



Florida's Fantastic Sea Turtles

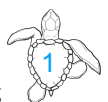
An at-home lesson and coloring book for grades K-2

Produced by:  **Florida
Oceanographic
Society**



Sea turtles live in warm ocean waters all around the world. Young sea turtles live in shallow areas, like coral reefs and seagrass beds. Adults are equally at home in the open ocean.

Florida Oceanographic Society is located on the east coast of Florida, a very special place for sea turtles. The beaches in this part of Florida are some of the most important sea turtle nesting areas on earth! Plus, seagrass beds in the Indian River Lagoon Estuary and coral reefs off our beaches provide a perfect nursery for young sea turtles.



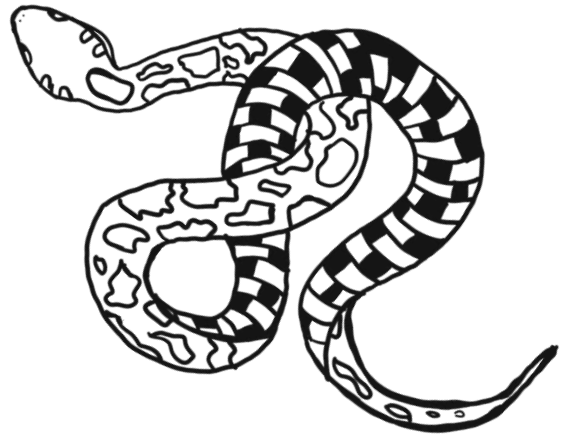
What is a Sea Turtle?

Sea turtles are **reptiles**.

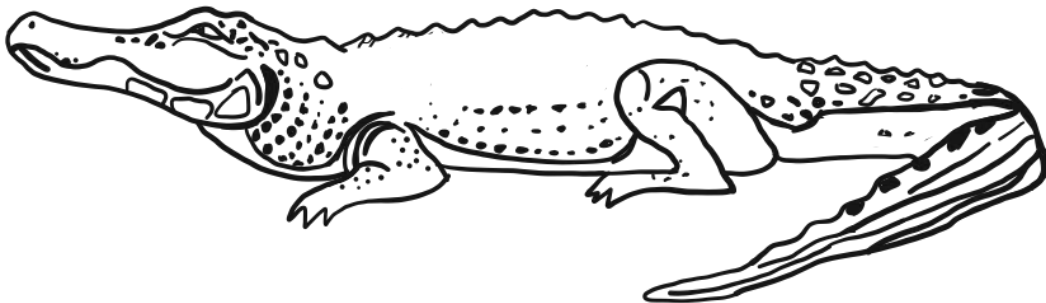
Lizards,



Snakes,



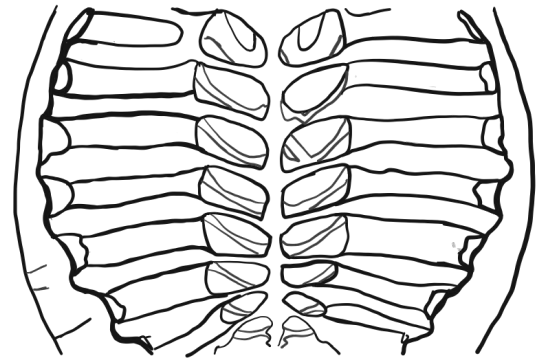
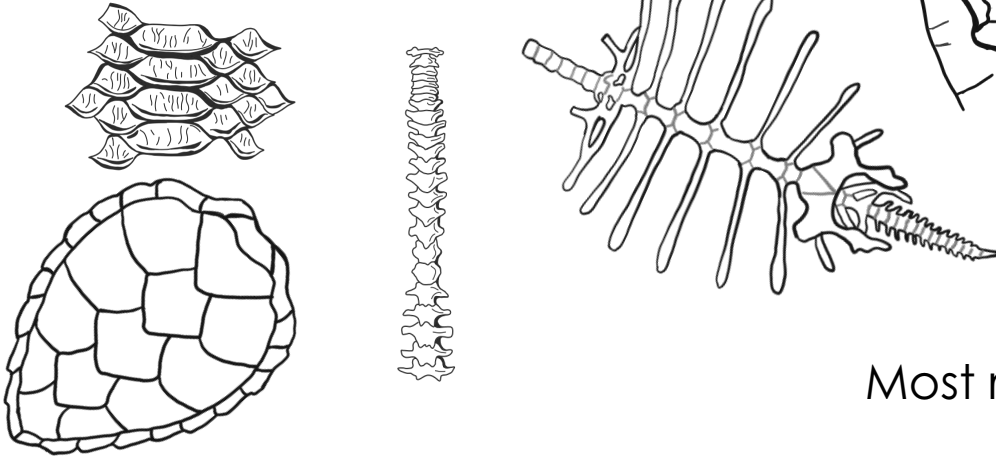
and alligators are
also reptiles.



But what is a **reptile**?

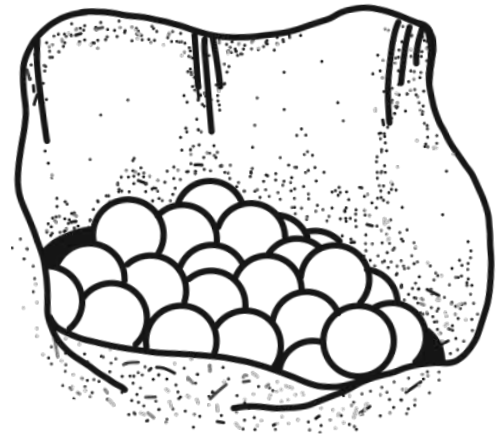
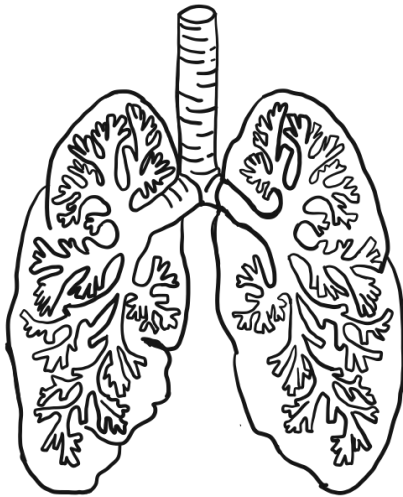
Sea Turtles are Reptiles

Reptiles have five things that make them different from other types of animals. All reptiles have a **backbone**. They also have **scales** covering the outside of their bodies.

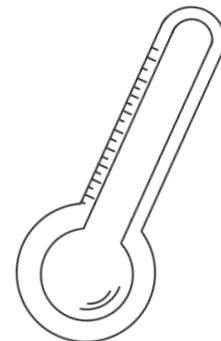


Most reptiles lay **eggs**.

They breathe air with **lungs**—just like you and me!



Reptiles also use the outside temperature to warm or cool their insides; scientists call these kinds of animals **cold-blooded**.

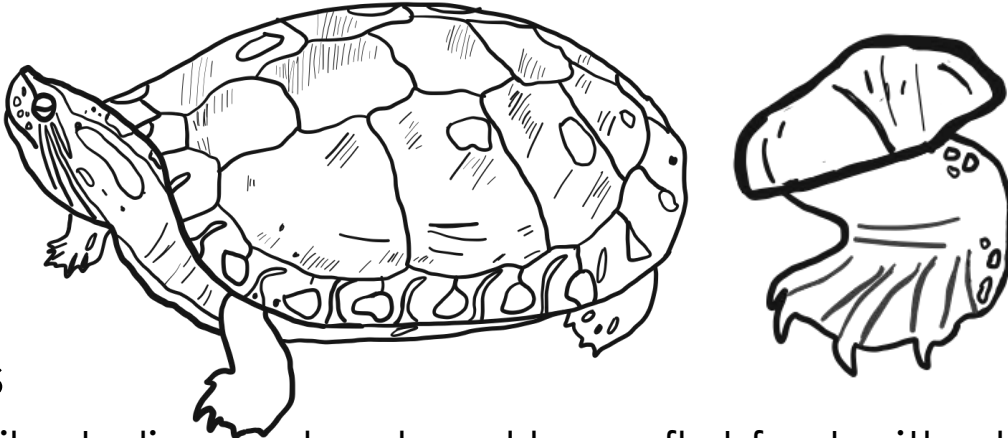


Different Types of Turtles

There are many types of turtles in the world.

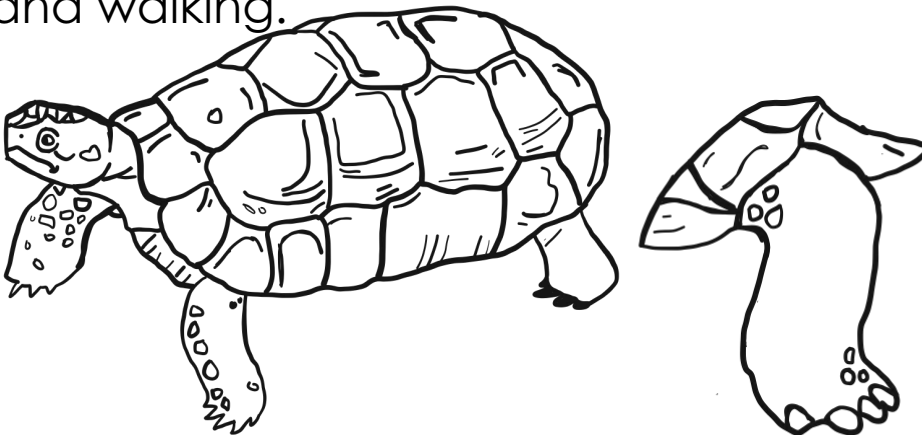
Freshwater Turtles

Freshwater turtles live in lakes, rivers, and streams and have webbed feet for swimming.



