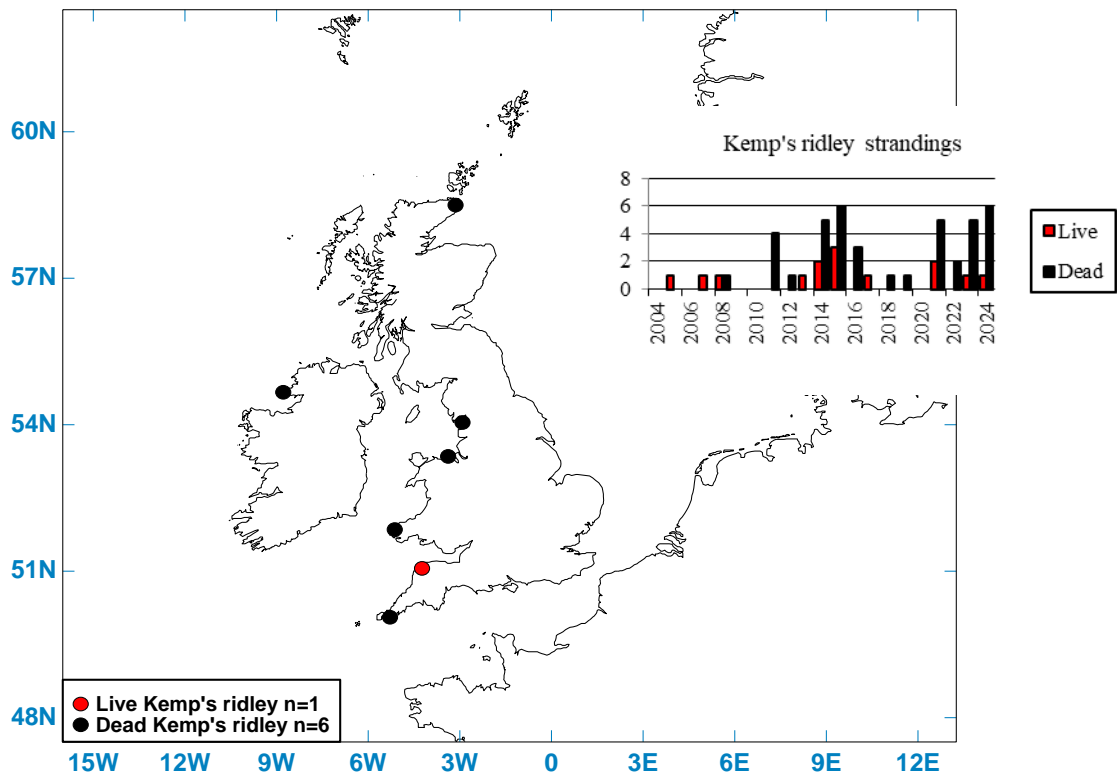


Figure 11. *Kemp's ridley strandings 2024.*

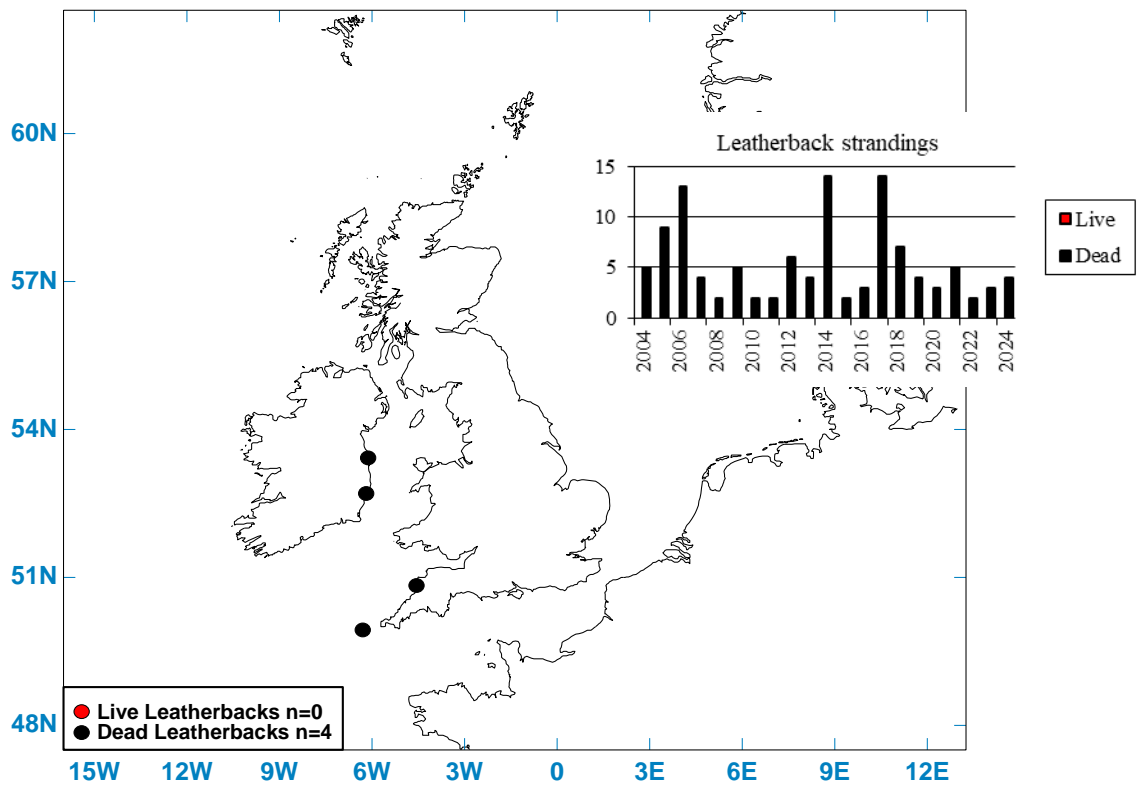


Figure 12. *Leatherback strandings 2024.*

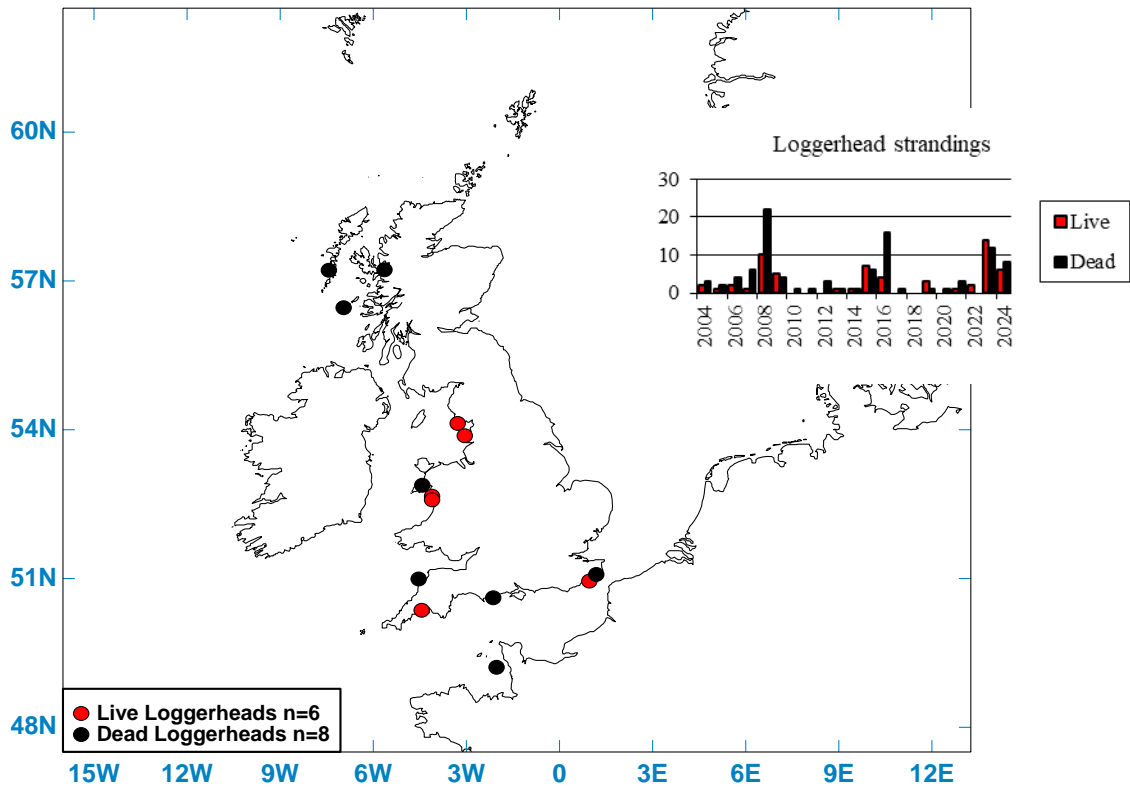


Figure 13. *Loggerhead strandings 2024.*

No live or dead olive ridley turtle strandings were reported during 2024. However, a live stranding of an olive ridley turtle was recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 14**.

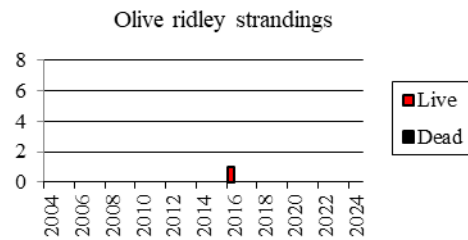


Figure 14. *Olive ridley strandings 2024.*

