

# Scute Over—I know you!

**Audience:** 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade

**Duration:** 15-20 minutes

**STEM Process Skills:** Observation

**Learning Objectives/Goals:**

The student will be able to identify sea turtle species based upon their carapace scute counts and descriptions.

**TEKS:** Science 4.10A, 5.10A

**Ocean Literacy Principles:** 5, 6

**Vocabulary:** carapace, plastron, scute

**Description:** This activity teaches students to identify sea turtles based on physical description and scute count.

**Materials:** One copy of background information and student data sheet per student.

**Procedure:** Students should use the information below to identify the sea turtle photos.

**Background**

**Green turtle** -The green turtle receives its common name from the green layer of fat under its shell. This turtle has a heart-shaped carapace with four scutes in the two outside rows and five scutes in the middle row. Green turtles have more rounded heads than the other turtle species and feed on seagrass.

**Hawksbill**- The hawksbill turtle is named for its beak-like upper jaw that resembles the bill of a hawk, which it uses to feed on sponges in crevices. Known for its beautiful shell, which has four rows of scutes in the two outside rows and five scutes in the middle row, it was once hunted for the tortoiseshell trade.

**Kemp's ridley**- The Kemp's ridley is the smallest of the sea turtles with a nearly round carapace which has three rows of five scutes each. Kemp's ridley turtles range throughout the Gulf of Mexico and feed on crabs and other benthic organisms.

**Leatherback**- The leatherback is the largest of the sea turtles, reaching a carapace length of up to six feet. It is named for its leathery, torpedo-shaped carapace with five distinctive ridges running lengthwise. The adult carapace is black with white flecks. Because the leatherback feeds on jellyfish, it is particularly vulnerable to ingesting plastic and other materials resembling food.

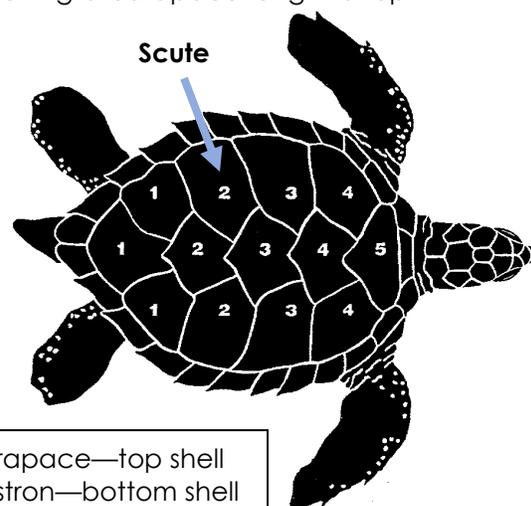
**Loggerhead** - The loggerhead is the most common sea turtle species and is named for its large head. It has an oval carapace with three rows of five scutes each. Their shells are commonly encrusted with organisms such as slipper shells, tube worms, and barnacles.

**Resources:**

[https://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/turtles/STSSN\\_formback.pdf](https://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/turtles/STSSN_formback.pdf)

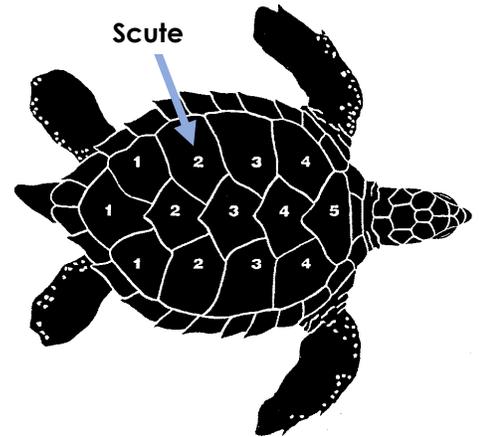
[www.seaturtle.org](http://www.seaturtle.org)

[www.arkive.org](http://www.arkive.org)





Does the sea turtle have scutes?



Turtle does not have scutes: Leatherback

Turtle has scutes

Turtle has 4 scutes on the outside rows

Turtle has 5 scutes on the outside rows

Turtle has a rounded face: Green

Turtle has a hawk-like beak: Hawksbill

Turtle has a rounder shell and smaller head: Kemp's ridley

Turtle has a more oval shell and larger head: Loggerhead

Use the turtle descriptions and chart to identify the four types of sea turtles below.



1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_