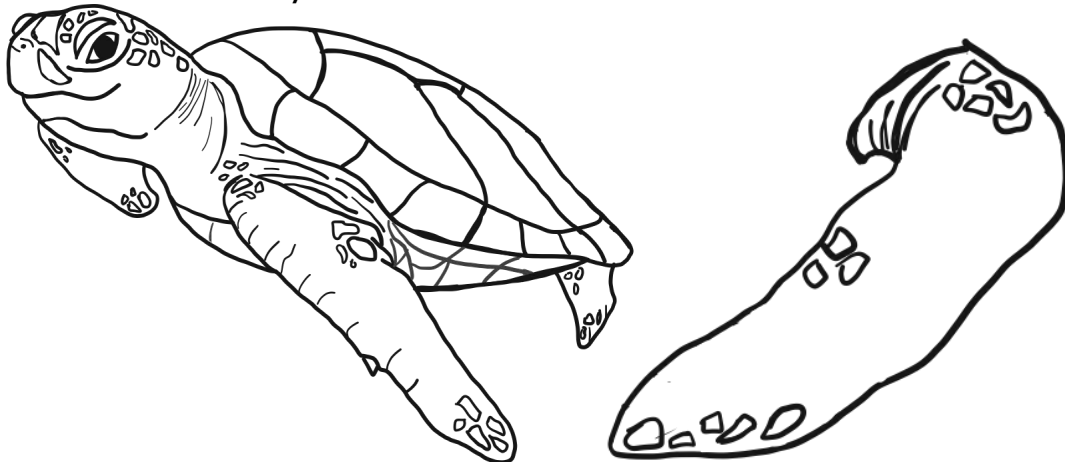
Tortoises

Tortoises like to live on land and have flat feet with claws for digging and walking.



Sea Turtles

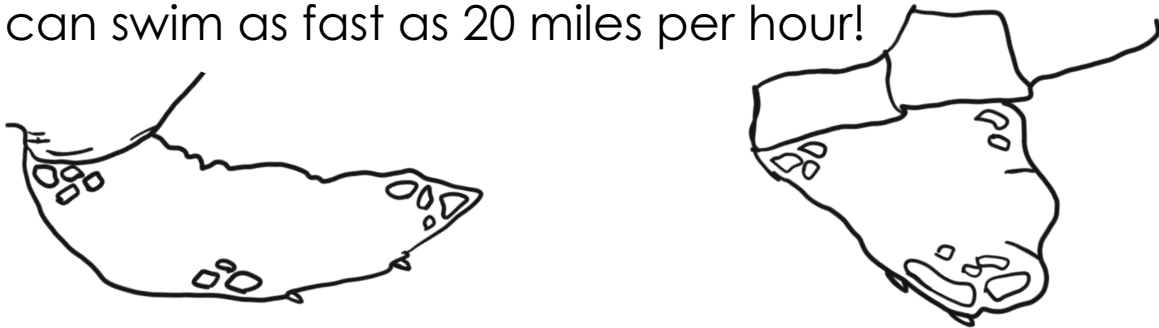
Sea turtles are the only turtles that live in the ocean.



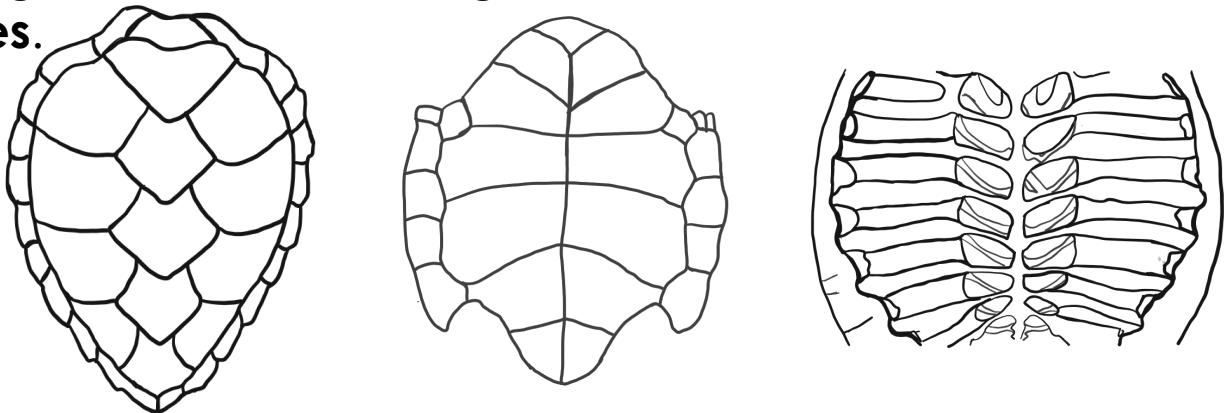
Sea Turtle Adaptations

Sea turtles have many **adaptations**, or things that help them survive in the environment they live in. Since sea turtles live in the ocean, they have to drink salty ocean water. Drinking salty water would make you and me sick, but sea turtles have a special trick. They cry super salty tears to help get rid of all of that extra salt.

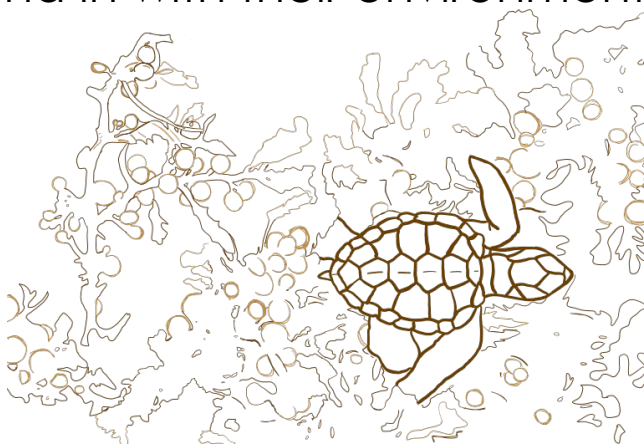
Sea turtles use long, flat flippers to swim around the ocean. They can swim as fast as 20 miles per hour!



Their shell is also flattened and smooth to help them cut through the water. The big scales on a turtle's shell are called **scutes**.



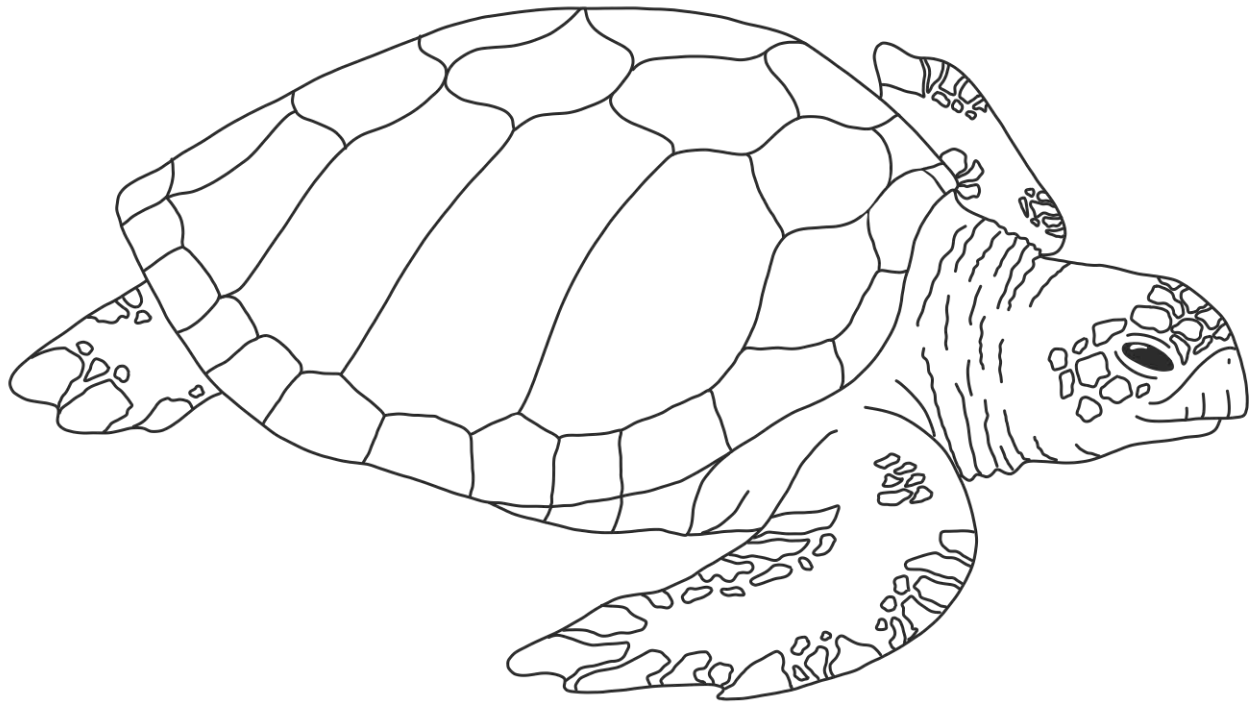
Young sea turtles have great **camouflage**, meaning that they are able to blend in with their environment.



