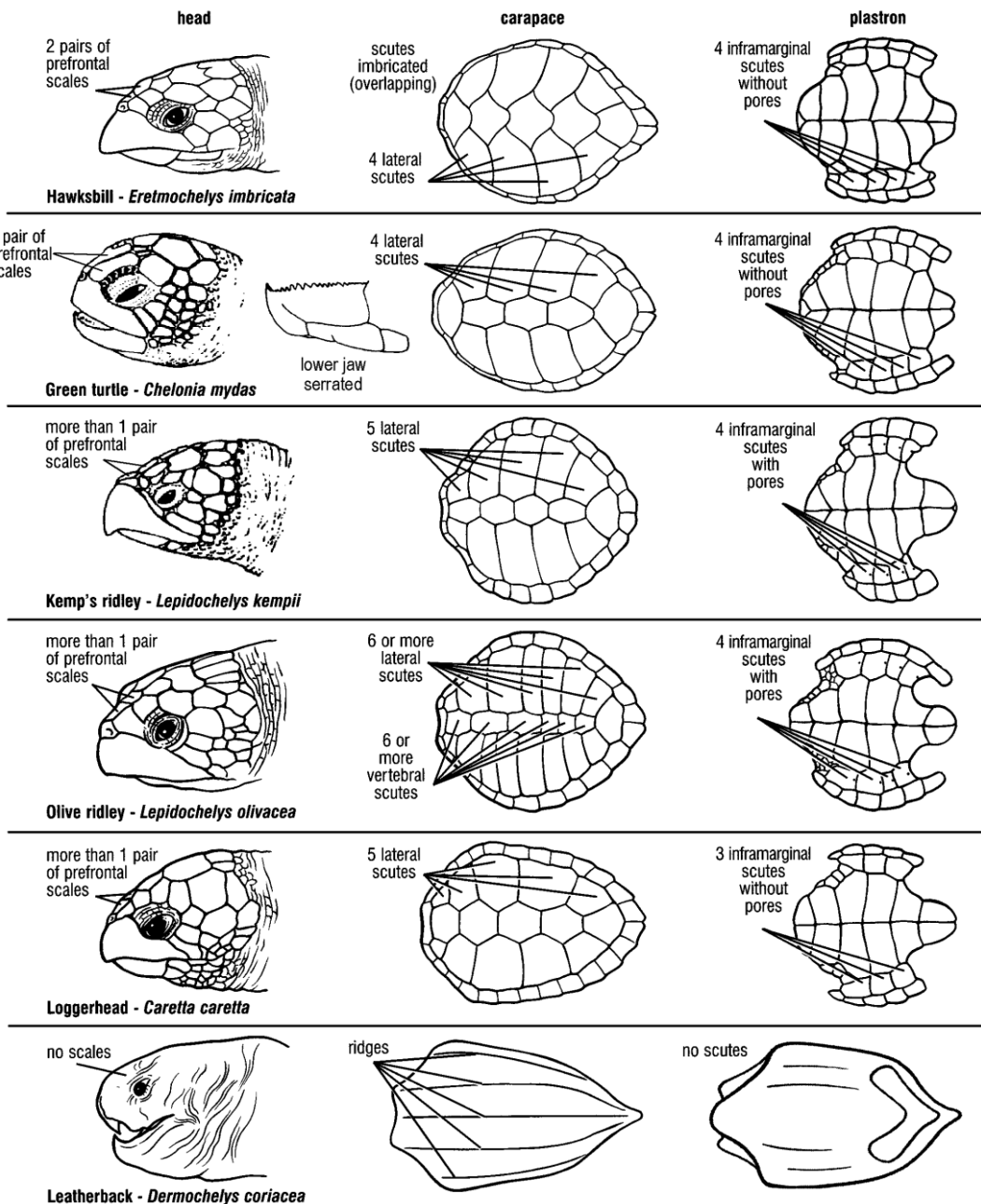


# FIELD CHECKLIST

**DETERMINE SPECIES:** Six species of sea turtles may be encountered in Florida, and all have unique features that can be easily identified (see diagram below). **Green turtles** have serrations along the edge of the lower jaw and only one pair of prefrontal scutes. **Loggerheads** have a relatively large head. **Kemp's ridleys** have a pointed beak (on both the upper and lower jaw) and a carapace that is often wider than it is long (in curved measurements). **Hawksbills** have scutes on their carapace that overlap each other (no space between them). **Leatherbacks** have a soft carapace with 5 longitudinal ridges (and no scutes). **Olive ridleys** are very rare in Florida but can be distinguished by more than 5 pairs of lateral scutes. Additional features that help distinguish the species are given below.

## SPECIES IDENTIFICATION



**TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS:** Complete photographic documentation of the stranded turtle, including any injuries or other anomalies, is the single-most important aspect of the stranding record. A complete set of high-resolution photographs should accompany each stranding report. A complete photo series includes clear, focused, unobstructed views of the entire dorsal and ventral surfaces of the turtle, of the turtle's head, and of any injuries, entanglements, signs of disease, or other anomalies.

**DETERMINE CONDITION:** Record the initial condition of the stranded animal by selecting one of the following.

- **Alive.** The sea turtle was alive at the time of initial observation. Even if the turtle died after it was first reported or discovered, still report **Alive** as the initial condition.
- **Fresh Dead/Mildly Decomposed.** The carcass may have rigor mortis, but the eyes should be clear and there should be no smell of decomposition or evidence of bloating. If the carcass smells at all or is bloated, it is more than mildly decomposed.
- **Moderately Decomposed.** There is a mild to moderate smell of decomposition and mild to moderate bloating and bulging eyes (if present). The soft tissue may feel spongy and the scutes and skin may be beginning to slough.
- **Severely Decomposed.** There is a foul smell and the carcass either is very distended by gas or has completely degassed (appears deflated). There is a mass of rotting flesh in areas of degassing and the scutes and skin are sloughing or missing. The limbs and carapace may be starting to disarticulate (especially upon handling) and there could be inundation by insect larvae (e.g., maggots).
- **Dried Carcass.** The carcass is completely desiccated with only dry skin and bones with little to no smell.
- **Skeletal.** The skeletal features are prominent and are disarticulating. Skin may still be present but large portions of the carcass are skeletonized.

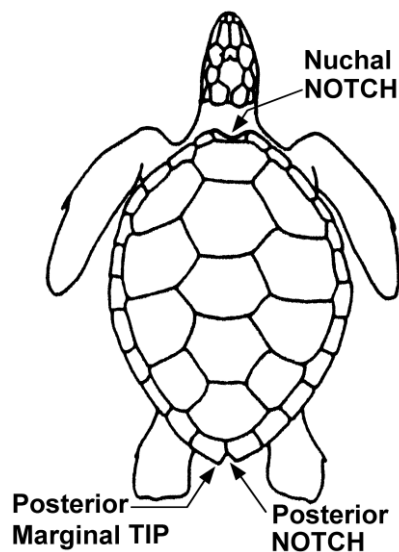
**NOTE CARCASS COMPLETENESS:**

- **Complete.** Head present and no flippers are completely missing, more than 50% of shell (body) is present.
- **Missing head.** Entire head is missing.
- **Missing one or more flippers (>50%).** One or more flippers is entirely or mostly (50% or more) missing.
- **Missing 50% or more of shell (body).** The carapace or plastron is entirely or mostly (50% or more) missing.

**CHECK FOR TAGS:** All strandings should be thoroughly examined for external tags, tag scars, PIT tags, living tags, and tracking or transmitting equipment. Take a close-up photograph of any of these things and make sure any alphanumeric IDs are clearly visible. Never dispose of a tag or any attached equipment. Any stranded sea turtle with a tag or other equipment should be considered for salvaging. Please consult your STSSN coordinator.

- **Flipper tags.** These would be found along the trailing edge of a flipper. Carefully check for these as they can be encrusted in barnacles or other epibiota. If found, note alphanumeric ID.
- **PIT tags.** Ideally, all stranded turtles should be scanned for PIT tags. At the very least, any turtle with a flipper tag scar should be scanned. When entering a PIT tag ID, include any hyphens that are shown on the screen of the PIT tag scanner and note the location of the PIT tag. A close-up photograph in which the PIT tag ID is legible on the screen of the PIT tag scanner should also be taken and submitted.
- **Living tags.** Living tags are skin grafts from the lighter colored plastron to the darker colored carapace and vice versa. Living tags appear as circular or elliptical whitish spots on the carapace and as dark spots on the plastron. A turtle with a living tag on the carapace should have one on the plastron.
- **Tracking gear.** Tracking gear includes satellite, sonic, or radio transmitters. Satellite and sonic transmitters are usually on the highest portion of the carapace, but sonic transmitters may be placed along the margin of the carapace. If found, describe the tracking gear and where it was located. If you find a stranded sea turtle with tracking gear, do not attempt to remove the equipment from the turtle.