No live or dead unidentified turtle strandings were reported during 2024. However, strandings of unidentified turtles have been recorded in recent years as shown in **Figure 15**.

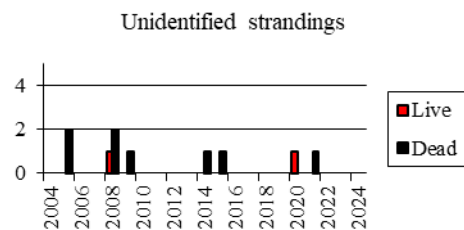


Figure 15. *Unidentified strandings 2024.*

All leatherback strandings and sightings, both dead and alive have been plotted by month for the period 2014 - 2024 (n=191) shown in **Figure 16**. The average figure was taken over 2014-2024 and plotted in **Figure 17**. 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 & Irish coast. The records for the hard-shell species are more sporadic. Of the hard-shell species the most numerous recorded turtle over the 2014 - 2024 period is the loggerhead (n=92). The data for this species are plotted in **Figure 18** and **Figure 19**.

As numbers of Kemp's ridley turtle strandings appear to be increasing, presumably by the recovery of the species by guarding of existing nests in Mexico and translocation of nests to additional beaches, graphs **Figure 20** and **Figure 21** showing dead and alive strandings and sightings over the period 2014 - 2024 (n=46) have been included.

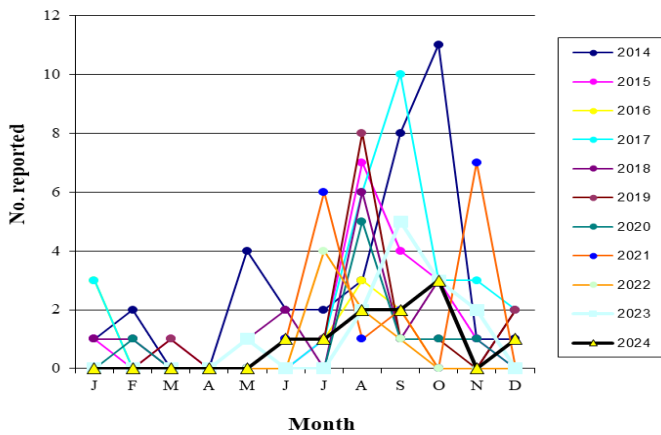


Figure 16. All leatherbacks by month.

