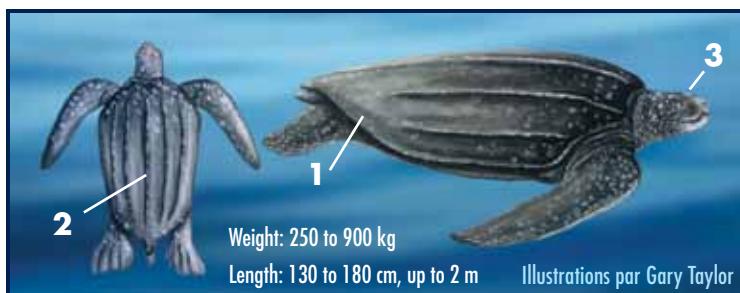


LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE *An Endangered Species. Tips for Handling and Releasing.*

Leatherback Sea Turtles can become accidentally entangled in fishing gear and other materials in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence during summer and fall, while visiting our waters to feed on jellyfish. These entanglements may prevent the recovery of this species designated endangered under Canada's *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*.



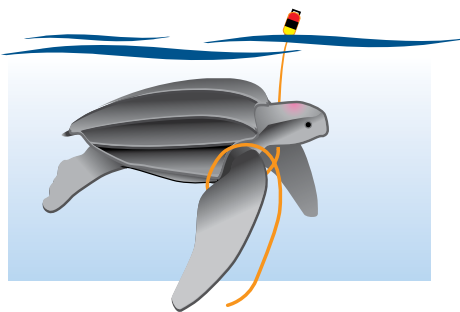
Description

- 1** - Rather than a hard shell, its back is covered with a thick cartilage covered with a tough skin similar to leather
- 2** - Five dorsal ridges on its back
 - Often seen swimming at the surface to feed on jellyfish
 - Can swim as fast as 25 km/hr and dive up to 1,300 m deep
- 3** - Has a pink spot on top of its head

Once entangled, turtles may drown before help arrives, being unable to come to the surface to breathe. Although turtles often appear healthy at the time of release, injuries sustained during entanglement can result in flipper loss and/or harmful infections. The proper handling and release of entangled Leatherback Turtles can improve their chances of survival. This fact sheet includes tips on how to disentangle these large sea turtles safely and to help increase successful disentanglement. It is difficult to free a turtle that is entangled without harming the turtle; however, every effort should be made to release the turtle with minimal injury and minimal remaining gear.

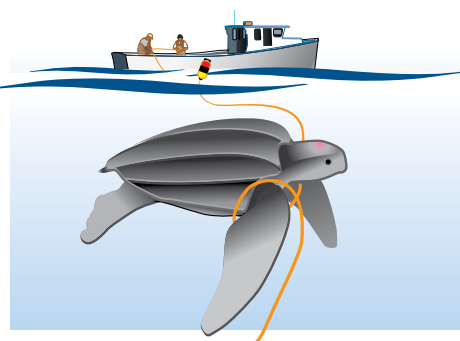
Step 1: Safety First

- Use caution at all times; Leatherbacks are heavy, large and very powerful – they are strong enough to pull a fishing boat;
- Leatherbacks can only swim forward; the turtle's reflex is to twist itself into the rope when it gets caught – be prepared for this reaction.



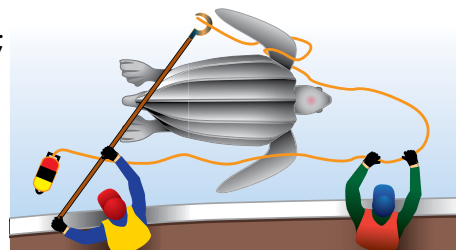
Step 2: Assess the Situation

- Carefully assess how the turtle is entangled by slowly approaching it. Once the turtle is alongside, place the motor in neutral.
- See if flippers, neck or shell are entangled;
- Assess if the rope is wrapped once or multiple times, the turtle's condition and size.



Step 3: How to Disentangle

- Do not jump in the water or try to bring the turtle aboard;
- Stay clear of the turtle's strong flippers;
- With at least two people, grapple the anchoring line and bring the turtle as close to the side of the boat as possible. Hold the anchoring line firmly to keep the turtle close to the boat;
- Do not use hooks or sharp objects in direct contact with the turtle to retrieve or control it, although a gaff may be used to control the line;
- Do not tow the turtle;
- Let the turtle calm down (this may take several minutes) while ensuring the turtle can breathe;
- First try to unwind the line without cutting it; if you have to cut the line, use a gaff to pull the line away to avoid cutting the turtle;
- Before releasing or cutting the anchoring line, remove all gear (ropes, other materials) from the animal as quickly as possible before it swims away;
- Note the turtle's behaviour and swimming and diving abilities after release;
- Before starting the engine, ensure that the turtle is a safe distance away from the boat.



Step 4: Documentation

- Mandatory reporting of encounters with Leatherbacks is required in your SARA logbook to document the impact of fisheries on the Atlantic Leatherback Turtle population;
- Record the date, time, latitude and longitude where the turtle was seen and its condition. Take a picture or a video of the turtle if possible;
- Sightings of turtles can also be reported to The Canadian Sea Turtle Network at 1-888-729-4667 (toll free);
- For assistance to release a Leatherback Turtle, please contact your nearest Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Conservation and Protection office.

For more information about Leatherback Turtles:
www.aquaticspeciesatrisk.gc.ca

Important Note:

The circumstances surrounding any disentanglement operation are variable. Harvesters are encouraged to adapt these instructions to take into account the factors present during any disentanglement operation, including (but not limited to) weather conditions, sea conditions and the size of the vessel. Neither the Government of Canada nor the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, nor any of their employees shall be liable for any loss or damages suffered as a result of any reliance upon the information contained in this factsheet.

This instruction card should be prominently displayed in the wheelhouse for instant reference.