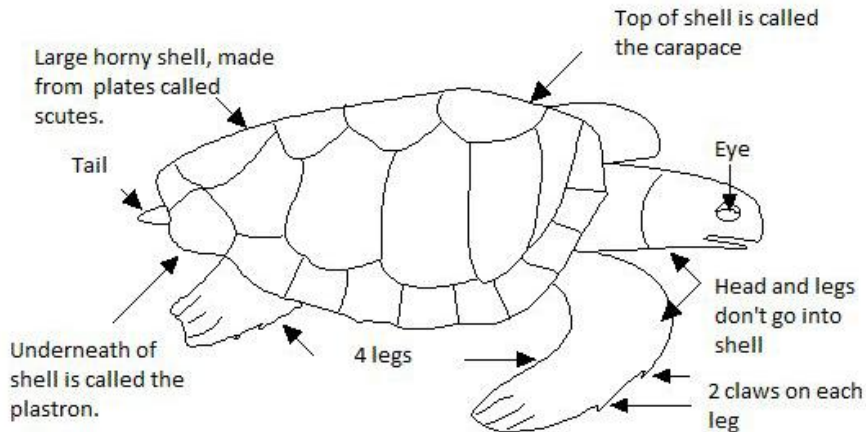


## TURTLE – The Ocean Reptile



**T**urtles are shelled reptiles which inhabit most oceans. There are seven species – Leatherback, Green, Loggerhead, Hawksbill, Kemp’s Ridley, Olive Ridley, and Flatback. Sea turtles have been on Earth for over 100 million years.

All turtles are ectotherms (commonly called cold- blooded) where their internal body temperature is controlled by their environment. Most turtles are found in tropical seas as the warmth of the water raises their body temperature and they can become more active.

They take in oxygen by coming to the surface to breathe, but can stay underwater for long periods – up to 6 hours. They can slow down their heart rate and use less oxygen when sleeping in the crevices of coral reefs.

Female turtles must come ashore when laying their eggs and return to the beach where they were hatched to lay their own eggs – often travelling thousands of miles. They lay up to 100 eggs at a time but on average only one will survive to adulthood. Male turtles do not need to leave the sea in the whole of their lifetime.

Turtles have incredible muscles in their chests (pectoral muscles) which gives them the power to swim at up to 35 mph using their front flippers only. Their back legs are used as rudders.



Turtles are immune to the stings of jellyfish – so they can eat lots of jellyfish without being stung. They eat anything from seaweed to snails but do not chase their food – preferring to pick at prey which is not moving too quickly.

### **FABULOUS FACTS:**

**Type** – Reptile

**Habitat** – All oceans except the polar regions, where it is too cold for them to survive.

**Known Species** : 7

**Size** – the largest is the Leatherback Turtle - up to 900kg.

**Life Span** – 80-100 years

**Status** – endangered due to loss of breeding sites, and by getting caught up in fishing nets.

### **Did You Know?**

Turtles have an excretory gland under the eyes, to release salt from their bodies - they can look like they are crying real tears.