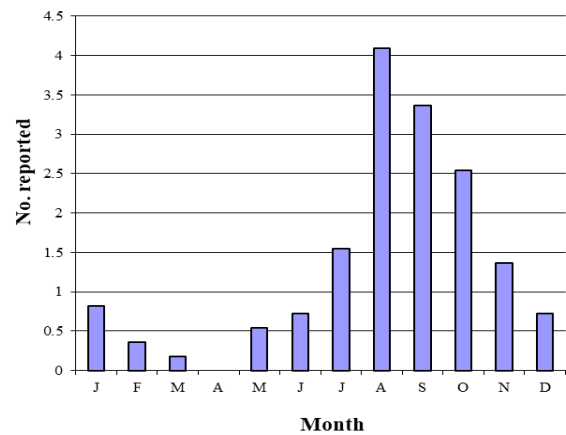


Figure 17. All leatherbacks average over 2014-2024

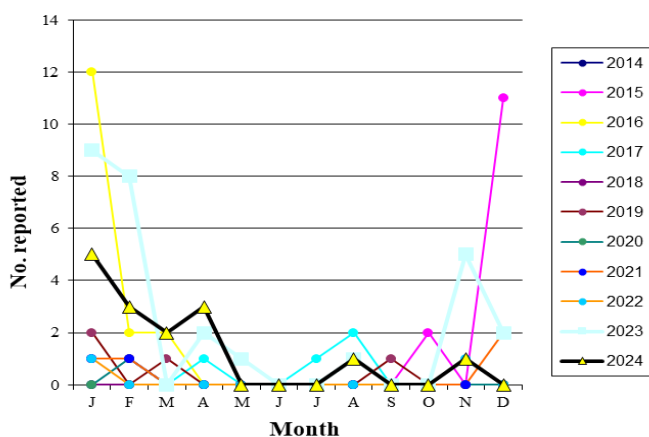


Figure 18. All loggerheads by month.

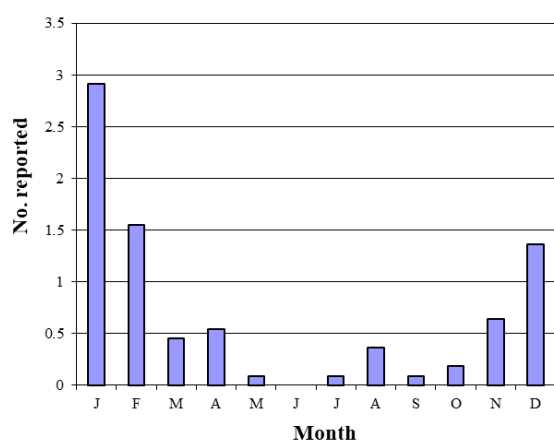


Figure 19. All loggerheads average over 2014-2024.

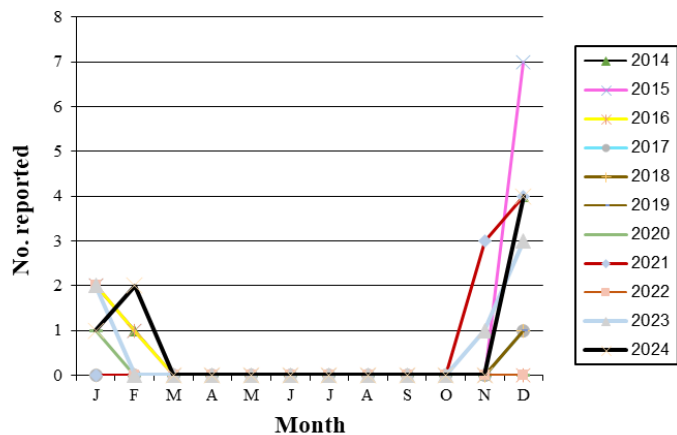


Figure 20. All Kemp's ridleys by month.

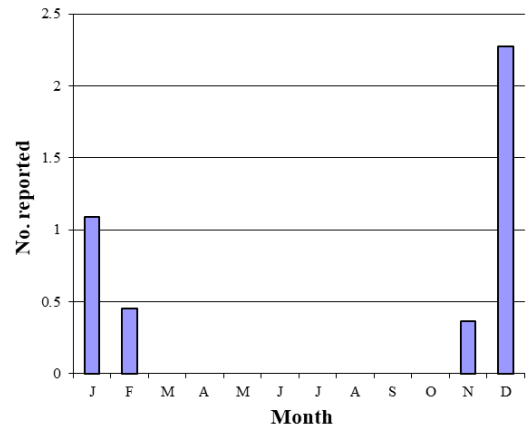


Figure 21. All Kemp's ridleys average 2014-2024.