**TAKE MEASUREMENTS:** Take two carapace length measurements (notch to tip and notch to notch) and one carapace width measurement (at widest point). Always take curved carapace measurements when possible, using a nonmetal (vinyl), flexible tape measure placed directly on the carapace. It is okay to measure over barnacles. Straight carapace measurements (taken only with calipers) are optional except in the case of a turtle with a flipper tag or a PIT tag, or with tracking gear. Always note the unit of measurement (centimeter or inch). If measurements are estimated, be sure to note this along with a description of how the estimate was made.



**NOTE TAIL LENGTH:** Note whether the tail extends past the carapace by at least 5 cm (2 inches) in the case of a Kemp's ridley or olive ridley, at least 10 cm (4 inches) in the case of a loggerhead, green turtle, or hawksbill, or at least 15 cm (6 inches) in the case of a leatherback. If so, tail length should be measured from the posterior marginal tip of the carapace to the tip of the tail using a flexible measuring tape. Be sure to note the unit of measurement (centimeter or inch).

**CHECK FOR THE PRESENCE OF ANTHROPOGENIC (I.E., MAN-MADE) MATERIAL:** Anthropogenic material of interest does not include research-related items that were purposely attached to the turtle as part of a study (e.g., satellite transmitter, flipper tag). Any anthropogenic material that is found associated with the stranded sea turtle should be thoroughly documented by photographs (both on the turtle and separately). The photographs should clearly show all aspects of the material and include a scale marker (particularly in the case of fishing gear; **SEE PAGE 7**). The material should be arranged such that all components are visible in the photos. Buoy lines can have various knots, loops, breakaway/weak links, and weights, and fishing gear can have various hooks, clips, weights, spacers, and crimps (**SEE PAGE 8**). If present, all of these should be clearly visible in photographs. If a turtle is found entangled in netting, stretch-out and photograph all aspects of the netting (including the float line and weight line if present; **SEE PAGE 9**). For anthropogenic material associated with known recreational hook and line captures, the gear does not need to be saved. For anthropogenic material associated with traditional strandings, the material does not need to be saved if there is only line present. If there is a hook or any other component present (including leaders), salvage all these along with a sample of the line. When possible, save traps/pots, trap and buoy lines, buoys, ropes, and nets. Please consult your STSSN coordinator for any questions regarding collection or disposal of anthropogenic material found associated with a stranded turtle.

**CHECK FOR INJURIES:** The injuries of interest are those of significance to sea turtle conservation and recovery based on potential association with the cause of stranding, indication of human interaction, or implication on health and fitness. This includes any healing or healed wounds that are identifiable as any of the injury types included here. All reported injuries should be specifically photographed and include a scale marker. Injuries to look for are as follows:

- **Definitive vessel-strike injury.** This is a discrete linear or curvilinear chop wound. In stranded sea turtles, these wounds are almost always created by the propeller, skeg, or rudder. A typical example is a series of parallel chop wounds caused by a vessel propeller (although a single chop wound is also common). An important feature is that bone and other tissue are destroyed as the propeller or other sharp components pass through it, leaving a gap (sometimes this gap is very narrow). Alternately, parts of the head, appendages, or shell may be sheared away (sometimes the body can be cut in half). **SEE PAGES 10 AND 11.**
- **Blunt force injuries.** This type of injury can also result in fractures of the head, carapace, or plastron, and often involve large or discrete areas of the body, depressing (crushing) the fractured bone, lacerating (tearing) the skin, and/or resulting in exposure of organs or soft tissue. Blunt force injuries often accompany definitive vessel strike injuries, and their presence does not need to be noted when a definitive vessel-strike injury is noted. In other words, only note blunt force injuries when definitive vessel-strike injuries are not noted. **SEE PAGES 12 AND 13.**
- **Shark-bite injuries.** Shark-bite injuries are characterized by sharp incisions, typically observed as multiple adjacent wounds. Common features include deep scoring of bone and soft tissue, amputation or removal of body parts, or wounds created in a semicircular pattern. **SEE PAGE 14.**
- **Amputation of unknown cause.** The sea turtle is missing 50% or more of at least one flipper **and** the site of amputation shows signs of healing or is healed. Loss of a flipper due (or possibly due) to decomposition should not be recorded as an amputation. If the amputation can be specifically attributed to a cause such as entanglement or a shark bite, note the amputation as an injury in the more specific category.
- **Incised wound.** These are wounds inflicted by humans and may occur under circumstances such as malicious injury, postmortem specimen collection, or butchery of turtles for meat. This includes injuries that are cleanly incised as created by a knife or other sharp instrument. In general, these cuts tend to be longer and more continuous than those created by shark bites and the margins are cleanly cut (not tattered) compared to injuries caused by other scavengers. Common patterns include incisions made to remove the plastron, appendages, head, or specific parts of soft tissue, or inflicted across the neck. **SEE PAGE 15.**
- **Perforating or penetrating wound.** A perforating or penetrating wound is deeper than it is wide. Penetrating wounds extend into tissues whereas perforating wounds pass all the way through the affected structure. In lay terms, these are often described as “holes” in a body part or tissues. Causes observed in sea turtles include wounds created by projectiles (firearms, spearguns), sharp manmade objects such as fishing hooks and gaffs, and objects from nature such as fish bones, stingray barbs, and sea urchin spines. If an injury is already identified as a definitive vessel-strike injury, it would not also be identified as a perforating or penetrating wound. **SEE PAGE 15.**
- **Entanglement wound.** These are depressions or wounds that partially or completely encircle the neck or appendages as caused when linear material becomes wrapped around part of the body. In more severe, chronic (long-term) injuries to flippers, the area distal to the injury may become swollen or the skin and deeper tissues may be discolored or detaching. **SEE PAGE 16.**
- **Beak furrow.** This is a smooth, rounded indentation along the edge of the beak (usually on the upper beak near the jaw hinge) and can occur when the turtle ingests a linear foreign object such as fishing line and then pulls against it. **SEE PAGE 16.**

- **Other injury.** This is any other injury that may have contributed to the cause of stranding, resulted from human interaction, or significantly compromised health and fitness, and that has not been previously captured in any other section. This includes major chronic or healed injuries (e.g., loss of large portions of the shell, skeletal fractures) of uncertain cause. There is no need to note minor, nonspecific injuries such as a notch in the webbing of a flipper or along the carapace margin.

**CHECK FOR INDICATIONS OF DISEASES OR THE PRESENCE OF LEECHES:** Note any external evidence of disease or possible disease. This includes the presence of externally visible masses such as the tumors associated with fibropapillomatosis, skin lesions, and leeches or leech eggs. Anything noted should be photographically documented. The photographs should clearly show all features noted and include a scale marker. Specifically note any of the following:

