Sea Turtles of the Americas

**Identification Key**

- Flexible carapace with
  - 5 distinct ridges
  - no scutes
- Bony carapace (shell) with
  - no continuous ridges
  - large scutes (shell plates)

4 pair lateral scutes (shown shaded)

- Carapace strongly tapered
  - Carapace leathery, flexible
  - Color dark gray or black with
    - white or pale spots
  - Jaw deeply notched
  - To 500 kg, "shell" to 180 cm

**Leatherback turtle, Trunk turtle**
(*Dermochelys coriacea*)

- Carapace longer than wide
  - 3 bridge scutes
  - No pores in bridge scutes
  - Head broad (to 25 cm)
  - Color red-brown to brown
  - To 200 kg, shell to 120 cm

**Loggerhead turtle**
(*Caretta caretta*)

- Carapace very round
  - 4 bridge scutes with pores
  - Very rarely south of 16° N
  - Juvenile color charcoal gray
  - Adult color dark gray-green
  - To 45 kg, shell to 70 cm

**Kemp's Ridley turtle**
(*Lepidochelys kempii*)

- Carapace nearly circular
  - 4 bridge scutes with pores
  - Very rarely north of 13° N
  - Juvenile color charcoal gray
  - Adult color dark gray-green
  - To 45 kg, shell to 70 cm

**Olive Ridley turtle**
(*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

- Prefrontal scales
  - 2 pair prefrontal scales
    - Overlapping shell scutes
    - Pointed face, distinct over-bite
    - Juvenile color and pattern variable
    - Adult color orange, brown, yellow
    - To 85 kg, shell to 95 cm
- Prefrontal scales
  - 1 pair prefrontal scales
    - No overlapping shell scutes
    - Round face, serrated jaw
    - Juvenile color and pattern variable
    - Adult color dark gray green
    - To 230 kg, shell to 125 cm

**Hawksbill turtle**
(*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

**Green turtle**
(*Chelonia mydas*)

**Underside**

Photos: Scott A. Eckert (loggerhead, olive ridley) and others by Peter C. H. Pritchard.