Sea Turtle Species

There are seven different **species**, or types, of sea turtles in the world. Five sea turtle species live off Florida's coast, but only three of them make nests on our beaches.

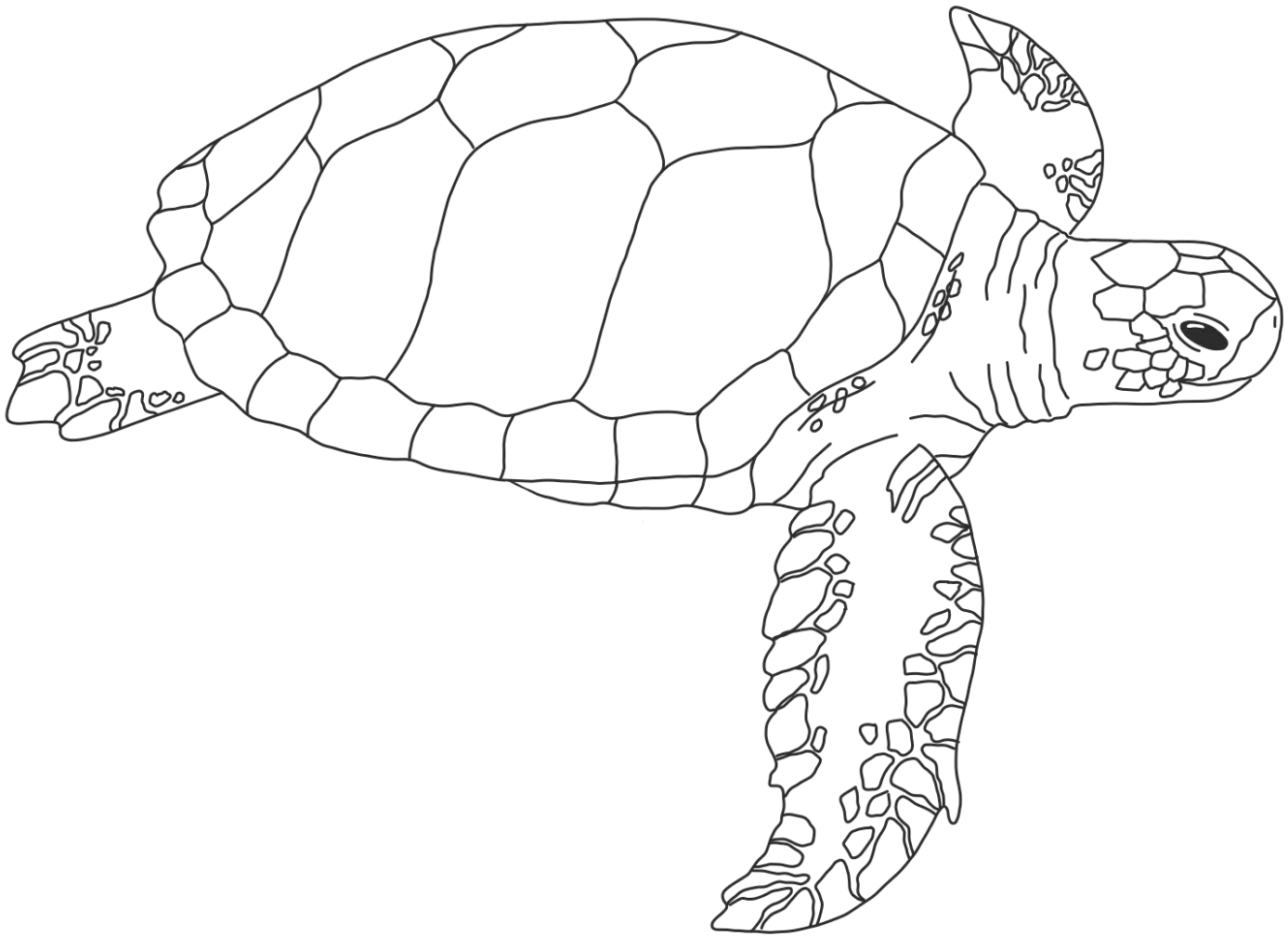
Loggerhead Sea Turtle



Loggerhead sea turtles are the most common sea turtle species in Florida. They get their name from their large, log-shaped head. Loggerhead sea turtles grow to more than three feet in length, and can weigh as much as 300 pounds! They love to eat hard-shelled animals, like crabs, snails, lobsters, and clams.



Green Sea Turtle



Green sea turtles are the second-largest sea turtles in the world! They can grow to more than four feet in length, and can weigh more than 400 pounds! Adult green sea turtles like to eat plants, especially seagrass and seaweed. This food turns the fat inside of their shell green, giving them their name. Younger green sea turtles also like crabs, shrimp, snails, and jellyfish.



Leatherback Sea Turtles

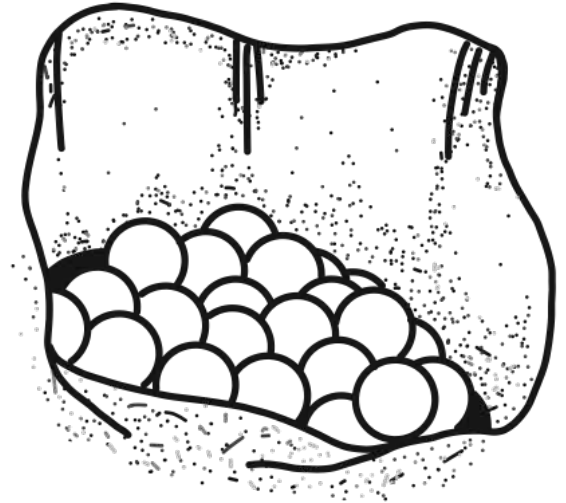


Leatherback sea turtles are the largest turtles on Earth. They grow to more than 7 feet in length and 800 to 1,500 pounds! Leatherback sea turtles don't have a hard bony shell like other sea turtles. Instead, they have a strong, flexible shell that won't break under pressure. This lets them dive more than a mile underwater in search of their favorite food, jellyfish.

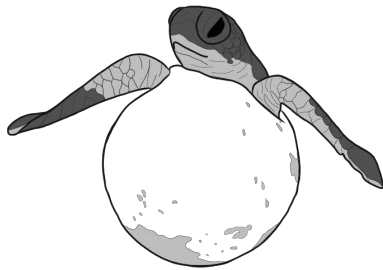
Sea Turtle Habitats

Did you know that sea turtles can live for more than 80 years?

The first two months of a sea turtle's life are spent buried in the sand inside an egg.



When a sea turtle hatches out of its egg, it is called a **hatchling**.



Once in the water, hatchlings swim far out into the open ocean, where they hang out in floating patches of seaweed called *Sargassum*. They float, eat, and grow into **juveniles** and then **subadults**, meaning they are almost completely grown up.

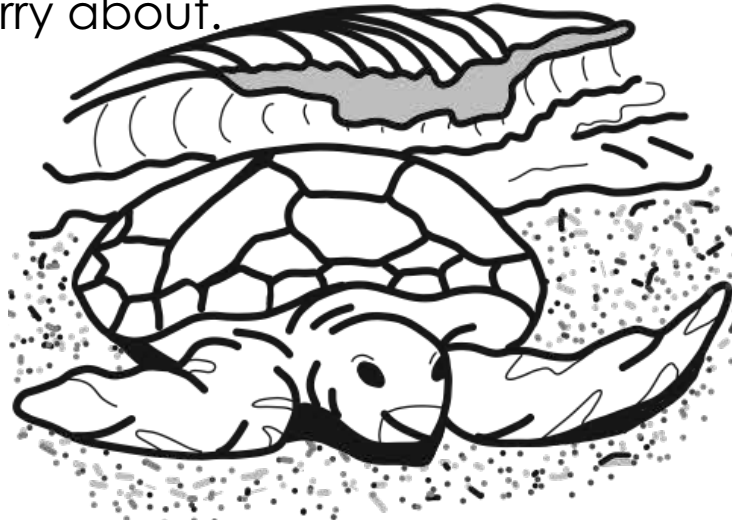


Once they are fully grown adults, mother sea turtles will swim back to the same beach they hatched on to lay their own eggs.