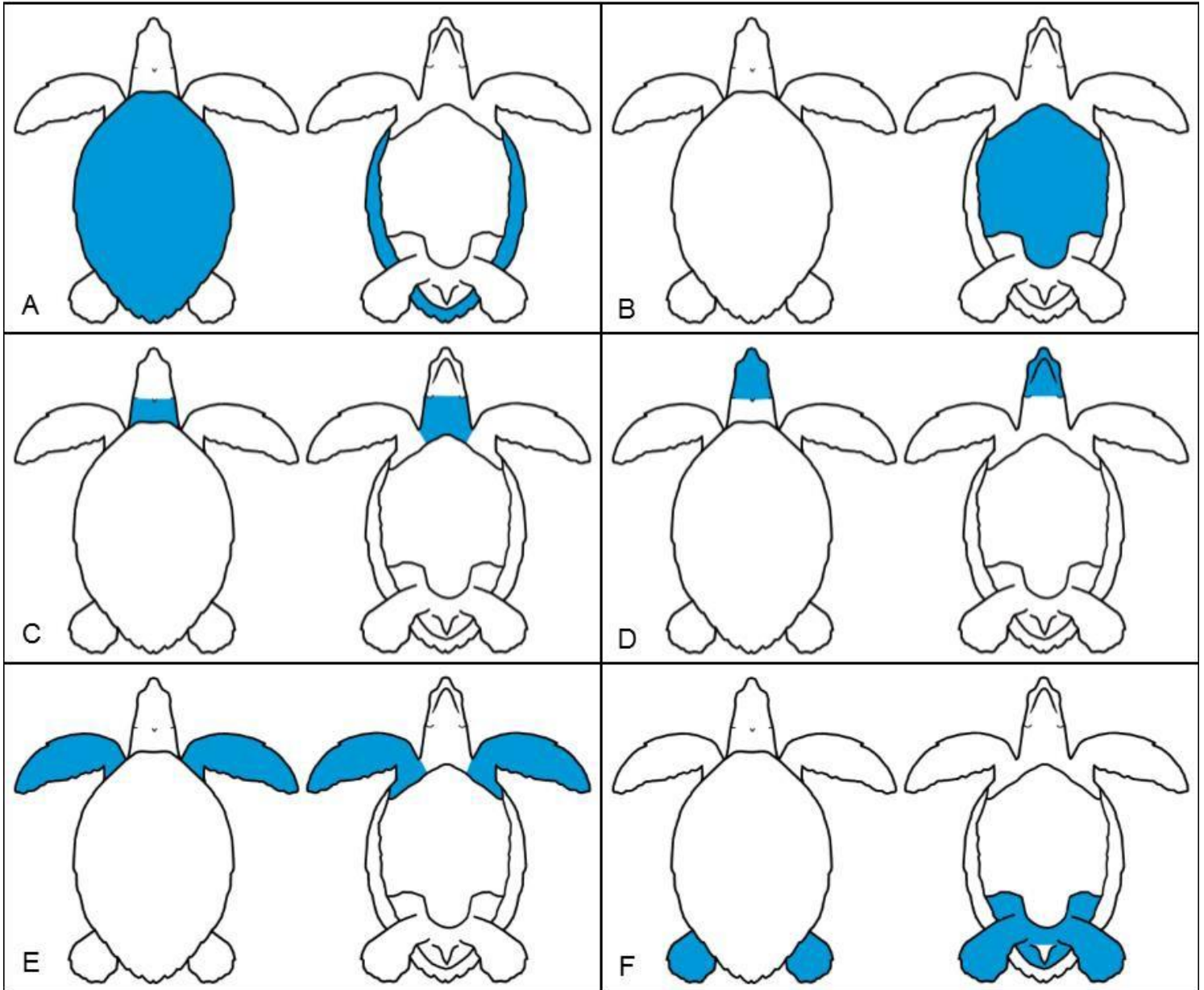
- **Fibropapilloma-like tumors.** These masses typically have a papillary or cauliflower-like (verrucous) surface attached to the skin by a broad or narrow base. The surface also may appear smooth or ulcerated. These tumors exhibit various degrees of pigmentation, from pink to black and may be less than a cm to many cm in size. If present, note if any have a papillary texture or are evident on the eyes or in the mouth. **SEE PAGES 17 AND 18.**
- **Non-fibropapilloma-like tumors.** This includes any tumor-like growth involving the skin that does not have the features of a fibropapilloma-like tumor as well as abnormalities that likely are not true tumors (i.e., that are non-neoplastic), such as aberrant accumulations of scar tissue or inflammatory material (e.g., abscesses). A common feature of these apparent tumors is that their external appearance is one of a space-occupying mass that extends from or upheaves the skin but does not have the characteristics of a fibropapilloma-like tumor or is not obviously associated with an identifiable injury. These include masses where the overlying skin exhibits normal coloration and scales. **SEE PAGE 18.**
- **Skin lesions.** Skin lesion is a general term for any abnormality of the skin. Note any abnormalities that manifest as inflammation or ulceration of the skin, which can occur because of trauma, due to organisms that live on the skin, or because of infections by bacteria, fungi, or viruses. Do not note skin lesions here that are associated with injuries, such as shark bites. **Superficial crusts** are recognizable as areas of the skin with a yellow- or tan-colored crust. In lay terms, **deep lesions** could be described as open sores that expose tissue below the skin. **SEE PAGES 19 AND 20.**
- **Leeches.** Adult leeches attach to the skin of sea turtles and suck blood. They tend to be found in the corners of the mouth, around the cloaca, on the neck, and around the base of the flippers. They are typically 1-2 cm in length and are pinkish in color. Their eggs are found as patches of brown, circular cocoons that adhere to the skin, especially on the plastron and the undersurfaces of the carapace and flippers. **SEE PAGE 21.**

**LOOK INSIDE THE MOUTH:** Opening and carefully examining the mouth (oral cavity) is an easy and useful addition to a standard external examination. For example, one or more hooks may be present in the mouth of a stranded turtle and this important finding may go undocumented if the oral cavity is not examined. This is not usually recommended for live turtles in the field. If a live turtle is taken to a rehabilitation facility, an examination of the mouth will be done there. On dead turtles, an instrument such as a heavy screwdriver can be used to pry open the mouth.

## FIELD REFERENCE MATERIAL

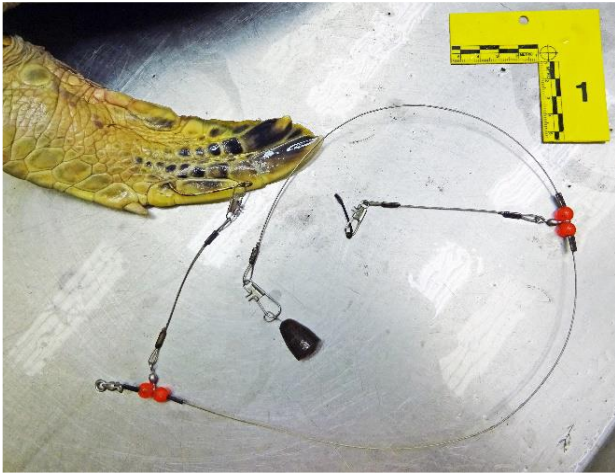
### BODY AREA CATEGORIES USED WHEN DESCRIBING THE LOCATION OF EXTERNAL ANOMALIES.

(A) Carapace- includes the ventral portion of the marginals. (B) Plastron. (C) Neck- includes the region between the carapace and the skull (dorsally) and the plastron and the skull (ventrally). (D) Head- includes all external surfaces over the skull. (E) Front Flippers- includes the shoulders and the axilla (armpits). (F) Rear Flippers- includes the prefemoral (inguinal) areas. Not shown here are the Mouth (the oral cavity; this is an internal surface but should be included in an external examination) and the Tail.

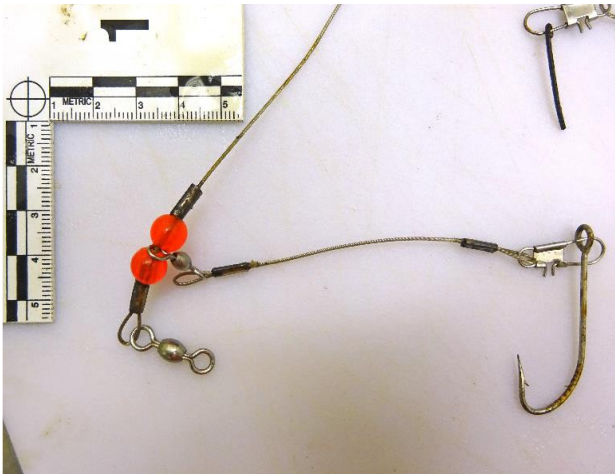
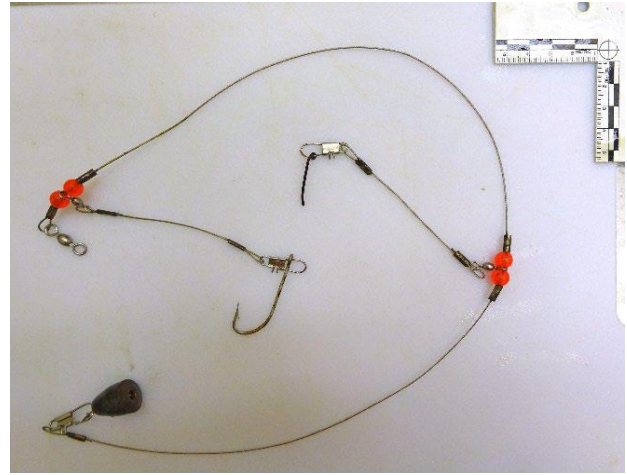




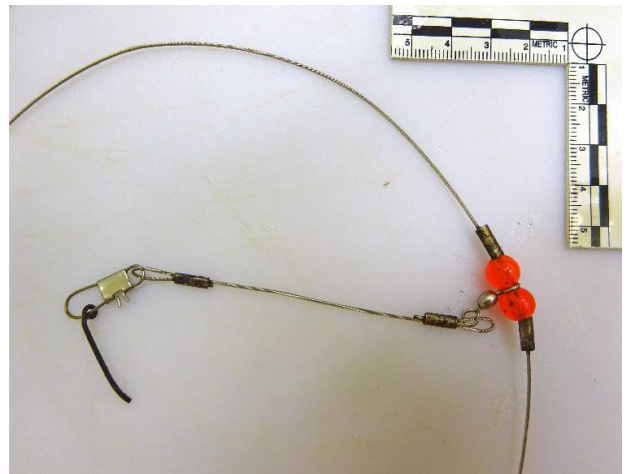
## DOCUMENTING ANTHROPOGENIC MATERIAL - HOOK AND LINE GEAR



**Example: Green turtle with embedded hook attached to a leader and multiple accessories.** Take a photo that shows all of the gear/tackle with a ruler or scale. Use a dark background for light colored or transparent line.



