



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES



## News Release

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10-82-SB

June 25, 2010

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CORRECTION:** If any other assistance is needed, such as sea turtles with serious cuts, ingested or deeply embedded hooks, or you observe a stranded sea turtle, or any other serious interaction between sea turtles and fishing gear, please contact the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies at 888-SOS-DOLPHIN (888-767-3657), **or call BP Deepwater Horizon Response at (866) 557-1401.**

### ***DMR Provides Urgent Information for Sea Turtle Encounters for Fishermen and Boaters***

BILOXI, Miss. – Due to an unusually high number of sea turtles in the Mississippi Sound this year, there is a greater chance of interaction between fishermen and sea turtles. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is taking a proactive approach to protect these threatened and endangered animals. Because all of the sea turtle species found in Mississippi waters are listed as threatened or endangered, it is important that these animals are returned to their natural environment with as little stress as possible. The attached information sheets are an aid in case such an encounter should occur. A PDF containing this information is available on the DMR Web site at [www.dmr.ms.gov](http://www.dmr.ms.gov). If a sea turtle encounters your fishing gear, use this information to guide you in disengaging the sea turtle from your fishing gear with as little harm and stress as possible.

If any other assistance is needed, such as sea turtles with serious cuts, ingested or deeply embedded hooks, or you observe a stranded sea turtle, or any other serious interaction between sea turtles and fishing gear, please contact the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies at 888-SOS-DOLPHIN (888-767-3657), **or call BP Deepwater Horizon Response at (866) 557-1401.**

Please review the attached information from NOAA Fisheries and keep this information on your boat or with your gear, should such an encounter occur. In addition to this news release, DMR is mailing turtle encounter information to Mississippi license holders.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at [www.dmr.ms.gov](http://www.dmr.ms.gov).

**ATTACHED:**

- Sheet 1: NOAA Sea Turtle Disentanglement Network
- Sheet 2: NOAA Sea Turtle Resuscitation
- Sheet 3: NOAA Turtle and Mammal Interaction Pamphlet

—END—

# Sea Turtle Resuscitation Guidelines

If a turtle appears to be unconscious or comatose, attempt to revive it before release. Turtles can withstand lengthy periods without breathing; a living comatose sea turtle may not move, breathe voluntarily, or show reflex responses or other signs of life. In other cases, a lightly comatose turtle may show shallow breathing or reflexes such as eyelid or tail movement when touched. Use the following method of resuscitation in the field if veterinary attention is not immediately available:

- Place the turtle on its plastron (lower shell) and elevate the hindquarters approximately 15 - 30 degrees to permit the lungs to drain off water for a period of 4 up to 24 hours. A board, tire or boat cushion, etc. can be used for elevation.
- Periodically, rock the turtle gently left to right and right to left by holding the outer edge of the carapace and lifting one side about 3 inches, then alternate to the other side.
- Keep the turtle in the shade, at a temperature similar to water temperature at capture. Keep the skin (especially the eyes) moist while the turtle is on deck by covering the animal's body with a wet towel, periodically spraying it with water, or by applying petroleum jelly to its skin and carapace. Do not put the turtle into a container with water.
- Do not put the turtle on its carapace (top shell) and pump the plastron (breastplate) or try to compress the turtle to force water out, as this is dangerous to the turtle and may do more harm than good.
- Periodically, gently touch the corner of the eye or eyelid, and pinch the tail near the vent and the front and rear flippers (reflex tests) to monitor consciousness. Conduct the reflex tests on both sides to check for bilateral response.
- Sea turtles may take some time to revive; do not give up too quickly. Turtles that are successfully resuscitated benefit from being held on deck as long as possible (up to 24 hours) to fully recover from the stress of accidental forced submergence.
- Release successfully resuscitated turtles over the stern of the boat, when fishing or scientific collection gear is not in use, the engine is in neutral, and in areas where they are unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels. A turtle that has shown no sign of life after 24 hours on deck may be considered dead and returned to the water in the same manner.



NMFS/SEFSC Photos



## References:

Federal Register, December 31, 2001. Government Printing Office, Washington DC 66 (250), pp. 67495- 67496.

July 2009

# SEA TURTLE DISENTANGLEMENT NETWORK



EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS – Please Call Immediately  
NOAA Fisheries Service Stranding HOTLINE: 978-281-9351  
PCCS (Mass. Only): 800-900-3622 or USCG VHF CH. 16



Sea turtles can become accidentally entangled in active or discarded fixed fishing gear and other man-made material. These entanglements may prevent the recovery of endangered and threatened sea turtle populations. NOAA Fisheries has established the Sea Turtle Disentanglement Network to promote reporting and increase successful disentanglement of sea turtles. Please report all sea turtle entanglements and disentanglements, including documentation, to the contact numbers listed above.