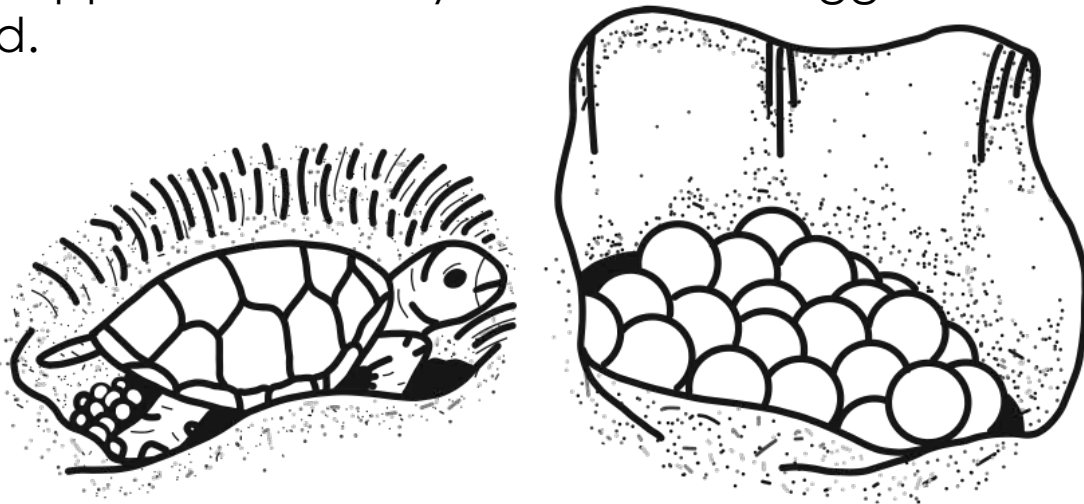


Sea Turtle Nesting Process

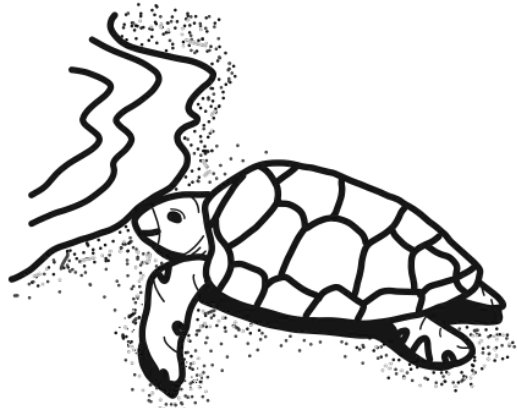
When it's time to lay eggs, a mother sea turtle will crawl from the ocean up onto the beach. Most sea turtles lay their eggs at night, when the sand is cooler and there are fewer predators to worry about.



Once she finds a spot she likes, the mama turtle starts digging with her flippers and will lay about 75-100 eggs into a hole in the sand.



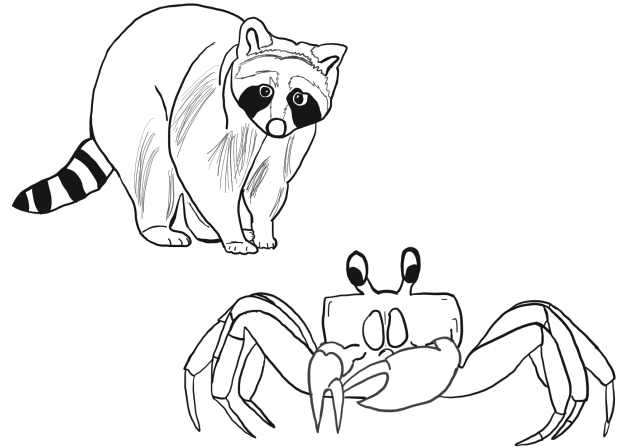
The mother crawls back into the ocean when she is finished, leaving her nest hidden two feet under the sand.



Sea Turtle Predators

Sea turtles have a hard, protective shell to keep them safe from predators, but hatchlings still have to be careful when they are crawling from their nest towards the ocean.

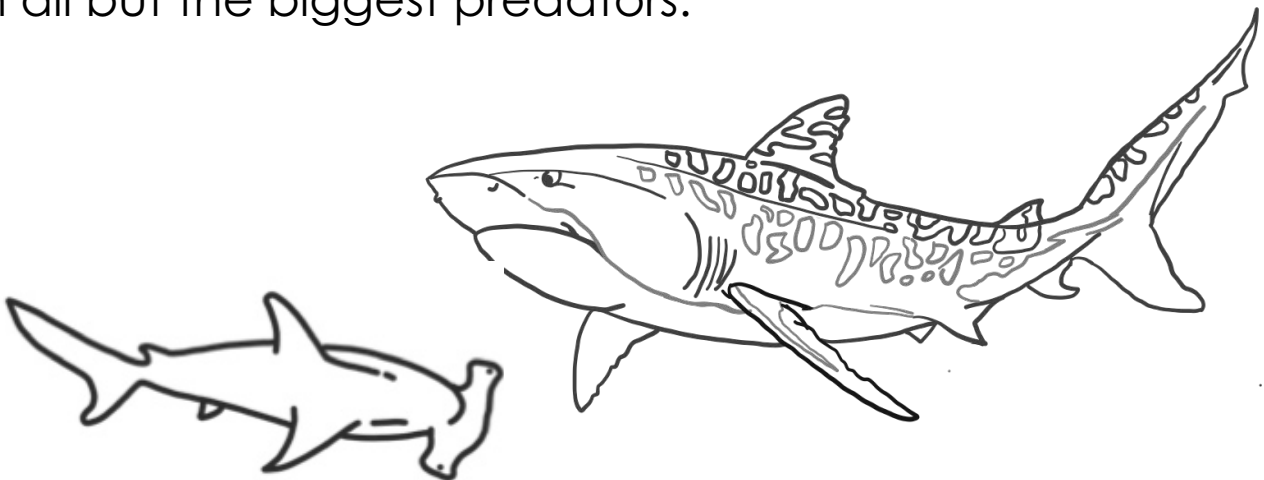
This is a dangerous journey for a baby sea turtle, since hungry crabs, birds, raccoons, and even fire ants might see them as food.



In the ocean, baby sea turtles try their best to hide from hungry fish and seabirds.

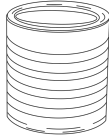


Thankfully, once sea turtles are fully grown, they are safe from all but the biggest predators.

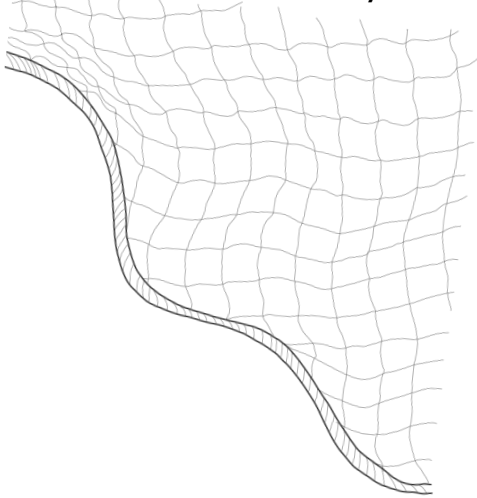


Threats to Sea Turtles

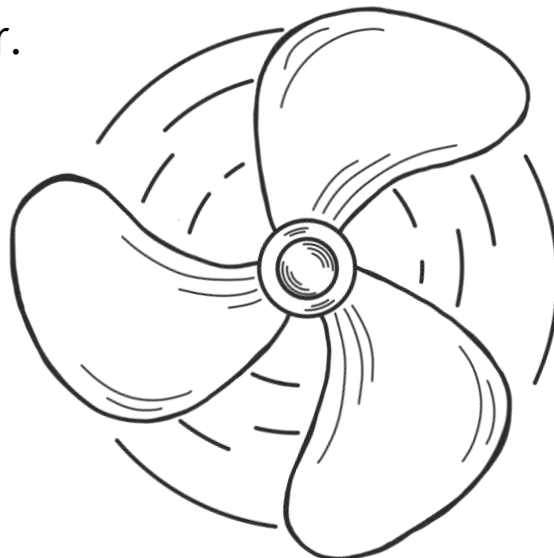
Sea turtles are very rare and special animals. In most parts of the world, sea turtles are protected by the law. This means that people are not allowed to harm a sea turtle. Sadly, sea turtles are not protected everywhere. In some places, sea turtles and their eggs are used for food and their shells made into jewelry.



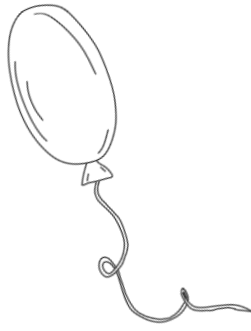
Sea turtles can be accidentally caught in fishing nets or hooked by certain types of fishing gear.



Boats and boat propellers can hurt a sea turtle when it comes up for a breath of air.



Threats to Sea Turtles



A big threat to sea turtles is all of the trash floating around in the ocean. Sea turtles accidentally eat little pieces of plastic, thinking it's food. This can make them really sick! Plastic bags and balloons are especially bad, because they look like jellyfish to a turtle.

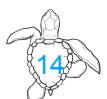


Even the health of our whole planet can affect sea turtles. Years of pollution are causing Earth's climate to change. In some places, our planet is getting too hot. Unusually hot temperatures can cause most sea turtle hatchlings to become girls. This isn't good news, since there needs to be both boy and girl sea turtles in the ocean. Hot temperatures are also causing our oceans to rise. Because sea turtles nest on the beach, even tiny changes in sea level can cause nests to flood.

How can you help sea turtles?

How you can help:

1. Ask your family to use reusable bags at the grocery store so less plastic ends up in the ocean.
2. Stay off the beach at night during sea turtle nesting season—March 1st to October 31st in our part of Florida. Sea turtles think people are predators, so you and your family might accidentally scare a momma, causing her to stop nesting.
3. Participate in a beach cleanup. You can also hold your own if you want—just pick up a few pieces of trash every time you visit the beach.
4. If you make a sand castle or dig a big hole in the sand, always flatten it back out before you leave the beach. This will leave a smooth path for nesting momma turtles, as well as hatchlings.
5. Don't leave beach chairs or umbrellas out on the beach overnight. They might scare a nesting turtle, or block her path up the beach.
6. Teach your friends and family what you've learned about sea turtles.



SEA TURTLE WORD SEARCH

Use the vocabulary listed below and circle the words in your search. Words can be found up and down and side-to-side.

