

## Loggerhead Sea Turtle

**Description:** The Loggerhead Sea Turtle is named for its large head and blunt jaw. This huge sea turtle can grow to 800 pounds (though the average turtle is about 200 pounds) and three and a half feet in length. It is the largest hard-shelled turtle in the world. The carapace (shell) and flippers are reddish brown and the plastron (lower shell) is yellowish. The carapace has five lateral scutes and five central scutes. Scutes are hexagonal sections of the carapace. Underparts are white or whitish. These incredible turtles have powerful flippers that can propel them through the water at speeds of up to 16 miles per hour. The Loggerhead Sea Turtle has a life span of up to 50 years in the wild.

**Habitat/Range:** The seafaring Loggerhead Sea Turtle is found throughout the world's tropical oceans. They are also found in temperate waters in search of food and in migration. Breeding populations exist in many locales including the Atlantic coast of the United States (from North Carolina to Florida), numerous Caribbean islands, Central America, the Mediterranean Sea, and Africa.

**Diet:** Loggerhead Sea Turtles consume fish, crustaceans, mollusks, crabs, and jellyfish. They use their powerful jaws to crush prey. These turtles often ingest stray plastic bags which are mistaken for jellyfish and which cause potentially fatal complications.

**Nesting:** The Female Loggerhead Sea Turtle normally lays her eggs on the same beach in which she was born. It may take up to 30 years before these turtles reach reproductive age. In June or July, females will emerge from the ocean and dig a hole in the sand. Between 70 and 150 eggs are deposited in the hole. The female uses her hind flippers to cover the hole. The eggs are about the size of ping pong balls. Eggs hatch within 65 days. Young turtles instinctively head toward the ocean upon hatching (which reflects the moonlight). Many of these young turtles are taken as prey by opportunistic gulls, vultures, and raccoons. Others are led in the wrong direction by lights from roads and beach houses which the turtles mistake as moonlight. Those that are fortunate enough to make it to the water are swept toward the open ocean by waves and sea currents.

**1.) Why is this species named Loggerhead Sea Turtle?**

- A. It has a large head.
- B. It rests its head on logs.
- C. It hunts on logs.
- D. No one knows.

**2.) What shape are scutes?**

- A. Square
- B. Hexagonal
- C. Diamond
- D. Octagonal

**3.) Which of the following is not part of the turtle's shell?**

- A. Scute
- B. Plastron
- C. Tail
- D. Carapace

**4.) Which of the following is NOT true?**

- A. Loggerhead Sea Turtles can live 50 years.
- B. Loggerhead Sea Turtles are negatively affected by trash that makes its way into the sea.
- C. Baby Loggerhead Sea Turtle, by instinct, stray away from light when they hatch.
- D. There are no hard-shelled turtles larger than the Loggerhead Sea Turtle.

**5.) Loggerhead Sea Turtles DO NOT eat...**

- A. Dolphins
- B. Jellyfish
- C. Mollusks
- D. Crabs

**6.) Where would you most likely NOT see a Loggerhead Sea Turtle?**

- A. Off the coast of Africa.
- B. In Lake Michigan
- C. The Caribbean Sea
- D. In the ocean near South Carolina.

**7.) Where do female Loggerhead Sea Turtles lay eggs?**

- A. On the beach of their birth.
- B. On gravel surfaces away from the beach.
- C. On any beach that does not have people.
- D. At the bottom of the ocean.

**8.) What does the word "fatal" mean in the following sentence?**

These turtles often ingest stray plastic bags which are mistaken for jellyfish and which cause potentially fatal complications.

- A. Confusing
- B. Painful
- C. Annoying
- D. Deadly

**What does the word "emerge" mean in the following sentence?**

In June or July, females will emerge from the ocean and dig a hole in the sand. Between 70 and 150 eggs are deposited in the hole.

- A. Swim away from
- B. Come from
- C. Return to
- D. Give birth to

**10.) Which is not true about Loggerhead Sea Turtle eggs?**

- A. They hatch within 65 days.
- B. They are poisonous to predators.
- C. They are laid in the sand.
- D. They are shaped like ping pong balls.