## How to Approach an Entangled Sea Turtle:

- Look for moving or unusually clumped buoys and lines near the turtle.
- Approach turtle slowly and carefully until vessel is alongside, then stop the vessel.
- If possible, record lat/lon and time at turtle's initial location.

## How to Assess and Document the Entanglement:

- Is the turtle moving, attempting to swim away from the vessel or diving?
- How is the turtle entangled: flippers (front right, front left, etc.), head, shell?
- Are there single or multiple wraps of line on the turtle?
- Are the wraps restricting the turtle's movement or cutting into the skin?
- Is the turtle bleeding?
- Are there any other new or old injuries (such as propeller wounds)?



Leatherback Photos: Don Lewis



Loggerhead Photo: Thomas Dellinger / University of Madeira, Portugal

## How to Disentangle:

- Do not get into the water with the turtle or bring it aboard. Work from the vessel with the turtle in the water.
- Determine which line is under strain from anchoring or drifting gear.
- Grapple the anchoring line and maintain a firm hold to keep turtle close to the vessel without lifting the turtle above the water. To avoid losing the turtle before completely disentangled, **do not release or cut this line before trying to remove all other gear.**
- Try to unravel the gear from the turtle without cutting. Be careful around powerful flippers, jaws, and claws.
- If the gear cannot be removed by unraveling and the turtle is at risk of strangulation, drowning or further injury, try to cut the line.
- Avoid cutting turtle by pulling line away from the turtle with a boat hook before cutting.
- If gear must be cut, tie it off to the boat or existing gear to avoid losing the gear. Save all cut off/removed gear for analysis ashore (see *Documentation*).
- If you cannot free the turtle of **ALL** gear, report the last known location, area landmarks, wind and current speed and direction, and any identifying characteristics about the turtle or gear. Report this information to the red contact numbers above or VHF Ch. 16.

## How to Release:

- Leave engines in neutral and release the turtle from the last line (the anchoring line).
- Record the lat/lon and time of release.
- Ensure that the turtle is safely away from the vessel before starting the engines.
- Observe turtle behavior after release. Did it dive and/or swim away or did it remain relatively immobile at the surface?

## Documentation:

- Log critical information (time, location, sea turtle description, signs of injury, behavior) when you encounter an entangled sea turtle.
- Log information about gear (line type, color and diameter, buoy/float type and color, buoy/pot ID#s), and final location of gear (brought ashore, left at site, etc.). Photograph/video the gear and sea turtle if possible.
- Reports and documentation (time, location, description, photos, video) of dead or injured sea turtles are also important.
- Report logged information to the red contact numbers at top of this card. Send photos, video and any removed gear to:

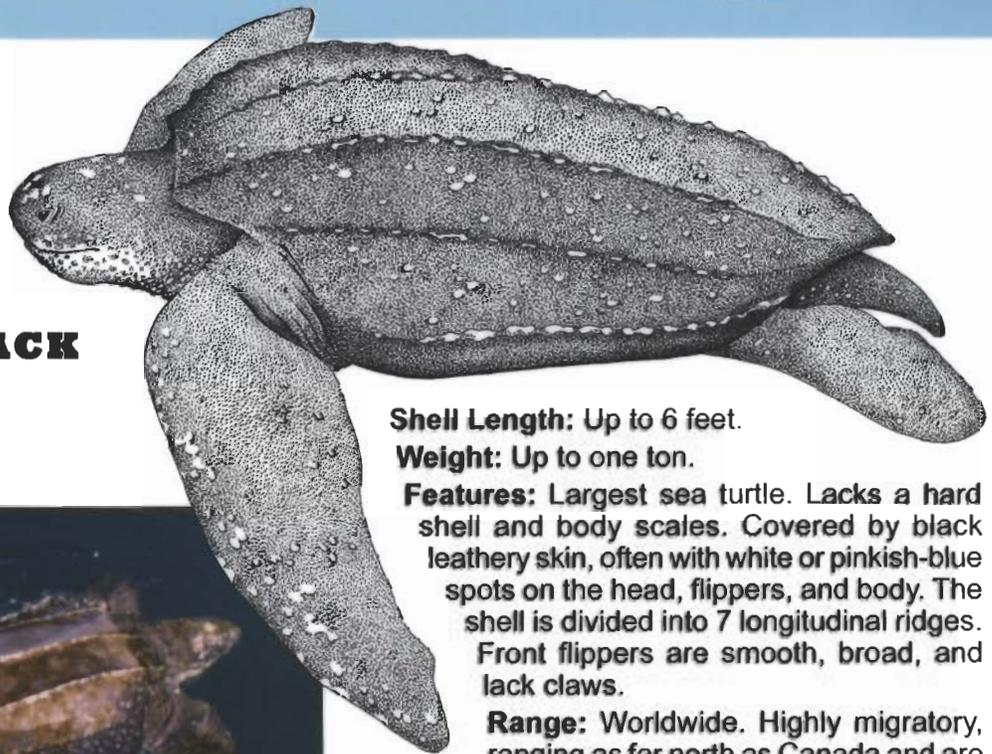
**NOAA Fisheries Protected Resources Division**  
One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

