Identification Notes for wildlife law enforcement

Scientific Name/s: Lepidochelys olivacea
Common Name/s: Olive Ridley (Sea) Turtle

PROBLEM: Verification of identification to species level of whole sea turtles is often required. This Quick Take, a supplement to Quick Take R-91-2, provides additional diagnostic information.

Dorsal View of Head

Lepidochelys olivacea (from CITES, 1984)

Plastron

DIAGNOSTIC FEATURES:

Carapace (viewed from above) nearly round, upturned on the lateral margins and flat on top; width 90% of length. Carapacial scutes include 5 pairs of pleurals.

Plastron bridge with four inframarginal scutes; openings for Rathke’s glands present as pores on rear of each.

Head narrow, almost triangular, length averaging 22.4% of straight carapace length. Two pairs of prefrontal scales.

Front Flippers with one or two visible claws on the anterior margin; sometimes a small claw present on the distal portion. Rear flippers with two claws.

Color: Adult carapace plain olive-grey, plastron creamy or whitish with pale grey margins.

REFERENCES:

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