B	H	Z	S	S	C	U	T	E	B
E	C	R	E	P	T	I	L	E	H
A	B	C	K	M	W	T	S	E	A
C	S	C	A	L	E	E	R	F	T
H	A	T	C	H	L	I	N	G	U
Z	O	T	F	L	I	P	P	E	R
T	O	R	T	O	I	S	E	B	T
R	S	A	L	T	Z	P	B	J	L
W	O	A	R	S	H	E	L	L	E
A	A	G	V	U	E	K	Z	J	U

BEACH

FLIPPER

HATCHLING

REPTILE

SALT

SCALE

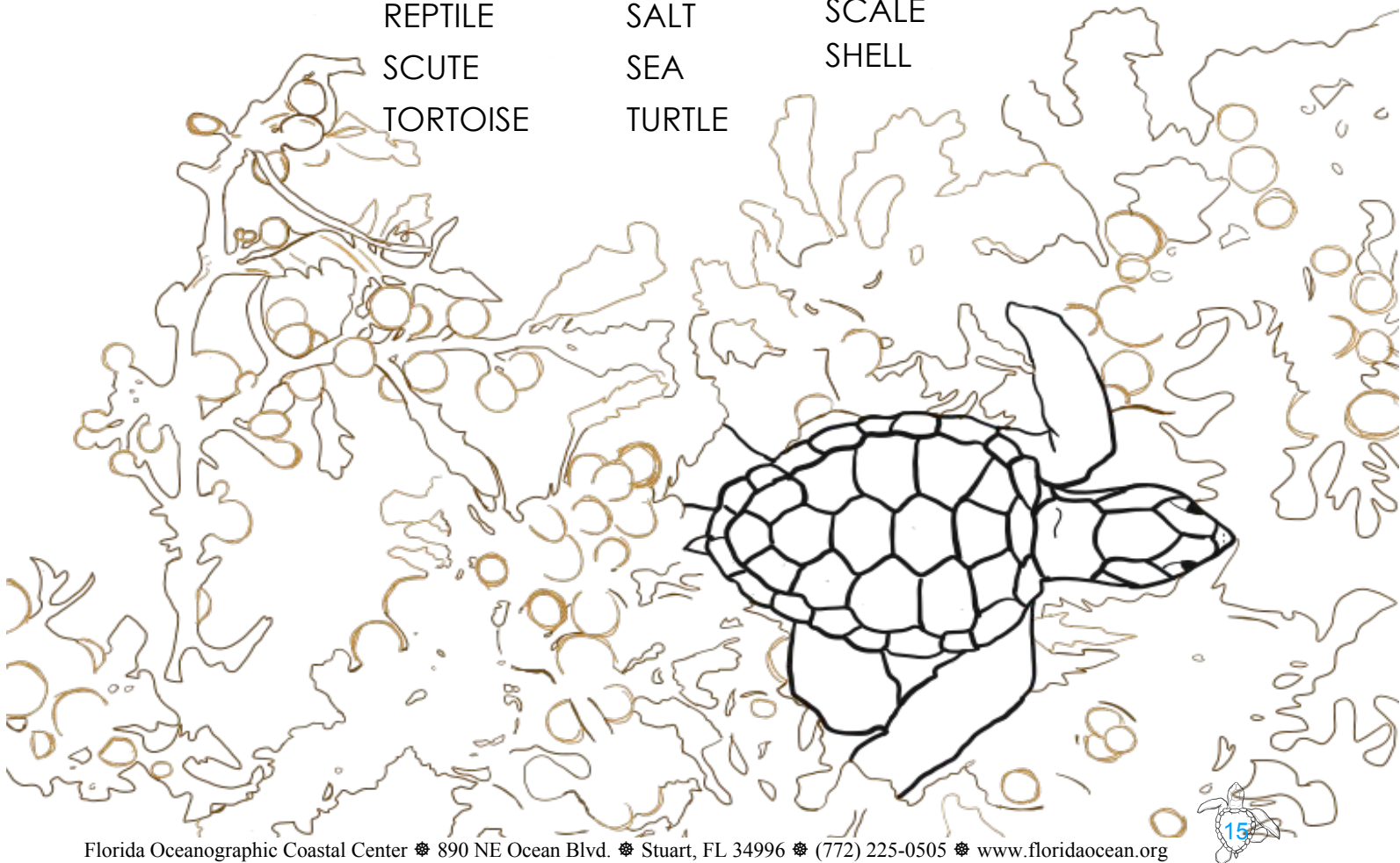
SCUTE

SEA

SHELL

TORTOISE

TURTLE



SEA TURTLE HANDWRITING PRACTICE

Trace the letters below.

Sea Turtle

Green

Loggerhead

Leatherback

Scutes and Scales

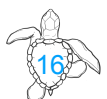
Reptile

Beach

Hatchling

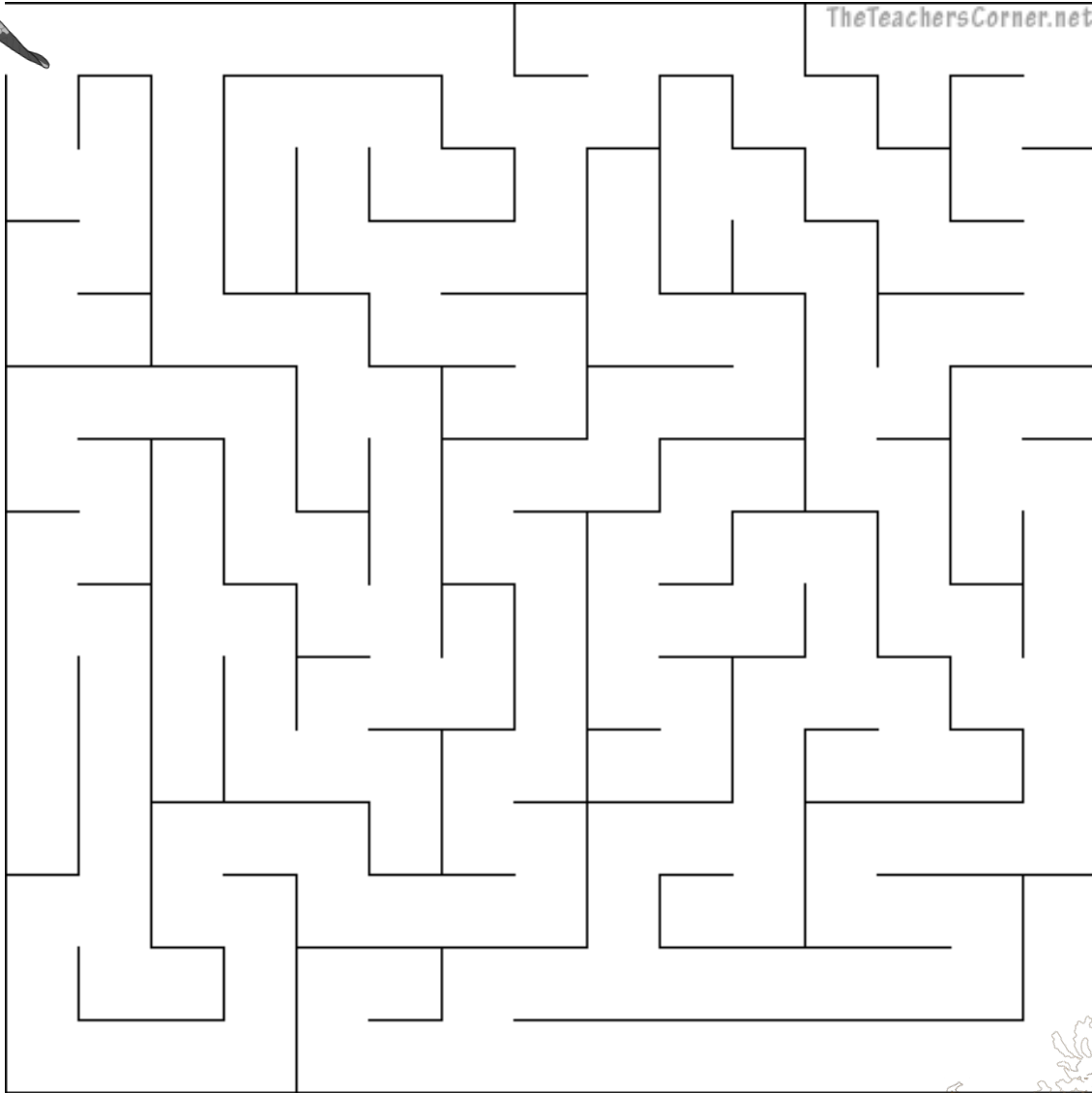
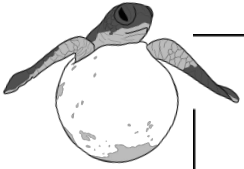
Ocean

Flipper



HATCHLING HAZARDS

Can you help the hatchling reach the Sargasso Sea?