# SEA TURTLES YOU MAY ENCOUNTER

## LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE



Photo: Nova Scotia Leatherback Turtle Working Group



**Shell Length:** Up to 6 feet.

**Weight:** Up to one ton.

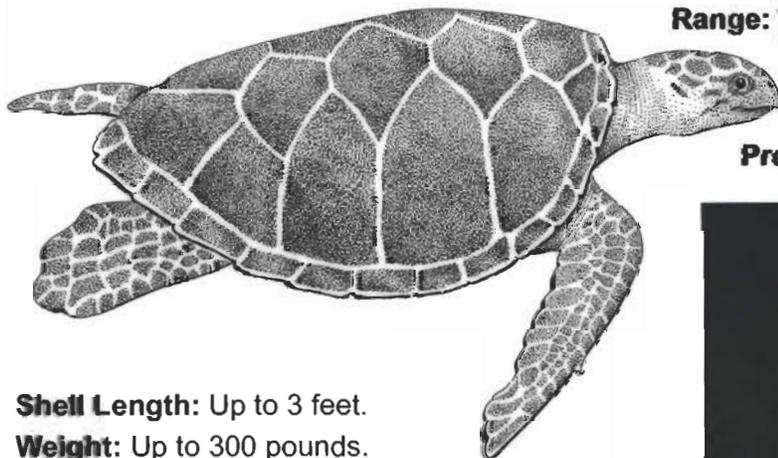
**Features:** Largest sea turtle. Lacks a hard shell and body scales. Covered by black leathery skin, often with white or pinkish-blue spots on the head, flippers, and body. The shell is divided into 7 longitudinal ridges. Front flippers are smooth, broad, and lack claws.

**Range:** Worldwide. Highly migratory, ranging as far north as Canada and are most commonly seen in northeastern waters June - November. Migrates south in winter.

**Prey:** Primarily jellyfish.

Illustrations: Linda Bound / International Wildlife Coalition

## LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE



**Shell Length:** Up to 3 feet.

**Weight:** Up to 300 pounds.

**Features:** Shell is hard and covered with plates. Head large and broad with powerful jaws for crushing prey. Front flippers are covered in scales, with two claws on each flipper. Shell

and head yellow-orange to reddish brown, often covered by barnacles.

**Range:** Worldwide. Ranging as far north as the Gulf of Maine and most commonly seen in northeast waters May - November. Migrates south in winter.

**Prey:** Crustaceans, molluscs.



Photo: J Wyneken

## Contact Information

To report stranded, injured or entangled seals, dolphins, or sea turtles call NOAA Fisheries Service's Stranding Hotline at 978-281-9351 or the closest stranding network member (see list below).

To report entangled large whales (entire East coast) & sea turtles (MA only): 800-900-3622

## Stranding Network Organizations

### MAINE

(Rockland, north)

Allied Whale, College of the Atlantic  
207-288-5644

(Rockland, south)

ME Dept. of Marine Resources, Marine Animal Reporting Hotline:  
800-532-9551

Univ. of New England, Marine Animal Rehab Center  
207-915-0169 (pager)

### NEW HAMPSHIRE & MASSACHUSETTS

New England Aquarium Hotline  
617-973-5247

### MASSACHUSETTS

(Boston, north)

Whale Center of New England  
978-281-6351

(Boston, south)

Cape Cod Stranding Network (marine mammals)  
508-743-9548

National Marine Life Center  
508-743-9888

Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (sea turtles)  
508-349-2615