Take closer images of all aspects of the material to clearly show how they are attached or arranged. Always include a ruler in the photo for scale.



Focus on each specific element so that the shape and size are clearly visible. Again, include a ruler or scale.

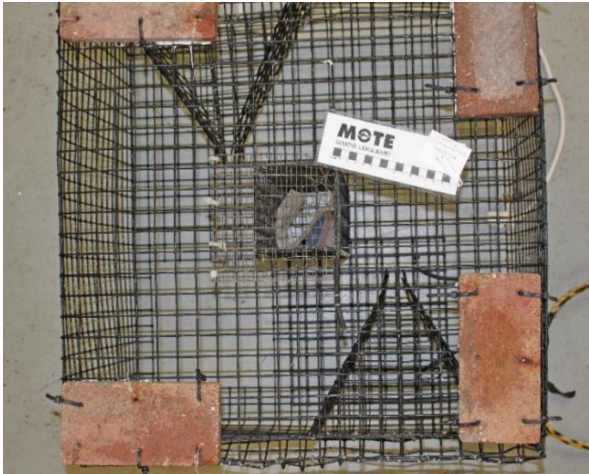
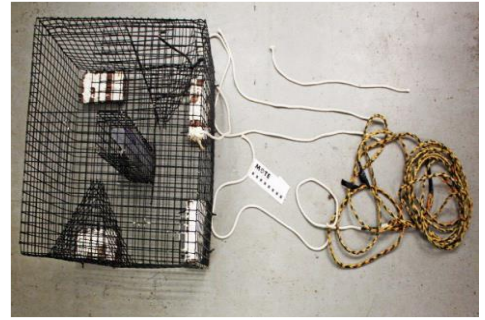




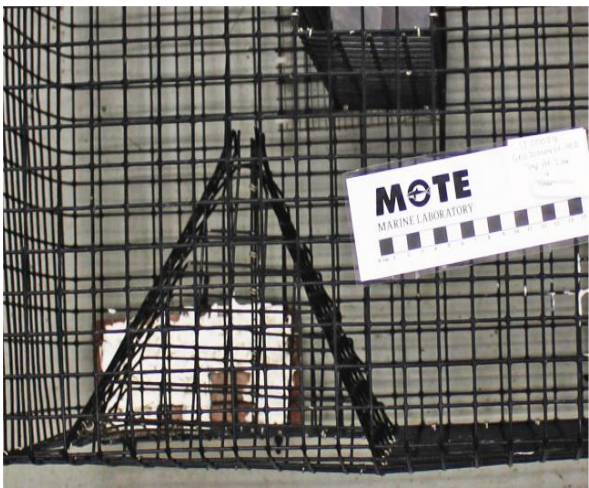
## DOCUMENTING ANTHROPOGENIC MATERIAL – BUOY LINE OF TRAP/POT GEAR



**Example: Loggerhead turtle entangled in trap/pot gear.** Take a photo that shows all the gear as intact as possible with a ruler or scale. Include any lines, weights, or floats.



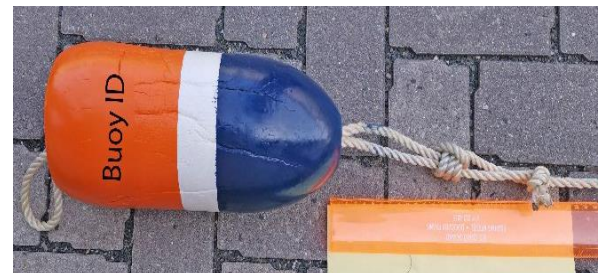
Take photos of multiple sides of the pot/ trap to clearly show its size and shape and any features, such as openings, escape rings and bait holders.



Trap component close-ups:  
Take closer images of any tags, identifiers or numbers, opening, and other trap features.

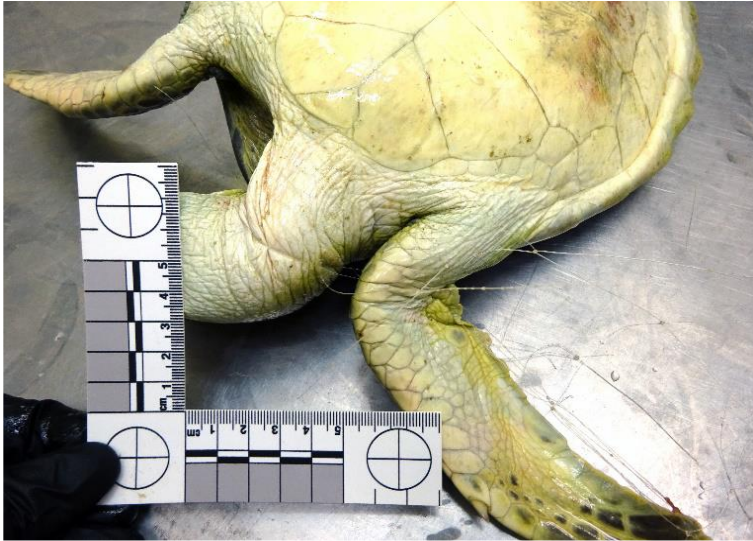


Take photos of buoys and line. Include close-ups of any knots, loops, weak links, numbers or identifiers, or other components.

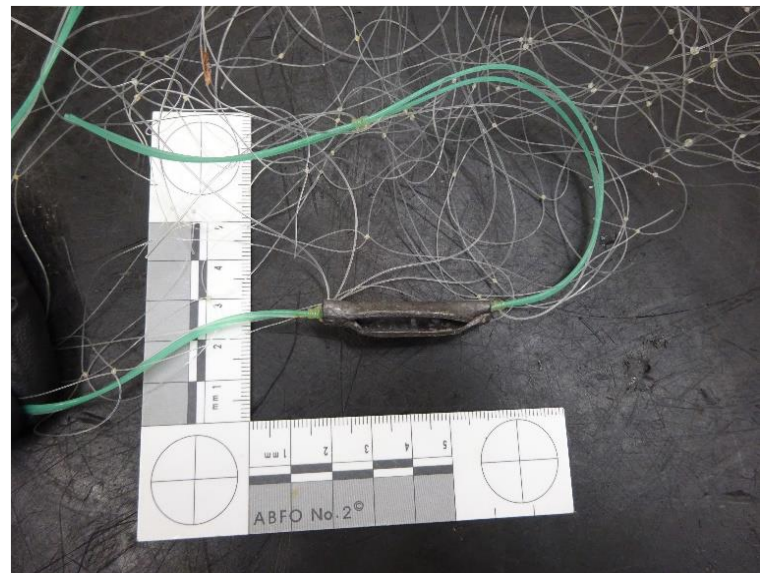
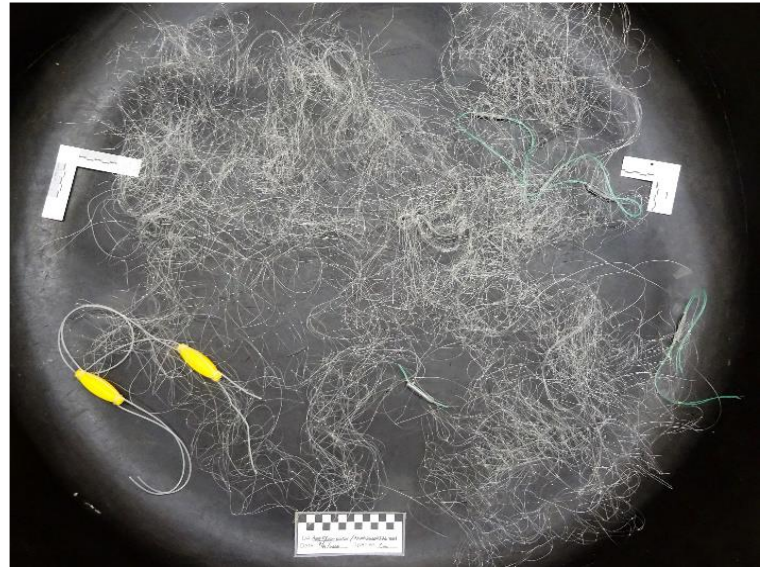
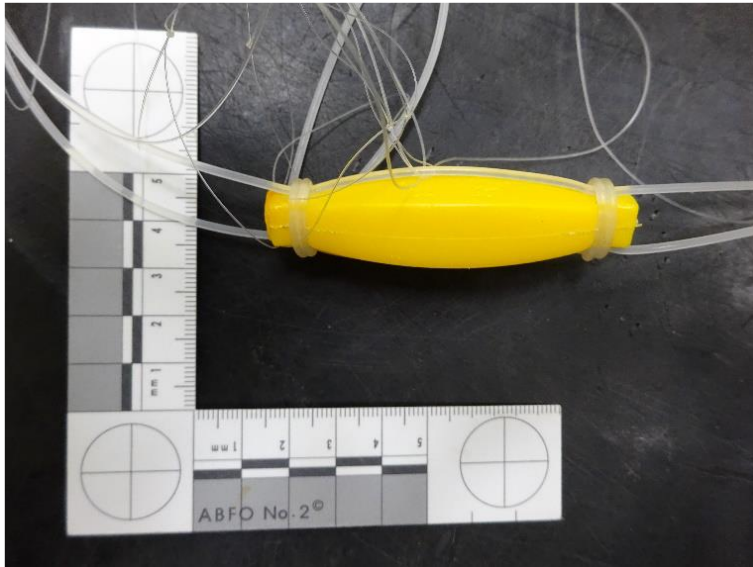