TheTeachersCorner.net



Hatchlings and all sea turtles struggle to survive many different hazards, including:



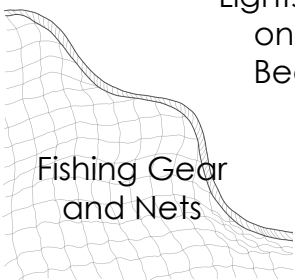
Lights Seen on the Beach



Crabs



Sharks and Fish



Fishing Gear and Nets



Birds



Boat Propellers



Sandcastles, Toys, and Holes on the Beach

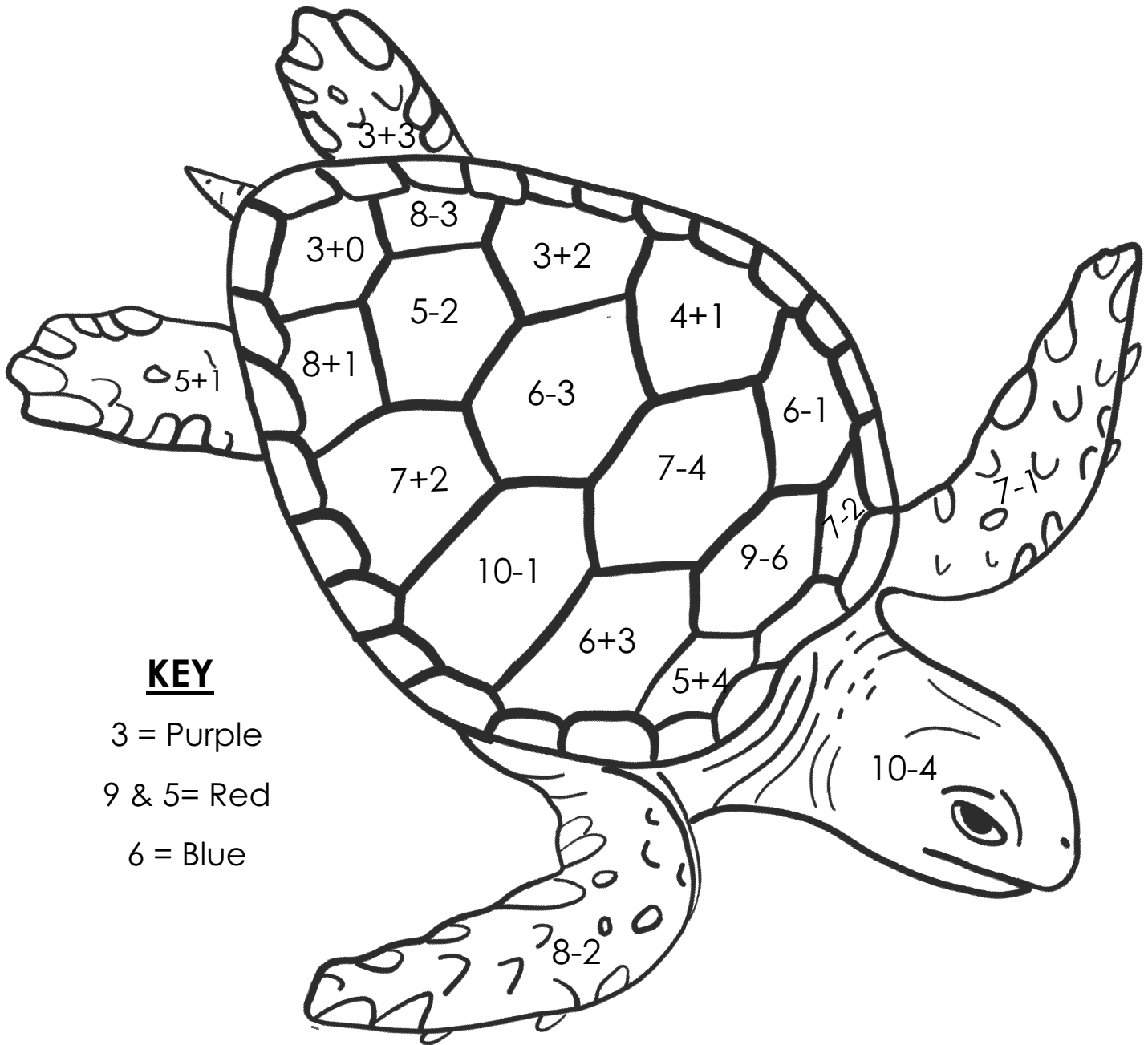


Plastic



COUNT THE SCUTES

Solve the math problems to color the sea turtle's shell. Use the key to figure out how many lateral scutes this sea turtle has.



KEY

3 = Purple

9 & 5 = Red

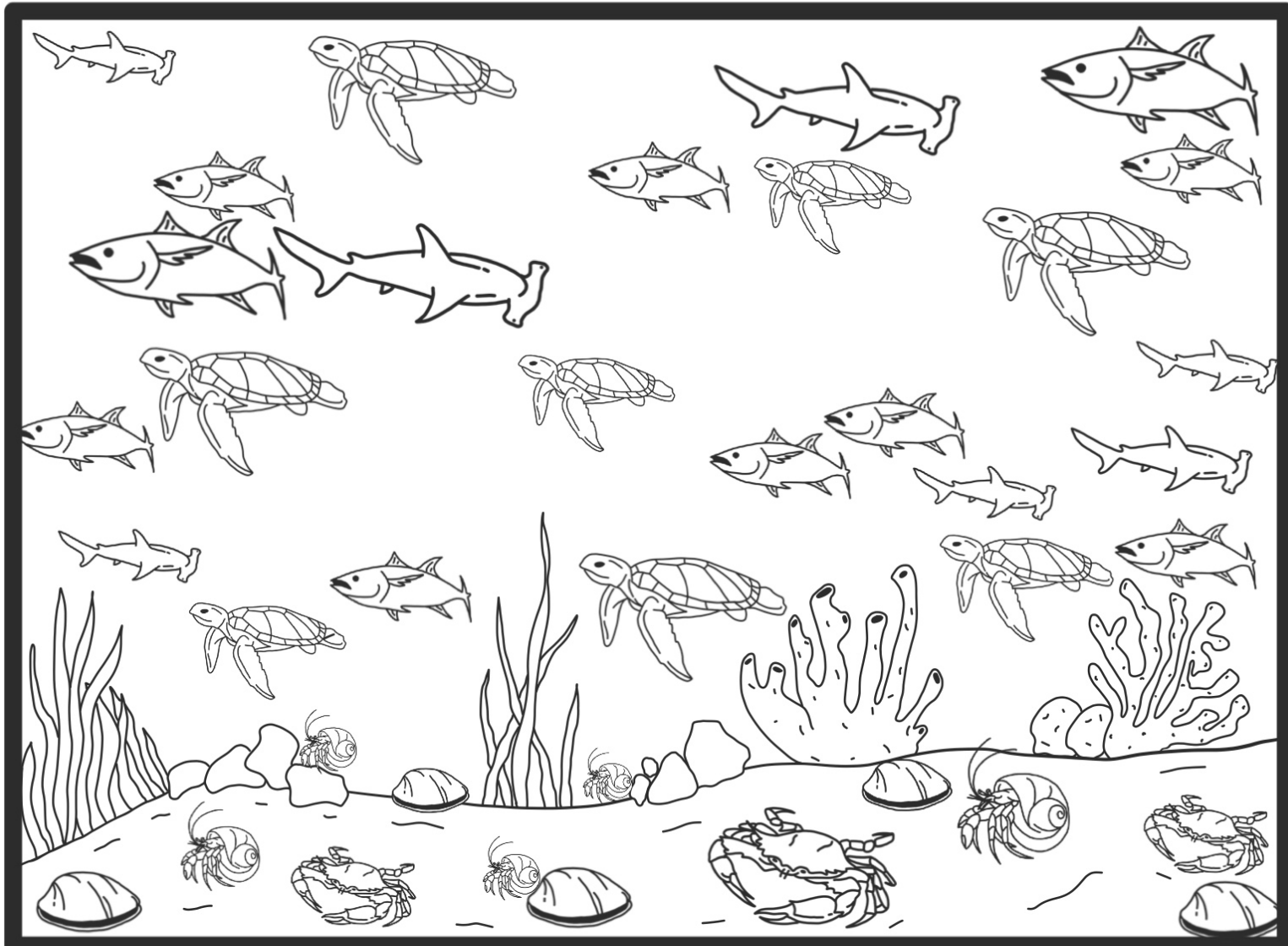
6 = Blue

The **vertebral scutes** of a sea turtle, in red, run down the middle of their back. The **lateral scutes**, in purple, are located on either side. The number of lateral scutes on a turtle's shell can tell us which species it is. Green sea turtles have 8 lateral scutes (4 on each side) and loggerhead sea turtles have 10 lateral scutes (5 on each side). How many lateral scutes are on this sea turtle's shell? Is it a green or loggerhead sea turtle?

SWIMMING IN THE DEEP BLUE SEA

Instructions:

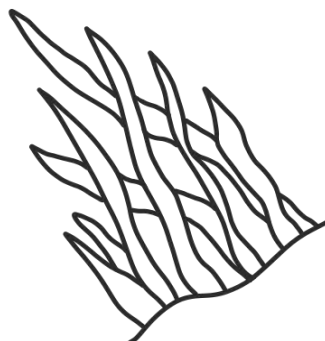
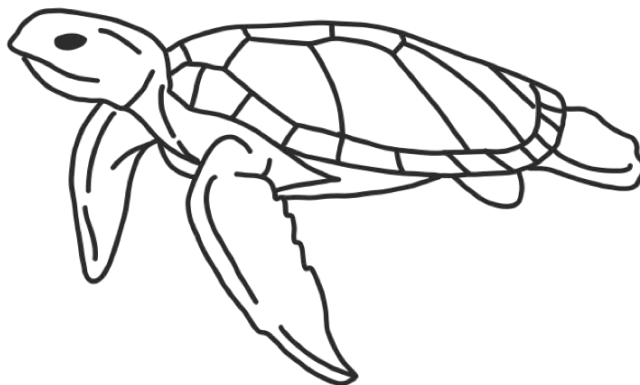
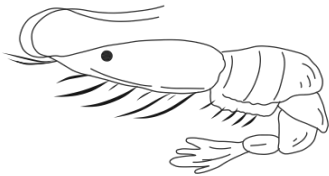
Color the animals below, then count how many of each animal there are. You can put your answers in the boxes below.



