

# SPECIES QUICK FACT SHEET

## LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE



**Common Name:** Loggerhead - named for its exceptionally large head.

**Scientific Name:** *Caretta caretta*

**Description:** Head is very large with heavy strong jaws. Carapace is bony without ridges and has large, non-overlapping, rough scutes (scales) present with 5 lateral scute. Carapace is heart shaped. Front flippers are short and thick with 2 claws, while the rear flippers can have 2 or 3 claws. Carapace is a reddish-brown with a yellowish-brown plastron. Hatchlings have a dark-brown carapace with flippers pale brown on margins.

**Size:** Typically 2.5 to 3.5 feet in carapace length (73-107 cm).

**Weight:** Adults weigh up to 350 pounds (159 kg).

**Diet:** Primarily carnivorous and feed mostly on shellfish that live on the bottom of the ocean. They eat horseshoe crabs, clams, mussels, and other invertebrates. Their powerful jaw muscles help them to easily crush the shellfish.

**Habitat:** Prefer to feed in coastal bays and estuaries, as well as in the shallow water along the continental shelves of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.

**Nesting:** Nest at intervals of 2, 3, or more years. They lay 4 to 7 nests per season, approximately 12 to 14 days apart. Lays an average of 100 to 126 eggs per nest. Eggs incubate for about 60 days.

**Range:** Found in all temperate and tropical waters throughout the world.

**Status:** *U.S.* - Listed as Threatened (likely to become endangered, in danger of extinction, within the foreseeable future). *International* - Listed as Endangered (facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future).

**Threats to Survival:** The greatest threat is loss of nesting habitat due to coastal development, predation of nests, and human disturbances (such as coastal lighting and housing developments) that cause disorientations during the emergence of hatchlings. Other major threats include incidental capture in longline fishing, shrimp trawling and pollution. Incidental capture in fisheries is thought to have played a significant role in the recent population declines observed for the loggerhead.

**Population Estimate:** 44,560 nesting females (based on monitoring reports and publications from 2004.)