

## New Issue: Protect Sea Turtles

By: Pat Morgan

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in Corpus Christi, TX, the USPS issued a new set of 6 stamps called Protect Sea Turtles. These stamps caught my eye as Lesa and I vacationed in Key West, FL in February, and visited [The Turtle Hospital](#) in Marathon, FL where we learned about these incredible turtles including the fact that when resting turtles can hold their breath for 3 to 5 hours and can live up to 75 years.

**About The Protect Sea Turtles stamps:** The stamps show incredible photos of 6 turtle species up close and personal. The stamp art director, Derry Noyes, set out to emphasize the uniqueness of these turtles along with showing each of their faces to help show their vulnerability. I suggest that she hit a home run!

**The Kemps Ridley** turtle is a carnivore, eating crabs, and shrimp. They can grow up to 100 pounds. This turtle was named after a Key West Fisherman, Richard Kemp. The Kemps Ridley is classified as “Endangered.”

**The Green** turtle is an herbivore, eating sea grasses. They can grow up to 500 pounds. Its name comes from the green fat in its body. The Green is classified as “Threatened.”

**The Leatherback** turtle is a carnivore, eating mostly jellyfish. They can grow up to 2000 pounds and are the largest reptile alive today that has an endothermic (internally regulated body temperature) metabolism. The Leatherback is classified as “Endangered.”

**The Loggerhead** turtle is a carnivore, eating shrimp, lobster, and conch. They can weigh more than 300 pounds and are the most common turtles found in Florida waters. The loggerhead has a large head and has orange and brown coloration. These turtles are classified as “Threatened.”

**The Hawksbill** turtle is an omnivore eating mainly sponges. They can grow up to 150 pounds and live near rocky places and coral reefs. It gets its name from its hawk-like beak. The Hawksbill is classified as “Endangered/”

**The Olive Ridley** turtle is a carnivore that eats algae, lobster, crabs, tunicates, and mollusks. They are the most abundant sea turtles in the world and can grow up to 100 pounds. The Olive Ridley gets its name from the olive-green color of its heart-shaped shell. The Olive Ridley is classified as “Endangered.”



Threats to sea turtles have changed over the years. Green turtle meat is prized by turtle connoisseurs and was canned starting in the 1860s at a beef-packing plant in Texas. For those who couldn't afford canned turtle, there was mock turtle soup made from calf heads. The human consumption of sea turtles was ended in 2004 by the Endangered Species Act.

Habitat loss is now the biggest threat; wetland drainage, fields getting paved over, or condos being built on a nesting beach, leaves no space left for turtles.

Other threats include; discarded fishing lines, ropes from crab and lobster traps, boat hits, oil and tar spills, debris like cigarette filters and plastic bags that cause intestinal impactions, and viruses that cause fibropapilloma tumors.

The turtle populations and habitats are monitored by many agencies but there are very few agencies that rehabilitate injured and sick turtles.

Fortunately for the turtles there are a few places like The Turtle Hospital in Marathon, FL that rescues, rehabilitate, and return the turtle to the wild. This hospital takes in between 70-200 turtles a year. Since opening in 1986, more than 2000 turtles have been released back into the wild.

If you get down to the Florida Keys a visit to The Turtle Hospital is a place you have to visit.



Check out the work of the hospital at their website: [The Turtle Hospital. Rescue, Rehab, Release.](#)

Feel free to send any questions and comments to me at [pjmorgan622@gmail.com](mailto:pjmorgan622@gmail.com).