Table 4.

Cumulative number of records in the TURTLE database.		
Country	All Species	
	2024	1748 - 2024
Rep. of Ireland	5	1377
England	15	745
Scotland	4	439
Wales	8	313
N. Ireland	0	41
Isle of Man	0	37
Channel Islands	2	21
Offshore	1	15
Total	35	2988

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 – 2024** column.

Table 5.

Species comparison from all TURTLE database records														
Country	2004 - 2014													
	2014 - 2024													
	GT		HB		KR		LBT		LOG		OR		UNI	
England	0	0	0	0	6	19	125	68	20	38	0	0	51	21
Scotland	1	1	0	0	4	9	67	36	19	9	0	0	10	0
Rep. of Ireland	1	2	0	0	2	4	155	45	22	22	0	0	15	2
Wales	0	4	0	0	6	13	80	35	15	15	0	1	11	1
Channel Islands	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	5	0	0	1	0
N. Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	2	1
Isle of Man	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	2	0	3	0	0	2	0
Offshore	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
Total	2	7	0	0	18	46	448	191	77	92	0	1	93	25

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.

TURTLE Database Species Totals (1748 - 2024).	
Species	TOTAL
Green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>)	17
Hawksbill turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	1
Kemp's ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>)	91
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	2166
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)	313
Olive ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>)	1
Unidentified	399
Total animals	2988

The total records held in TURTLE are 2988 (end of 2024). However, some historical records with inadequate year data have been excluded in this report and from being uploaded to the NBN Atlas.

A breakdown of records for each country is shown in **Table 4**. However, the eleven-year comparison, 2004-2014 / 2014-2024 shown in **Table 5**, shows a marked decline in leatherback turtles recorded for most countries, this decline of leatherback turtles is likely to be a reflection of reduced effort. The increase in Kemp’s ridley turtles is likely to be the result of successful management of the breeding beach in Mexico where eggs have been introduced to additional sites and the nests have been afforded greater protection.

5. MATTERS ARISING.

5.1 Retrospective Reports.

No retrospective reports were received during 2024.

6. LIVE STRANDING EVENTS 2024.

Nine turtles were reported as live-stranding in 2024, these consisted of 6 loggerheads, one Kemp's ridley turtle and 2 Green turtles, these are listed below;

T2024/01 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Barmouth, Gwynedd, Wales on the 1st January. The turtle was recovered to Bristol Aquarium where it unfortunately died.

T2024/03 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Tywyn, Gwynedd, Wales, on the 23rd January. The turtle was recovered to Bristol Aquarium where it unfortunately died.

T2024/06 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Barrow in Furness, Cumbria, England on the 4th of February. The turtle was recovered to Blackpool Sea Life Centre where it made a full recovery.

T2024/14 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Dungeness, Kent, England on the 8th of April. The turtle was found on the beach entangled in seaweed. Released back into the sea by the finder.

T2024/15 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Millendreath, Cornwall, England on the 9th April. The turtle was recovered to Blue Reef Aquarium, Newquay, Cornwall where it unfortunately died.

T2024/27 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Cleveleys, Lancashire, England on the 26th November. The turtle was recovered to Blackpool Sea Life Centre where it made a full recovery.

T2024/29 was a Kemp's ridley turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Westward Ho, Devon, England on the 23rd December. The turtle was recovered to Blue Reef Aquarium, Newquay, Cornwall where it unfortunately died.

T2024/30 was a Green turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Quilty beach, Clare, Ireland on the 24th December. The turtle was recovered to Dingle Aquarium where it made a full recovery.

T2024/34 was a Green turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Schull, Cork, Ireland on the 26th September. The turtle unfortunately died.