## DOCUMENTING ANTHROPOGENIC MATERIAL – NETS



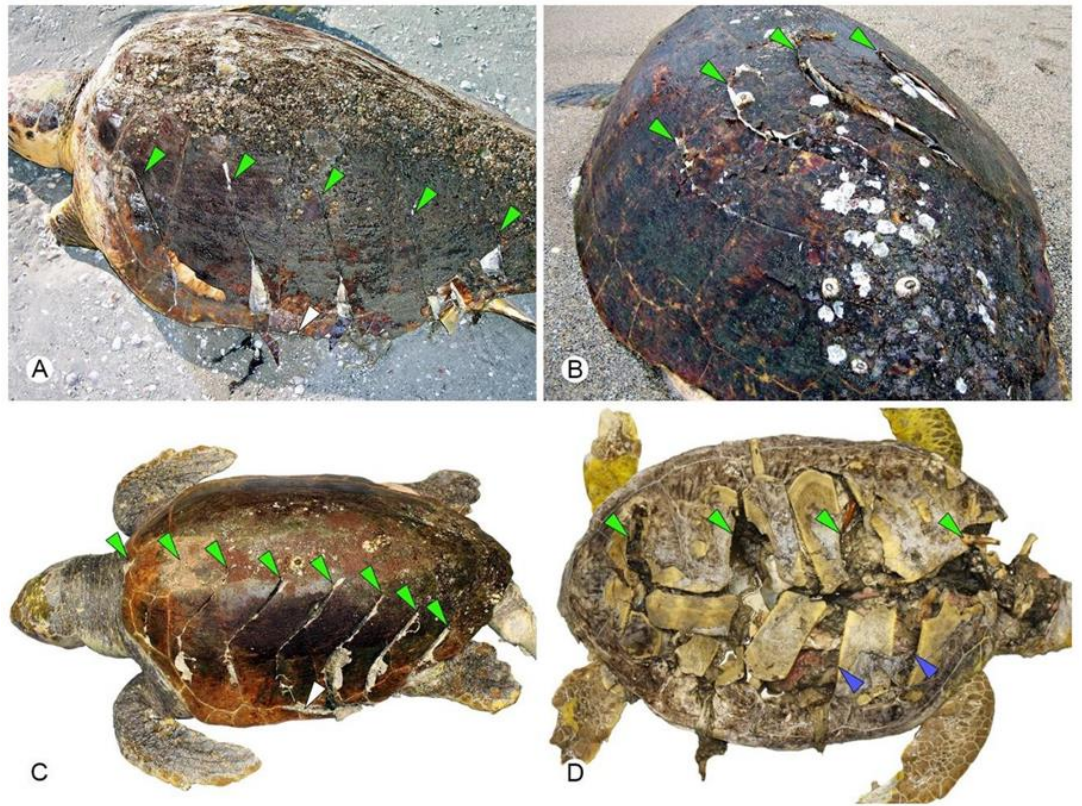
**Example: Green turtle entangled in monofilament gillnet.** Take a photo that shows all the netting as intact as possible with a ruler or scale. 1) Spread out the netting as much as possible. 2) Use a dark background for transparent netting. 3) Include any lines, weights, or floats.



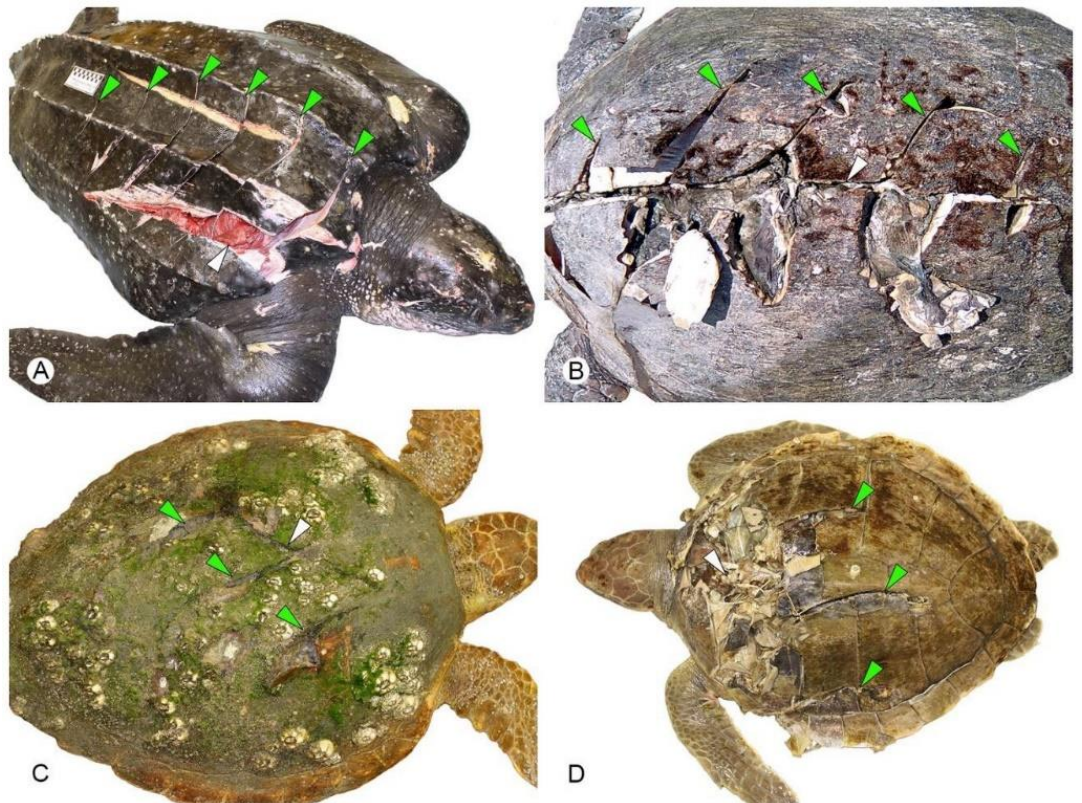


## IDENTIFYING INJURIES – DEFINITIVE VESSEL-STRIKE INJURIES

**Examples of definitive vessel strike injuries.** These examples show multiple parallel chop wounds caused by boat propellers. The depth and angle of penetration into the body and characteristics of the propeller influence whether the wounds are straight (A), curved (B), or sigmoidal (C). (D) Propeller wounds can be detected even if the carcass is coming apart due to fractures or decomposition. However, it is important to distinguish chop wounds (green arrowheads) from postmortem separation of shell bones (disarticulation) resulting from decomposition (blue arrowheads).