### RHODE ISLAND & CONNECTICUT

Mystic Aquarium Marine Mammal & Sea Turtle Stranding Program  
860-572-5955

### NEW YORK

Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation  
631-369-9829

### NEW JERSEY

Marine Mammal Stranding Center  
609-266-0538

### DELAWARE

MERR Institute  
302-228-5029

### MARYLAND

National Aquarium in Baltimore, Marine Animal Rescue Program  
410-576-1098

MD Department of Natural Resources Stranding Program  
800-628-9944

### WASHINGTON, DC

Smithsonian Institute, National Museum of Natural History  
202-633-1260

### VIRGINIA

Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program  
757-437-6159

Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Sea Turtle Stranding & Research Program  
(sea turtles) 866-493-1085



# NORTHEAST MARINE MAMMAL & SEA TURTLE PROTECTION GUIDELINES FOR RECREATIONAL BOATERS & FISHERMEN



P. Bennett/U. Keuper-Bennett



Whale Center of New England/Stellwagen Bank NMS



NOAA

NOAA Science | Service | Stewardship

## WHY SHOULD YOU PROTECT MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES?

Marine mammals are an important part of the marine ecosystem. Some species are classified as endangered, threatened or depleted. Of particular concern in the Northeast region are the right, humpback, fin, and minke whales, as well as harbor porpoises and bottlenose dolphins.

Sea turtles have existed for over 180 million years and play an important role in the ecosystem. All species of sea turtles are either endangered or threatened. Kemp's ridley, loggerhead, green, leatherback, and hawksbill sea turtles are found in the Northeast region.

## HOW CAN FEEDING AFFECT MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES?

- Feeding marine mammals is harmful and illegal under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).
- Feeding sea turtles is harmful and may be considered a "take" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).
- Feeding encourages marine mammals and sea turtles to approach boats and fishing piers for handouts. This can result in entanglement in gear and/or injury from boat collisions.
- Marine mammals and sea turtles fed by humans may lose their natural predatory instincts and can become ill from spoiled chum, bait or from eating other inappropriate foods.
- Feeding can result in ingestion of foreign objects and debris, such as plastics or hooks.



Joe Flanagan, Houston Zoo, Inc.

## ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) and its regulations prohibit the "take" of endangered or threatened sea turtles or marine mammals in U.S. waters and on the high seas. **Take** is defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect." **Harm** is further defined as any act that actually kills or injures fish or wildlife. This can include the destruction/modification of habitat that significantly impairs breeding, spawning, migrating, feeding, or sheltering which ultimately results in death of an animal.

Violating the ESA may result in civil penalties up to \$25,000 or criminal penalties up to \$50,000 plus imprisonment and/or seizure of vessel and other personal property.



To report potential  
ESA or MMPA  
violations, contact  
NOAA's Office of Law  
Enforcement:  
800-853-1964



Art S. Friedlaender

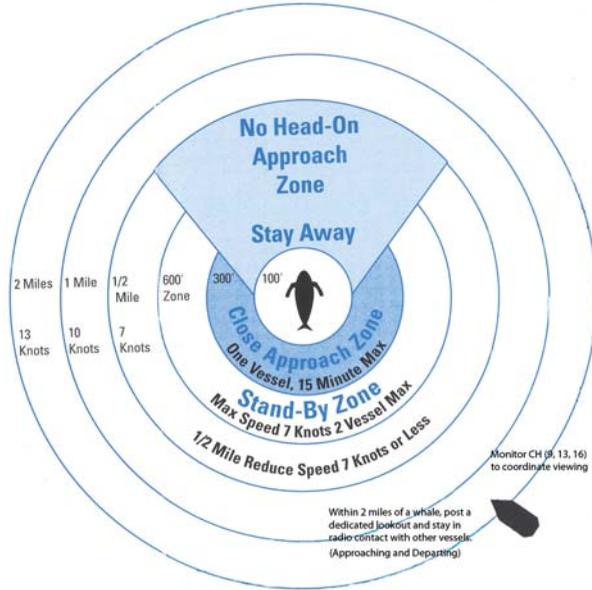
## MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) prohibits the "take" of any marine mammal (whale, dolphin, seal, sea lion, manatee, polar bear, or sea otter) in U.S. waters. **Take** is defined as "to harass, hunt, capture, kill, or feed any marine mammal." **Harassment** includes any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which has the potential to injure or disturb a marine mammal by interrupting/changing behavioral patterns such as migration, breathing, nursing, and feeding.

Violating the MMPA may result in civil penalties of up to \$10,000 or criminal penalties of up to \$10,000 or criminal penalties of up to \$20,000 plus imprisonment and/or seizure of vessel and other personal property.