6.1 Rehabilitation

Of the nine 2024 live-strandings, three turtles, survived in rehabilitation.

T2024/06 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Barrow in Furness, Cumbria, England on the 4th of February. The turtle was recovered to Blackpool Sea Life Centre where it made a full recovery. The turtle was flown to the Azores for release by Sea Life Centres.

T2024/27 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Cleveleys, Lancashire, England on the 26th November. The turtle was recovered to Blackpool Sea Life Centre where it made a full recovery. The turtle is currently waiting to be released.

T2024/30 was a Green turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Quilty beach, Clare, Ireland on the 24th December. The turtle was recovered to Dingle Aquarium where it made a full recovery. The turtle is currently waiting to be released.

6.2 Repatriation.

Following the failed attempt to fly 5 loggerhead turtles to Gran Canaria on the 8th February 2024, turtles **T2023/03**, **T2023/06**, **T2023/11**, **T2023/12** and **T2023/32**. were returned back to their respective rehab facilities by Airpets Ltd who kindly assisted with specialised ground transportation.

With the help of UK Government departments Defra and AHPA and Spanish Authorities in Madrid a European Health Certificate (EHC) for reptiles was drawn up. This however required the monitoring of the turtles at each facility for a period of 21 days by an Official Vet (OV) who was trained in the relevant species before embarkation.

Finding an OV with the relevant qualifications close to each facility proved to be challenging. One OV was found in Cornwall who was happy to assist free of charge but finding an OV to monitor the turtle in North Wales was more difficult and only one could be found requiring a four figure fee to cover fees and travel costs. Unfortunately, during this time the OV in Cornwall moved on.

Although we believe all relevant documentation had been identified and generated to enable passage into the Spanish mainland and onward movement to the Canaries the cost of the OV's could not be met.



Plate 1. Volunteer Royal Navy crew undergoing turtle handling.

With the dismal thought of the healthy turtles facing further time in their facilities, discussions were instigated with the Royal Navy about the possibility of the turtles being released into warmer waters whilst a vessel was on passage to its patrol area. If the turtles could be released into the high seas this would negate the EHC and monitoring by OV's with associated fees. Encouragingly, the request was met with 'how can we look to do this' and discussions were continued concerning condition requirements whilst on-board and animal husbandry. Two of the Ship's staff volunteered to attend Blue Reef Aquarium in Cornwall for a one day crash course in looking after the turtles whilst they would be in their care. During this time a sixth loggerhead turtle was added to the list, **T2023/39**.

In September, we were informed that HMS Medway would be leaving the UK to resume its role in the Caribbean to be on station to offer humanitarian assistance during the hurricane season. Although the Caribbean would be an ideal final destination, it was agreed that this would be far too long a duration for the animals to spend in their individual transportation crates and the high seas around the Azores would be a suitable

release point ticking all the boxes for their habitat requirements. On the day of departure, the turtles were driven overnight by aquarium personnel from their holding facilities and loaded onto the ship where all 6 loggerheads were later successfully released on the 20th September 2024 near the Azores. We are extremely grateful for the assistance of the Senior Service.

Further information can be found here, [Royal Navy helps return rare turtles to their original habitat](#)

The loggerhead turtle **T2023/31** named Barnacle Bill (due to the mass of goose barnacles attached to its shell) that stranded on Guernsey 6th November 2023 was obviously undergoing the same problem with repatriation following Brexit. Arrangements were made to move the turtle to the UK mainland in readiness in case a further RN vessel became available.

We are extremely grateful to Brighton Sea Life Centre who provided their facilities in holding the turtle in the UK until a vessel becomes available. It is hoped that the loggerhead turtle **T2024/27** that was recovered to Blackpool Sea Life Centre will be fit enough to join Barnacle Bill on this release.

7. BYCATCH.

No reports of fishery interactions with marine turtles were received during 2024. However, a report of a leatherback turtle entangled in a sailing marker buoy rope off Tenby, Wales in August was received. The turtle freed itself and swam off when approached.

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, SMASS, Cornwall Marine Pathology Team or the Irish Strandings project.