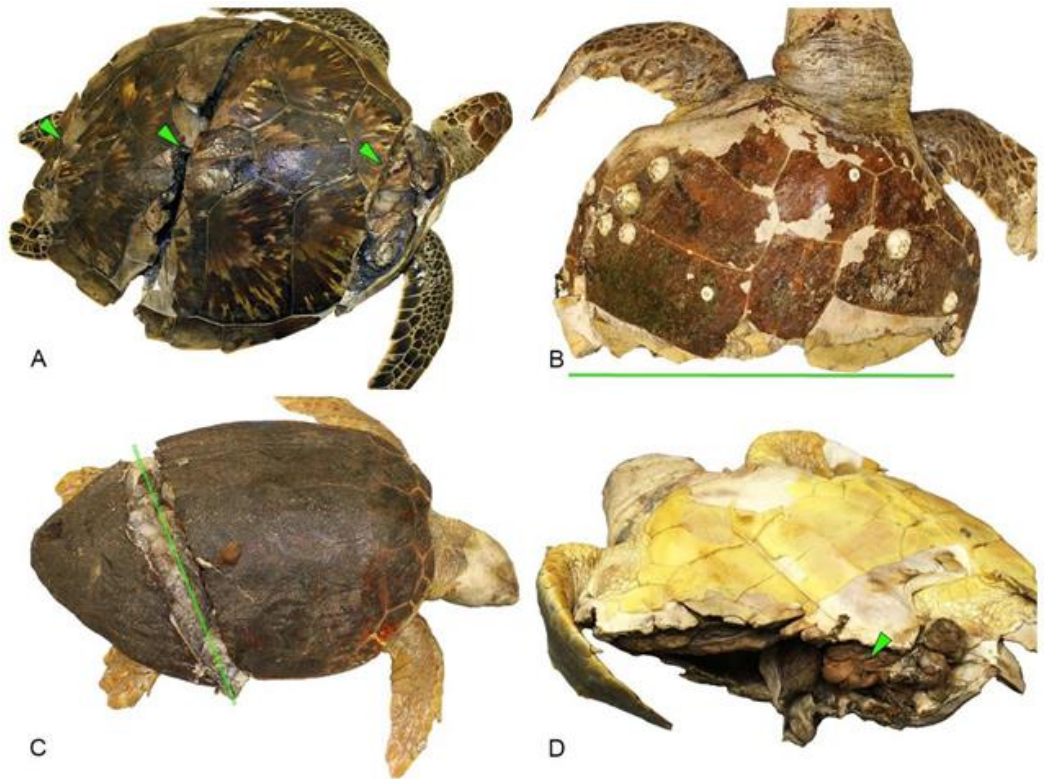
**Examples of definitive vessel strike injuries.** These examples show typical injuries caused by boat propellers and skegs or rudders. Boat propellers cause multiple parallel chop wounds (green arrowheads). Rudders or skegs produce linear sharp and blunt injuries (white arrowhead) that intersect or border those caused by the propeller. Skeg or rudder injuries may be offset from, as shown in (A–D), or centered on the propeller wounds (B).



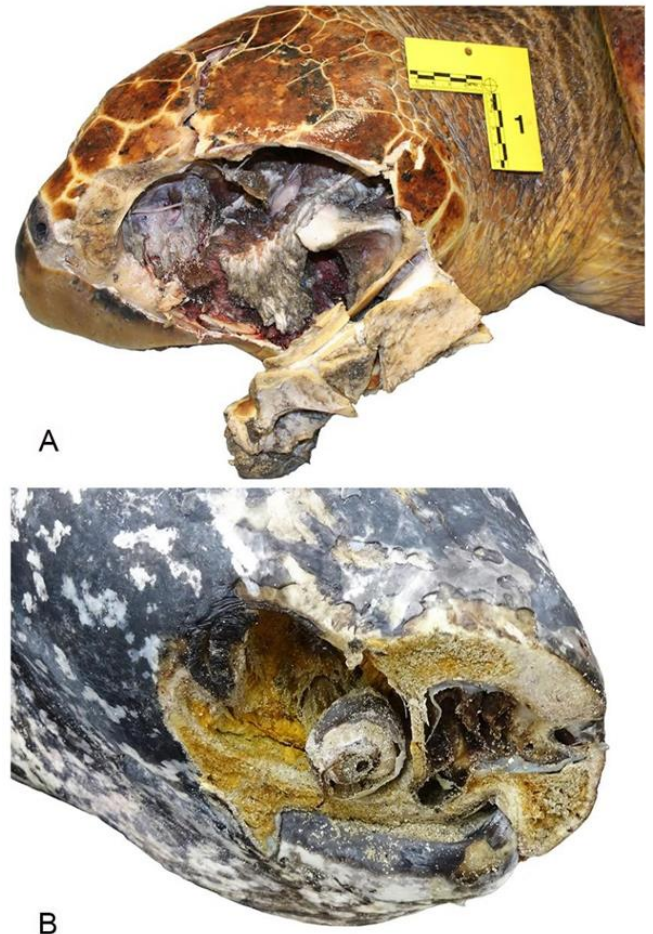


## IDENTIFYING INJURIES – DEFINITIVE VESSEL-STRIKE INJURIES (CONTINUED)

**Examples of definitive vessel strike injuries.** These are examples of wounds caused by large propellers. Large propellers can have greater distance between the strikes, as shown in (A), or may completely transect turtles as shown in (B–D). A key feature of single large propeller strikes shown here is the straight wound path (green line).

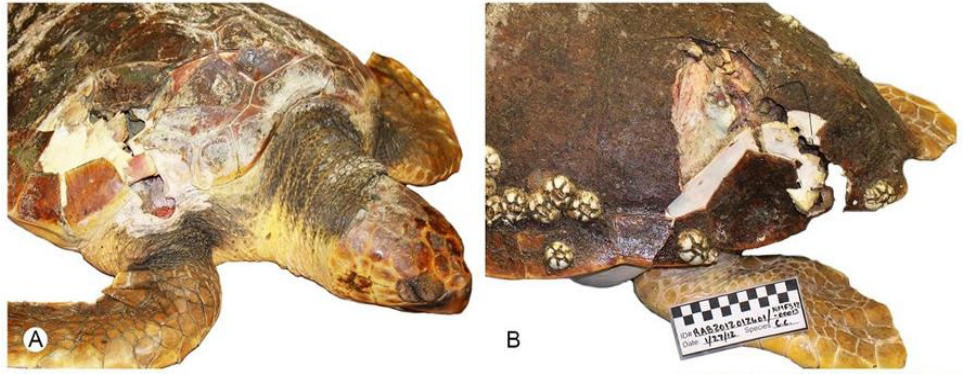


**Examples of definitive vessel strike injuries.** Single or oblique chop wounds can occur on the head without necessarily striking the body. Note how cleanly the bone is cleaved away in these injuries (A and B), like the shell wounds shown in earlier examples.

