

Leatherback Sea Turtle

Dermochelys coriacea



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Species Description

The Leatherback Sea Turtle is a large marine reptile that can be over 2 m long and weigh as much as 900 kg! It has a teardrop-shaped upper shell that tapers to a point near the tail. There are seven ridges (or keels) running the length of the upper shell, which is covered with the leathery skin that gives the turtle its name. The skin is bluish-black with scattered white blotches. The leatherback's front flippers are very long. Each turtle has a unique pink spot on the top of its head.



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Key ID Features: * large size * blueish-black leathery teardrop shaped upper shell

STATUS



Endangered COSEWIC

Endangered SARA

Highly migratory, precise navigators. They are usually observed in Atlantic Canadian waters from May to December. They travel south to the waters off the United States, and South and Central America to lay their eggs on sandy beaches.

Population Range



Interesting Points

- The largest of 7 marine turtles and the deepest divers, with dives greater than a kilometre.
- Waters off Atlantic Canada are one of the most important feeding areas in the world.

Threats

- Threats in Canadian waters:
- Drowning in fishing gear.
- Ingestion of marine debris such as plastic bags that resemble jellyfish.
- Collision with vessels.
- Oil and gas exploration and development.

Learn how you can help on page 136.



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Over 500 fishermen report sightings and work to carefully disentangle turtles caught in fishing gear.

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: DFO Species at Risk 1-866-891-0771 or xmarsara@mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Info: www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes, www.sararegistry.gc.ca

Sighting Reports & Stewardship: Canadian Sea Turtle Network www.seaturtle.ca