FOOD OR FOE?

Instructions:

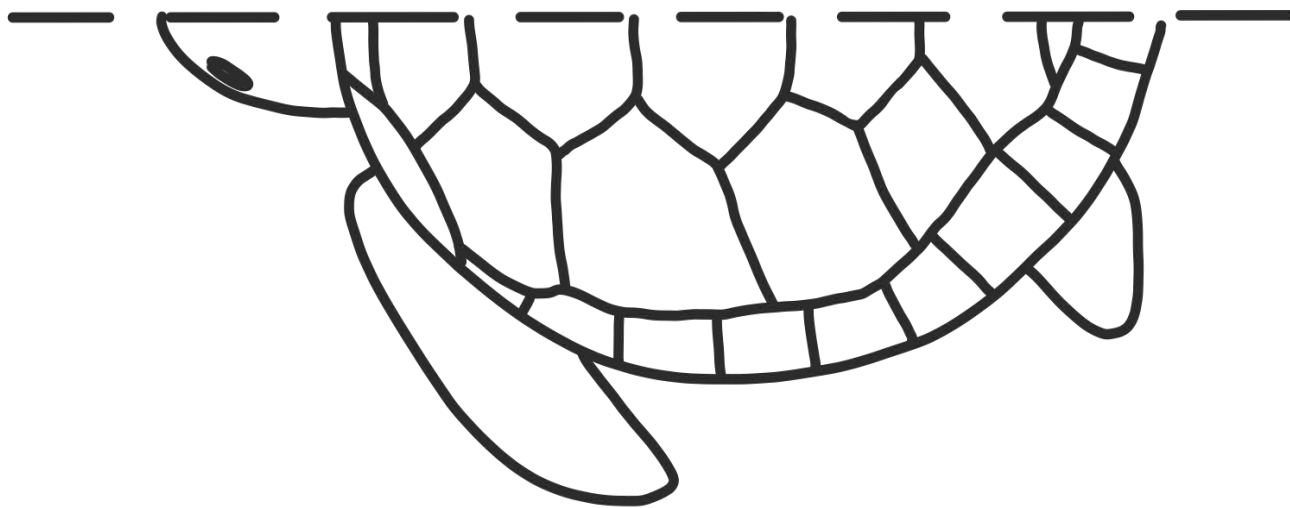
Below are pictures of food that this sea turtle should eat and things that aren't sea turtle food. Circle what you think is sea turtle food and cross out what you think is not. Then you can color the page.



SYMMETRY THE SEA TURTLE

Instructions:

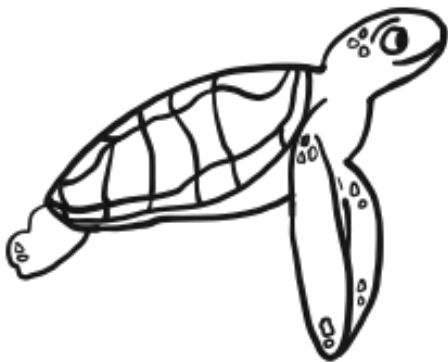
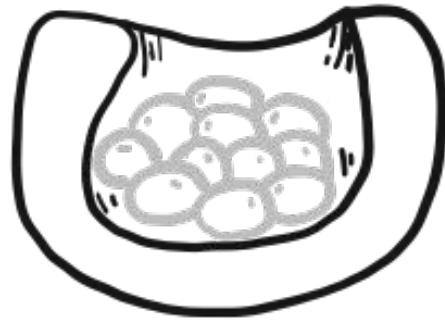
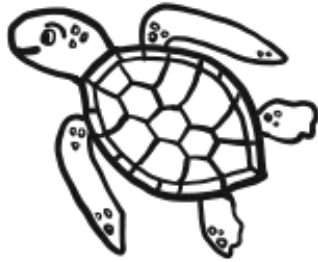
This sea turtle is not quite finished. To finish the sea turtle drawing, fold this paper in half along the dotted line, then hold it up against a window and draw the other half of the sea turtle.



SEA TURTLE LIFE CYCLE

Instructions:

Cut these out on the dotted line, then put the sea turtle life cycle in order.



MATCHING NUMBERS

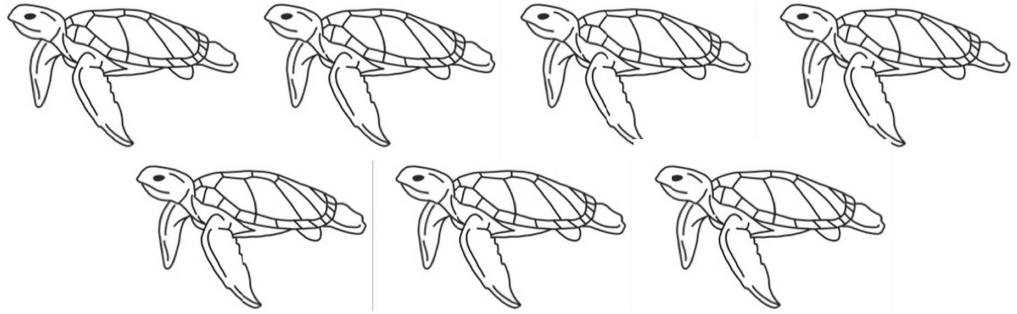
Instructions:

First fill out the dotted line numbers, then draw a line to match the number to the amount of each animal below.

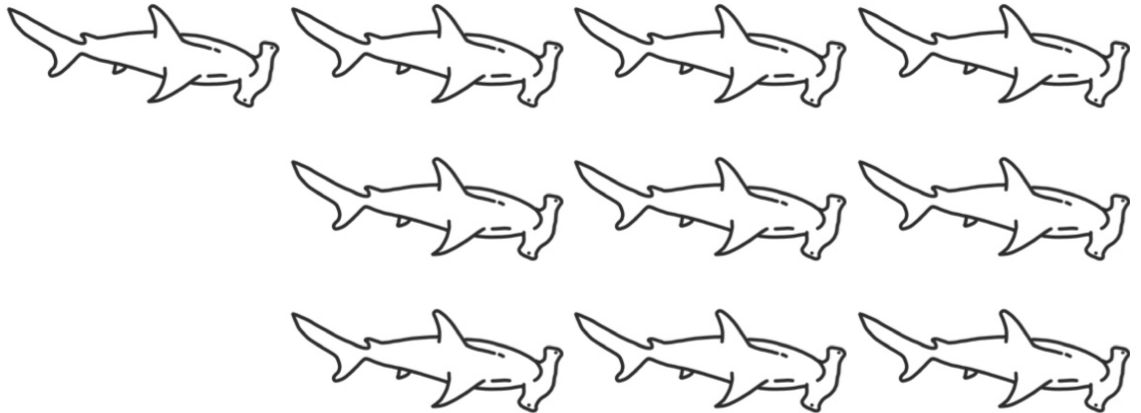
4



2



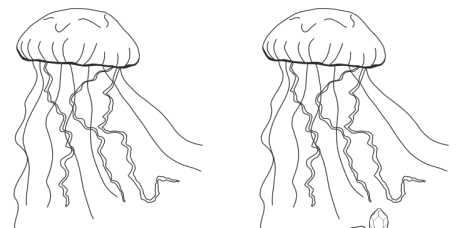
3



10



7



CREATE A SENTENCE!

Instructions:

Below there are words floating around. Put them together to create a sentence about sea turtles.