## MINIMUM APPROACH DISTANCES FOR MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES

- Sea turtles: **50 yards (150 ft)**
- Dolphins, porpoises, & seals: **50 yards (150 ft)**
- North Atlantic right whales: **\*500 yards (1500 ft)\***
- Other large whales: **See diagram below for Northeast whale watching guidelines.**



**\* Federal & state regulations prohibit approaching a North Atlantic right whale within a 500 yard buffer zone.\***



NOAA

To request more information on protected species approach limits in the Northeast, call 978-281-9300 x 6505.

## HOW CAN FISHING LINE AFFECT MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES?

- MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES CAN BECOME ENTANGLED IN FISHING LINE.
- Sea turtles & some marine mammals may try to eat baited hooks which may result in serious injuries.
- Marine mammals & sea turtles may be attracted to bait in trap/pot gear and can be caught in the traps or associated lines.
- Getting line wrapped around a flipper of a marine mammal or sea turtle can result in loss of the flipper, or death from infection &/or weakened health state.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HOOK OR ENTANGLE A SEA TURTLE?

**FOR ALL INTERACTIONS:** contact your local stranding network organization (see back panel) or call the U.S.C.G. via VHF Channel 16.



VA Aquarium Stranding Response Program

### For Hooked Turtles:

- **DO NOT attempt to remove the hook unless the turtle is ONLY lightly hooked and the hook can be removed without inflicting further injury. If uncertain, DO NOT attempt to remove the hook.**
- Gently bring turtle close to you, use dip net or firmly hold front flippers and shell to safely lift the turtle out of the water. **DO NOT pull the fishing line in order to lift turtle out of the water- this will result in further injury.**
- If onshore, or close to land, do not release turtle.
- If offshore and hook is unable to be removed safely, cut the line close to the hook & remove any additional line that has become entangled around the turtle.
- If turtle is too far away or if the turtle is too large, cut the line as short as possible to release turtle.
- To release the turtle, disengage boat engine and release turtle on the side furthest from the engine.

### For Entangled Turtles:

- Call your local stranding network organization, or U.S.C.G via CH-16, for guidance and information from trained disentanglement responders.

**TURTLES WITH SERIOUS CUTS OR INGESTED/DEEPLY EMBEDDED HOOKS NEED VETERINARY CARE. KEEP THE TURTLE IN THE SHADE AND DO NOT TRANSPORT. IMMEDIATELY CALL YOUR LOCAL STRANDING NETWORK ORGANIZATION.**

## MORE TIPS TO HELP YOU PROTECT MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES

- ALWAYS keep your distance from marine mammals & sea turtles.
- NEVER abandon fishing gear.
- Dispose of trash and fishing gear properly.
- **Throwing plastic into the ocean is illegal.**
- Recycle your monofilament line.
- DO NOT chum or throw fish overboard when marine mammals or sea turtles are near.
- Watch your bait/lines at all times; if you can see marine mammals or sea turtles close to your gear, or if they approach your gear, remove the gear from the water.
- **It is illegal to tamper with fishing gear.** NEVER tie -off to fixed gear (buoys or high flyers) since commercial gear is designed with reduced breaking strength to reduce potential large whale entanglements.
- DO NOT wet store your trap/pot gear.
- ALWAYS retrieve your mooring system (anchor and ball) before returning to port.



Whale Center of New England/Stellwagen Bank NMS



Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies

- NEVER cast your line, set your gear near, or troll your gear over marine mammals or sea turtles
- DO NOT use floating buoy line at the surface.
- Maintain knot-free buoy lines
- DO NOT use balloons while fishing; use reusable floats.
- NEVER entrap, encircle or chase marine mammals or sea turtles.
- When in the presence of a marine mammal, place engine in neutral and allow animal to pass.
- When in the presence of sea turtles, slow down and steer away from their direction of travel.
- Wearing polarized sunglasses can help you to better see marine mammals and sea turtles in the water.
- Approach areas of surface fish activity cautiously- marine mammals might be present.
- Abide by any commercial fishing regulations to protect marine mammals and sea turtles.

### REMINDER:

CHARTER VESSELS are considered commercial fishing vessels under the MMPA and therefore must report all incidental injuries or mortalities to marine mammals that occur during fishing activities to NOAA Fisheries Service.

For information on marine mammal & sea turtle regulations or to request injury/mortality reporting forms, call 978-281-9300 x 6505.