Wild About TURTLES

Protecting wild turtles and preserving their habitat is vital. Often you see turtles enjoying the sun or water. Don’t touch them. They may be carrying parasites or disease. Never pick up nesting turtles. Many will run back into the water and continue laying eggs. When coming near a nesting area, do not approach more than 100 feet from the nest. If you see a turtle in the road, simply slow your speed and drive wide of the turtle. Then be diligent in scanning the road for any other turtles that may not have been seen. If you come upon a turtle while riding a bike, simply ride slowly around it and take the extra time to scan the road for other turtles. Turtles have been known to follow cyclists for miles! Be respectful by keeping your distance and using binoculars to avoid frightening them.

Canary Island Turtle, Chelonia mydas
Identification: 3.5-4.5 ft. Sexual dimorphism is absent. The male has a larger shell. Dark smooth carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is jaw, the rear edge of the carapace is serrated. This is the only seaturtle that commonly nests near the equator. It is a herbivore.

Loggerhead Sea Turtle, Caretta caretta
Identification: 3-4 ft. Sexual dimorphism is absent. The male has a larger shell. Large smooth carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is sharp. This is the most numerous and widely distributed sea turtle species. It is a carnivore. The diet is comprised of a variety of aquatic organisms, including fish, squid, and crustaceans. This species is found in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. It is often observed around the Bahamas and Florida Keys.

Hawksbill Turtle, Eretmochelys imbricata
Identification: 1.5-2.5 ft. Sexual dimorphism is absent. The male has a larger shell. Medium-sized smooth carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is sharp. This species is found in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. It is often observed in areas with shallow water and coral reefs. The diet consists of sea sponges, tunicates, and jellyfish. This species is known for its distinct scalloped edges on the carapace.

Green Sea Turtle, Chelonia mydas
Identification: 5-7 ft. Sexual dimorphism is present. The male has a larger shell. Green carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is sharp. This species is found in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. It is often observed in areas with shallow water and coral reefs. The diet consists of sea grasses, sponges, and jellyfish. This species is the largest of the sea turtles and is listed as endangered.

Kemp’s Ridley Sea Turtle, Lepidochelys kempii
Identification: 2-3 ft. Sexual dimorphism is present. The male has a larger shell. Black smooth carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is sharp. This species is found in the Atlantic Ocean. It is often observed in areas with shallow water and coral reefs. The diet consists of sea grasses and sponges. This species is listed as critically endangered.

Loggerhead Sea Turtle, Caretta caretta
Identification: 4-5 ft. Sexual dimorphism is absent. The male has a larger shell. Large smooth carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is sharp. This is the most numerous and widely distributed sea turtle species. It is a carnivore. The diet is comprised of a variety of aquatic organisms, including fish, squid, and crustaceans. This species is found in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. It is often observed around the Bahamas and Florida Keys.

Hawksbill Turtle, Eretmochelys imbricata
Identification: 1.5-2.5 ft. Sexual dimorphism is absent. The male has a larger shell. Medium-sized smooth carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is sharp. This species is found in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. It is often observed in areas with shallow water and coral reefs. The diet consists of sea sponges, tunicates, and jellyfish. This species is known for its distinct scalloped edges on the carapace.

Green Sea Turtle, Chelonia mydas
Identification: 5-7 ft. Sexual dimorphism is present. The male has a larger shell. Green carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is sharp. This species is found in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. It is often observed in areas with shallow water and coral reefs. The diet consists of sea grasses, sponges, and jellyfish. This species is the largest of the sea turtles and is listed as endangered.

Kemp’s Ridley Sea Turtle, Lepidochelys kempii
Identification: 2-3 ft. Sexual dimorphism is present. The male has a larger shell. Black smooth carapace. The head is wide but tapers to a point. The beak is sharp. This species is found in the Atlantic Ocean. It is often observed in areas with shallow water and coral reefs. The diet consists of sea grasses and sponges. This species is listed as critically endangered.