turtle

The

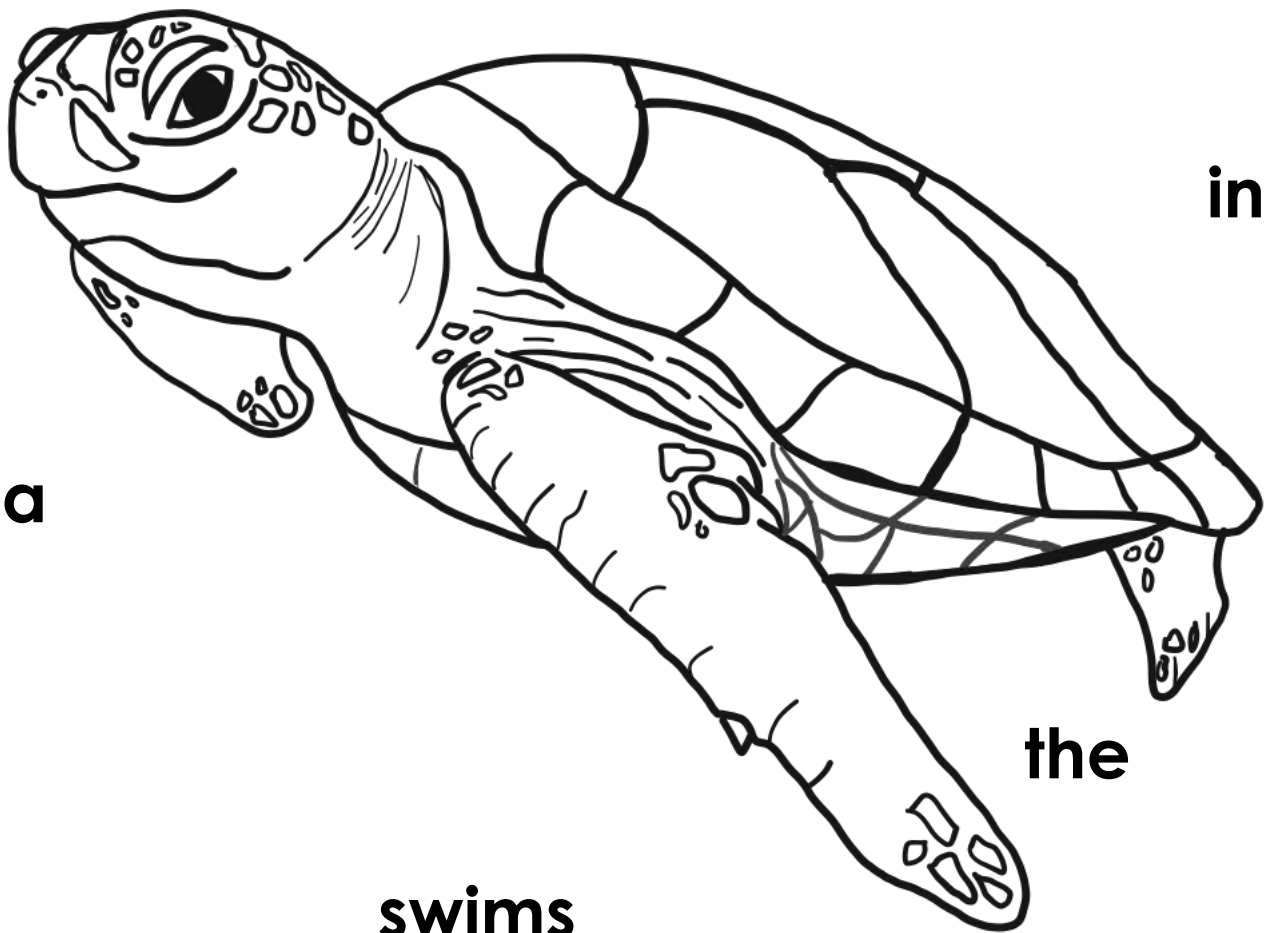
ocean

in

sea

the

swims



DINNER IS SERVED!

Match the sea turtle to its favorite food.

Remember— most sea turtles like to eat more than one kind of food.



Jellyfish



Algae/seaweed



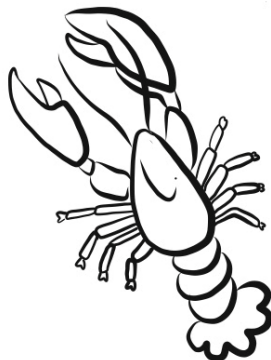
Shrimp



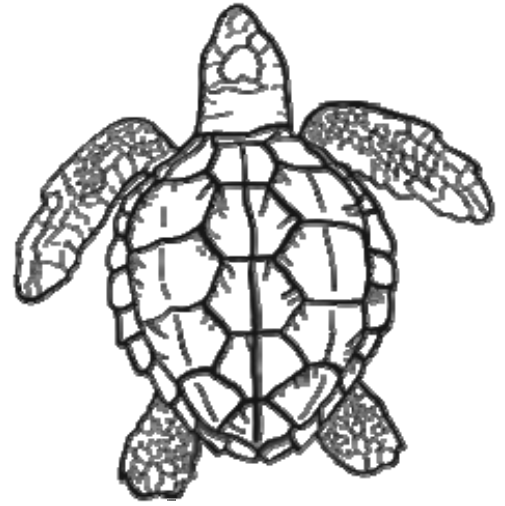
Seagrass



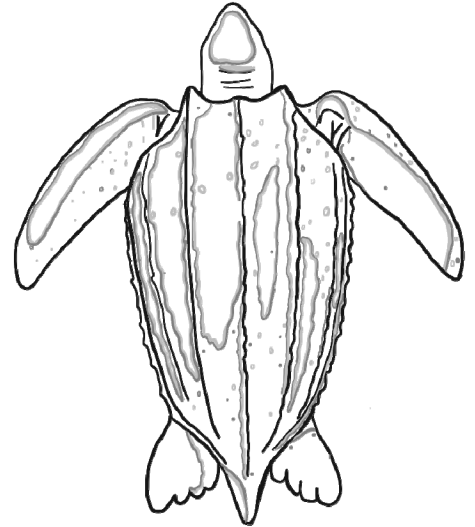
Crab



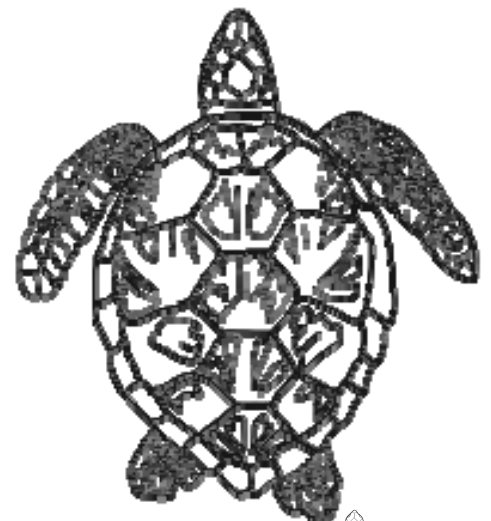
Lobster



Loggerhead



Leatherback

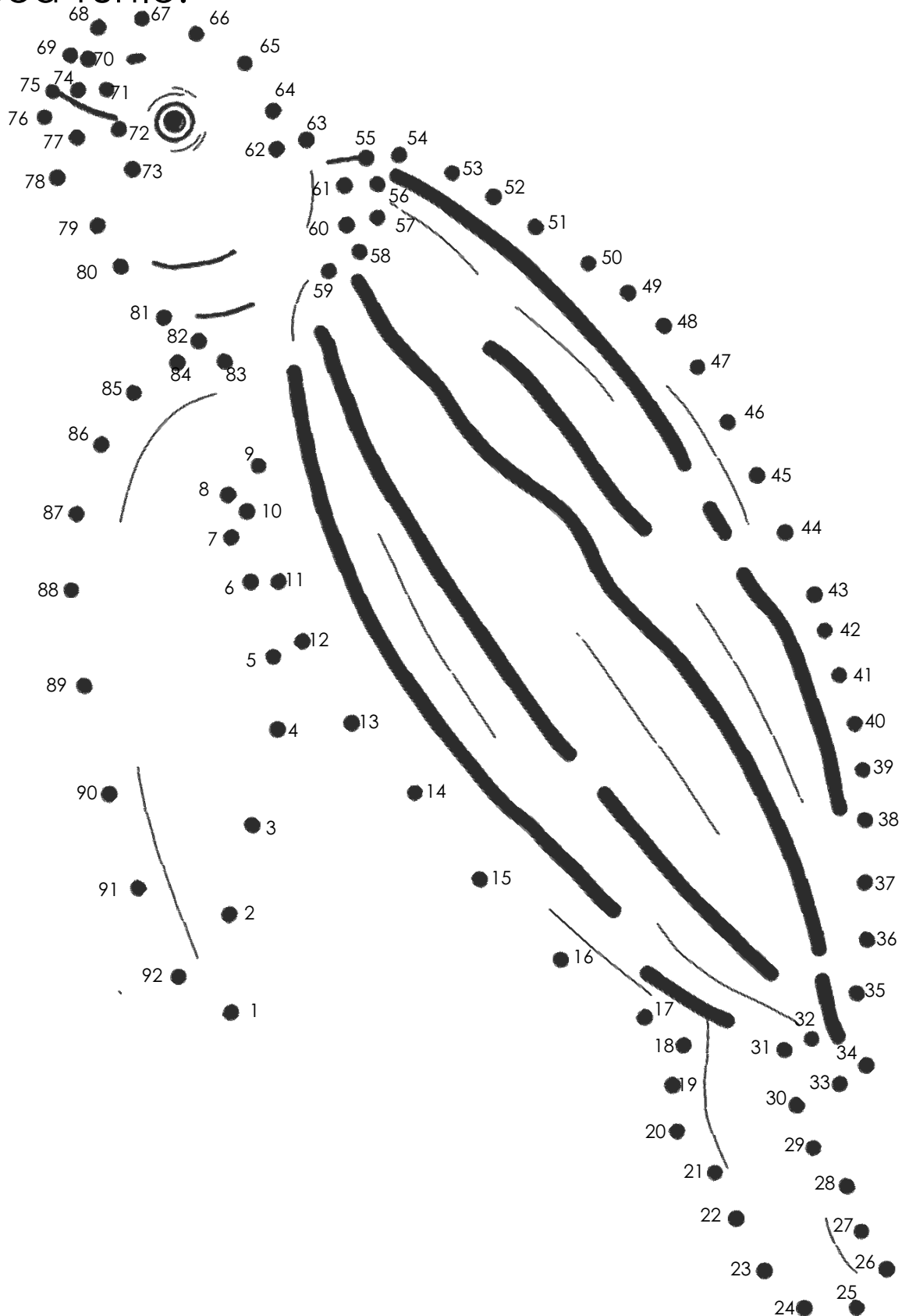


Green



CONNECT THE DOTS

Connect the dots to create a Leatherback Sea Turtle.



CONNECT THE DOTS

Connect the dots to create a Green Sea Turtle.