Six turtles were recovered to the project in 2024 in a suitable condition to undergo a full post-mortem examination. These were 4 loggerheads and 2 Kemp's ridleys listed below.

T2024/01 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Barmouth, Gwynedd, Wales on the 1st January. The turtle was recovered to Bristol Aquarium where it unfortunately died. Cause of death was given as: Liver: Diffuse pallor (presume anaemia), Mucus membranes: Diffuse pallor (anaemia), Stomach: Foreign bodies with pyloric impaction.

T2024/03 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Tywyn, Gwynedd, Wales, on the 23rd January. The turtle was recovered to Bristol Aquarium where it unfortunately died. Cause of death was given as: Cold stunned.

T2024/05 was a loggerhead turtle found stranded dead at Pwllheli, Gwynedd, Wales 27th January. The carcass was collected for examination within the CSIP. Cause of death was given as: Pending examination.

T2024/15 was a loggerhead turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Millendreath, Cornwall, England on the 9th April. The turtle was recovered to Blue Reef Aquarium, Newquay, Cornwall where it unfortunately died. Cause of death was given as: Cold stunned.

T2024/28 was a Kemp's ridley turtle found stranded dead at Talacre beach, Gwynedd, Wales 13th December in a state of slight decomposition. Cause of death was given as: Pending examination.

T2024/29 was a Kemp's ridley turtle found alive, stranded cold-stunned at Westward Ho, Devon, England on the 23rd December. The turtle was recovered to Blue Reef Aquarium, Newquay, Cornwall where it unfortunately died. Cause of death was given as: Fungal pneumonia.

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 has now been transferred to this platform having been updated to the new validation process required for the NBN Atlas.

10. UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES.

Sea temperatures continue to be recorded at increased levels with 2024 recorded at 1.29 degrees C above the 20th-century average of NOAA's 1850-2024 climate record and although total recorded turtle sightings and stranding records were lower than last year for the UK & Ireland (47 in 2023, 35 in 2024), increased hardshell species were recorded in Norway, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands over 2024. All recorded turtles were loggerheads.

1 in Norway (dead).

4 in Denmark (1 dead, 2 euthanised and 1 status unknown).

2 in Germany (1 dead and 1 alive).

10 in the Netherlands (4 alive and 6 dead).

Previous records consisted of maybe 1 or 2 over a 5 year period.

(Mainland European Data courtesy of Mark de Boer pers comm. 15/02/2025).



Plate 2. T2024/06 *Found alive at Barrow-in-Furness.*

T2024/06 was a loggerhead turtle found live-stranded at Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, England on the 4th February. The turtle was covered in green weed and had a satellite tag attached to its carapace. Subsequent investigations on the tag found the turtle to have been released by La Rochelle Aquarium where it was found stranded on the on the French Atlantic coast on 12/04/2023.

It was released on the 08/06/2023, its tag ceased transmitting on the 02/12/2023 when it was between Ireland and the United Kingdom. The turtle was recovered to Blackpool Sea Life Centre then later to Scarborough Sea Life Centre. The turtle was finally flown to the Azores for release 15/09/2024 courtesy of Sea Life Centres.

This is not the first turtle to have stranded in the UK released from mainland Europe and further work is needed to see if there is a northerly current hugging the coast or if this is a result of the turtles actively swimming north.

11. PUBLICITY.

A dedicated web-site to bring all turtle related information concerning turtles in the UK & Ireland together with online reporting forms for both sightings and strandings has been constructed at www.ukturtles.online

The Strandings Web-site has been maintained to provide details of MEM and the CSIP. Key contact

details are given for England, Scotland and Ireland. The pages can be viewed at www.strandings.com/ Annual reports and other turtle related publications are available at <https://strandings.com/annual-reports/>

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

The NBN Atlas is now the preferred outlet for the TURTLE database.

12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

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Defra for providing funds for transportation of turtles for release into the wild.

13. APPENDICES.

- Appendix 1. 2024 TURTLE data.
- Appendix 2. UK Turtle Code.
- Appendix 3. Morphometrics.



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
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