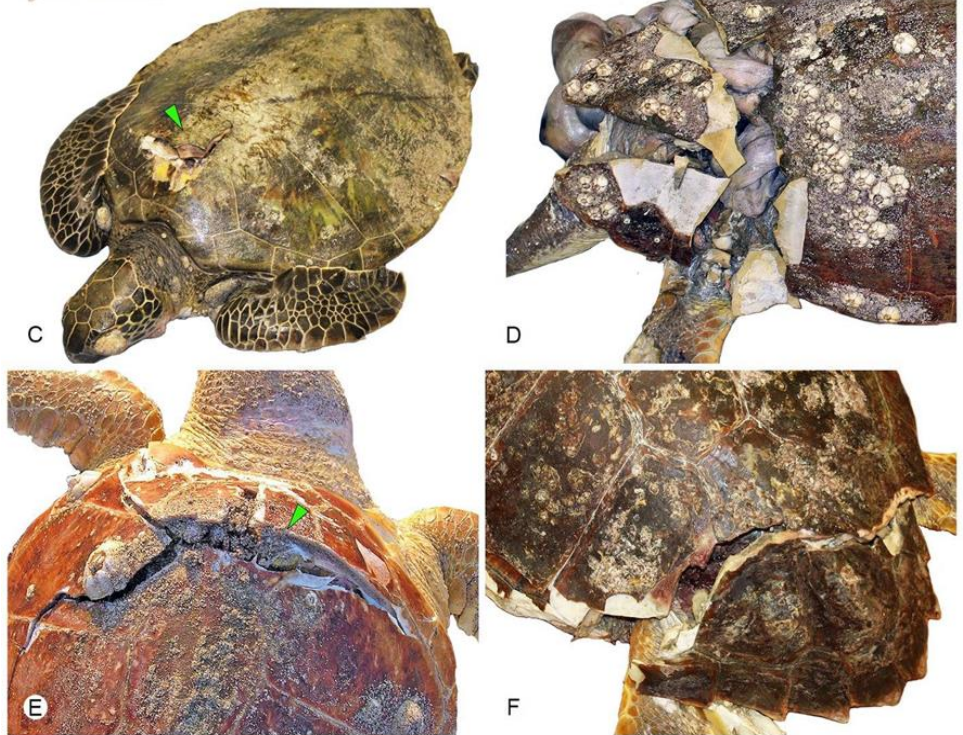




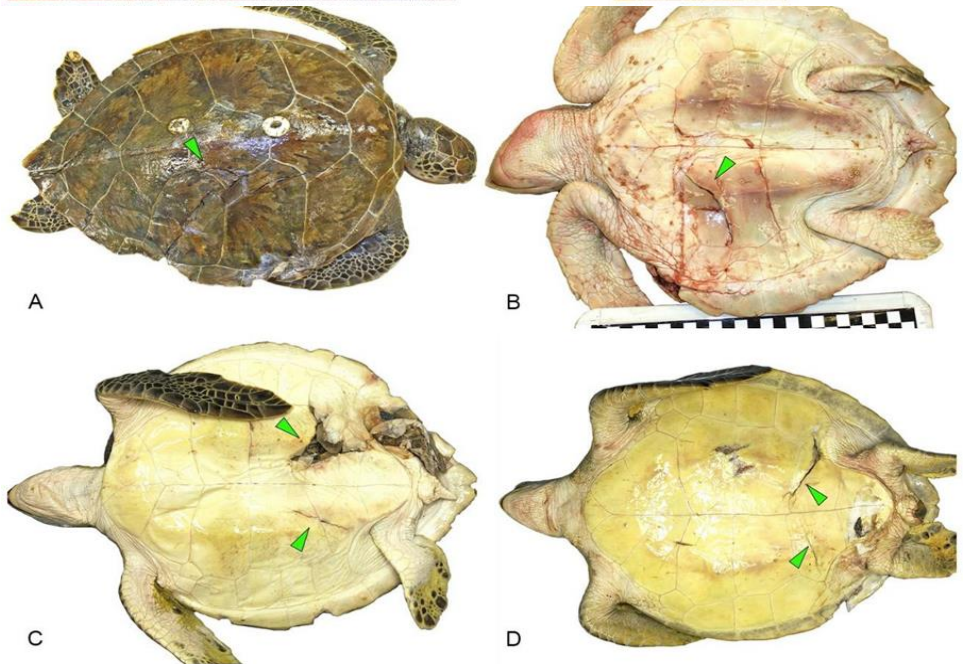
## IDENTIFYING INJURIES – BLUNT FORCE INJURIES



**Examples of blunt force injuries.** Blunt force injuries are defined in the STSSN database as fractures (often depressed) and associated tearing of the skin involving the large or discrete areas of the head or shell. These are most commonly attributable to being struck by blunt parts of vessels. Note that all these examples (A-F) lack the discrete chop wounds caused by rotating propellers, skegs, or rudders.



**Examples of blunt force injuries.** (A) Fractures of the shell may radiate out from the area of impact and can resemble curved chop wounds. However, note the absence of a clearly identifiable wound path as shown in examples of definitive vessel strike injuries. (B-D) Blunt trauma frequently results in fractures of the plastron bones.





## IDENTIFYING INJURIES – BLUNT FORCE INJURIES (CONTINUED)



A

**Examples of blunt force injuries.** These can occur on the head as well as the body. As in the previous examples, there are multiple fractures that tend to be depressed by the blow (A-C). The wounds generally appear messier or less defined than those shown for definitive vessel strike injuries.



B



C



## IDENTIFYING INJURIES – SHARK BITE WOUNDS

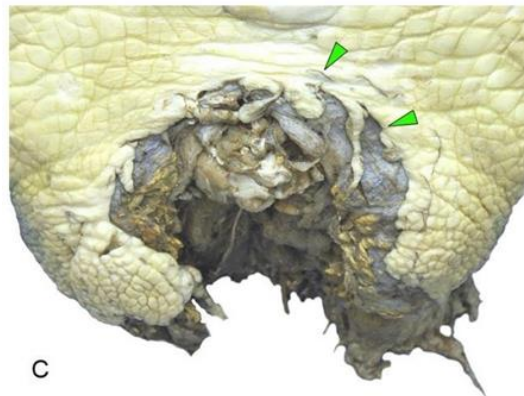
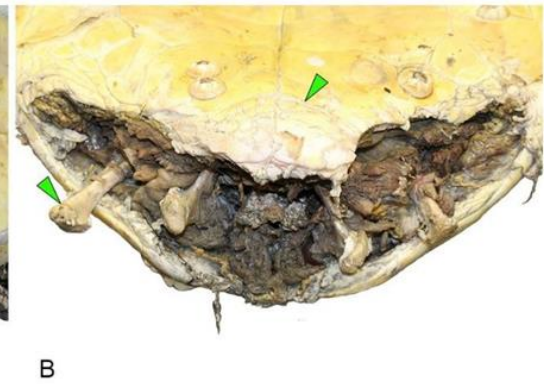
### Examples of shark bite wounds on the body.

(A) Shark teeth are very sharp and cleanly cut into the skin and soft tissue, causing multiple adjacent, often curved, or semi-circular wounds. (B) Tissue may be removed in a typical semi-circular pattern. (C) The sharp teeth will shred the scutes of the shell and created grooves in the underlying bone. This is a typical example of a bite wound along the margin of the carapace. The corresponding other half of the bite wound may be on the lower shell (plastron) or the other side of carapace. (D) With older wounds, the same pattern may be recognizable despite healing, as in this example.



### Examples of the shark bite wounds involving the head, neck, and appendages.

(A) The sharp teeth cleanly remove limbs or tissue. Often individual tooth marks are visible at the margins (arrowheads). (B) Sharply incised teeth marks and cuts in exposed bone and on the skin (arrowheads) are telltale indications of shark bites. (C) Sharks may remove the entire head; note the shredded wound margins caused by sharp teeth. (D) Sharks may “sample” bite potential prey or bite multiple times to get a hold of a turtle or appendage; this can cause multiple overlapping wounds with different orientations. The key feature is series of multiple sharp wounds created by their teeth.

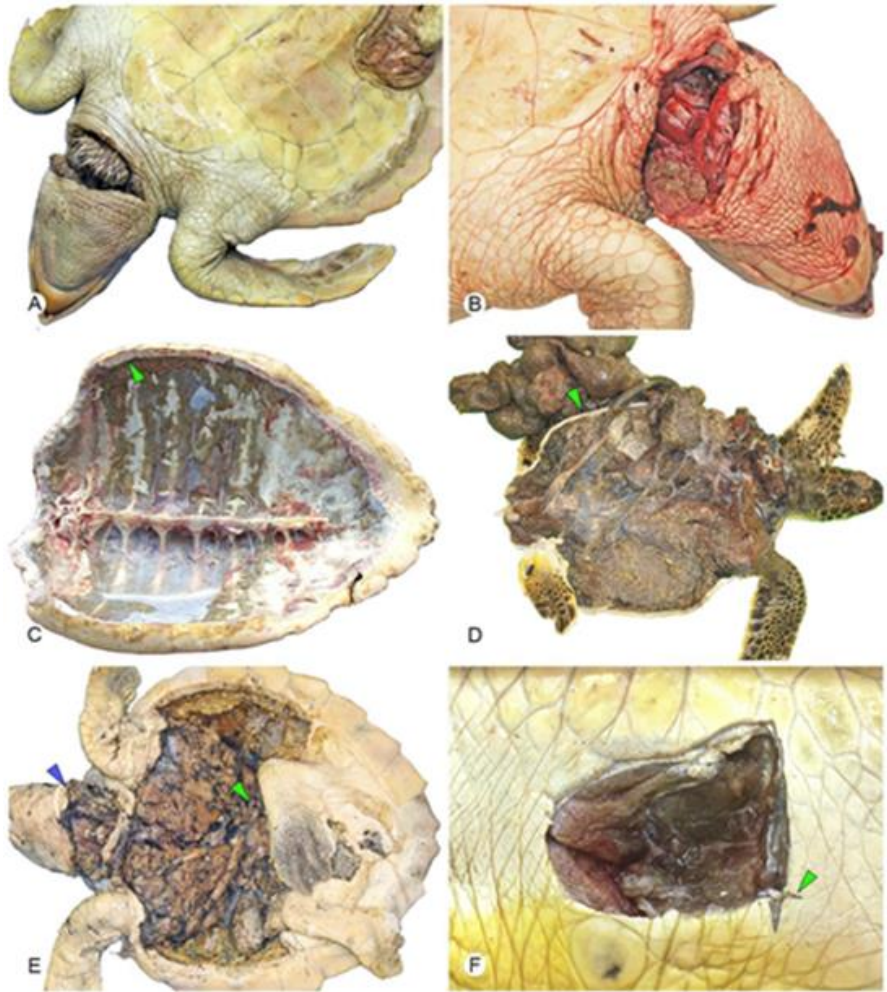




## IDENTIFYING INJURIES – INCISED, PENETRATING, AND PERFORATING INJURIES

### Examples of incised wounds and mutilation created with knives or other cutting instruments.

(A, B) Sharply incised wound across the neck. Note the cleanly cut margins. (C) The carapace that has been separated from the body and much of the soft tissue has been removed. Note the cleanly cut surfaces where the plastron was cut away (arrowhead). (D) Example of remains after the carapace has been removed. Clean cuts (arrowhead) around the plastron are visible. (E) The plastron in this turtle has been cleanly cut away (green arrowhead). Note another suspicious incised wound across the neck, like those seen in (A) and (B). (F) Skin and muscle cut away from the flipper. Note the intersection of cuts (green arrowhead), which can be indicators of an intentional human-caused wound.



### Examples of penetrating and perforating injuries.

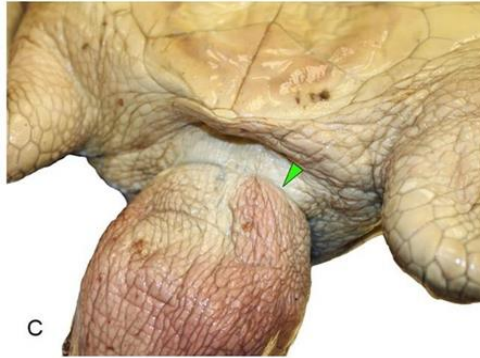
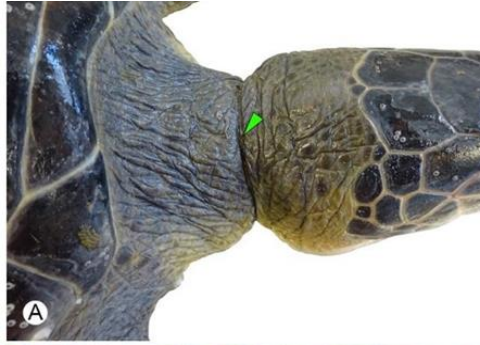
Penetrating and perforating injuries are deeper than their diameter. Penetrating wounds pass through a structure whereas perforating wounds do not exit the affected anatomy. (A) Two penetrating wounds in the carapace. (B) Penetrating wound in the head. (C, D) penetrating wounds in the lower jaw area. (E) Close-up of another penetrating wound. (F) Do not document injuries that are suspected or known to have been caused by scavengers as determined by field observations or necropsy. Note the bird tracks (arrowhead) in this example.



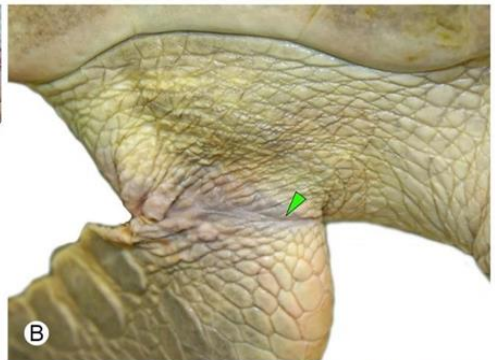
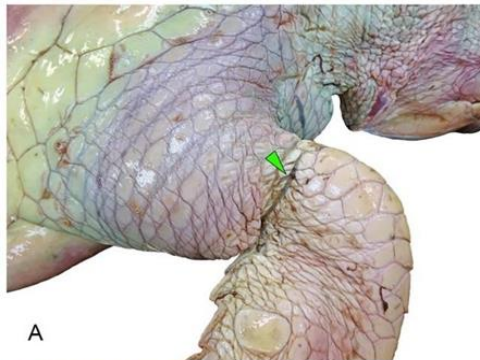


## IDENTIFYING INJURIES – ENTANGLEMENT WOUNDS

**Examples of entanglement wounds.** A-C. Circumferential depressions around the neck caused by entangling material. The thickness, characteristics, tightness, and duration of the entangling material influence the appearance of the wound. (A) and (C) are examples of wound from finer material, such as fishing line. Thicker material may cause a depression as shown in (B). (D) Do not confuse creases in the skin created by position of the carcass or bloating. Only document an entanglement type injury if a mark or wound are clearly visible.



**Examples of entanglement wounds.** A-D. Circumferential depressions and wounds around flippers caused by entangling material. The thickness, characteristics, tightness, and duration of the entangling material influence the appearance of the wound. (A) and (B) are examples of more recent wounds or without further damage to the skin or compromised circulation. (C) The material cut into the skin and muscle, exposing bone. (D) In this example, blood flow was cut off or reduced, causing death of tissues distal to the constriction. Note how the skin is darkly discolored and detaching compared to the skin above the ligature (arrowhead).



**Example of a beak furrow.** A furrow at the corner of the mouth due to ingested trailing line or other linear foreign material.



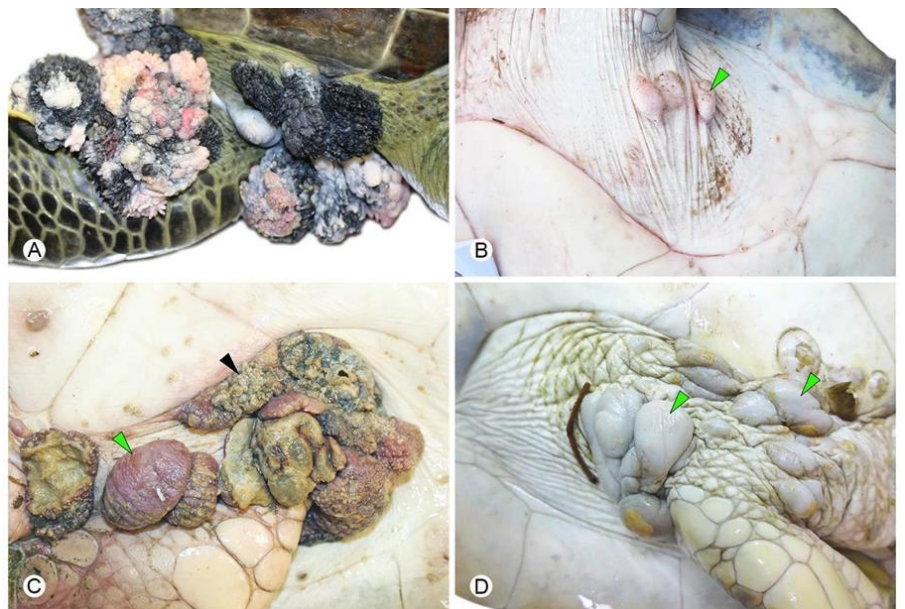


## IDENTIFYING DISEASE – FIBROPA PILLOMA-LIKE TUMORS

**Examples of fibropapillomas in sea turtles (noted as “fibropapilloma-like tumors”).** (A) Single tumor with a verrucous (cauliflower-like) surface and broad base. (B) Multiple tumors showing variation in coloration, including non-pigmented (white) tumors and darkly pigmented (black) tumors. (C) Tumors vary in size and can be ulcerated. Shown is a large tumor (and multiple adjacent smaller tumors). (D-F) Tumors also may have a smoother surface as shown in these three examples. If the surface lacks the normal scale pattern of the skin, as shown here, it is recorded as fibropapilloma-like tumors. If the skin overlying a mass has scales and is very similar to the surrounding skin, it is recorded as a “non-fibropapilloma-like tumor.”



**Examples of surface texture of fibropapilloma (FP) tumors.** In general, most FP tumors will have a papillary texture. (A) An example of multiple tumors with a papillary texture. (B) In this example, the surfaces of these FP tumors are more rounded, but you can still see some irregularity. (C) There are FP tumors with both smooth (green arrowhead) and papillary (black arrowhead) surfaces. (D) All of the FP tumors clearly have a smooth surface (none with a papillary texture).

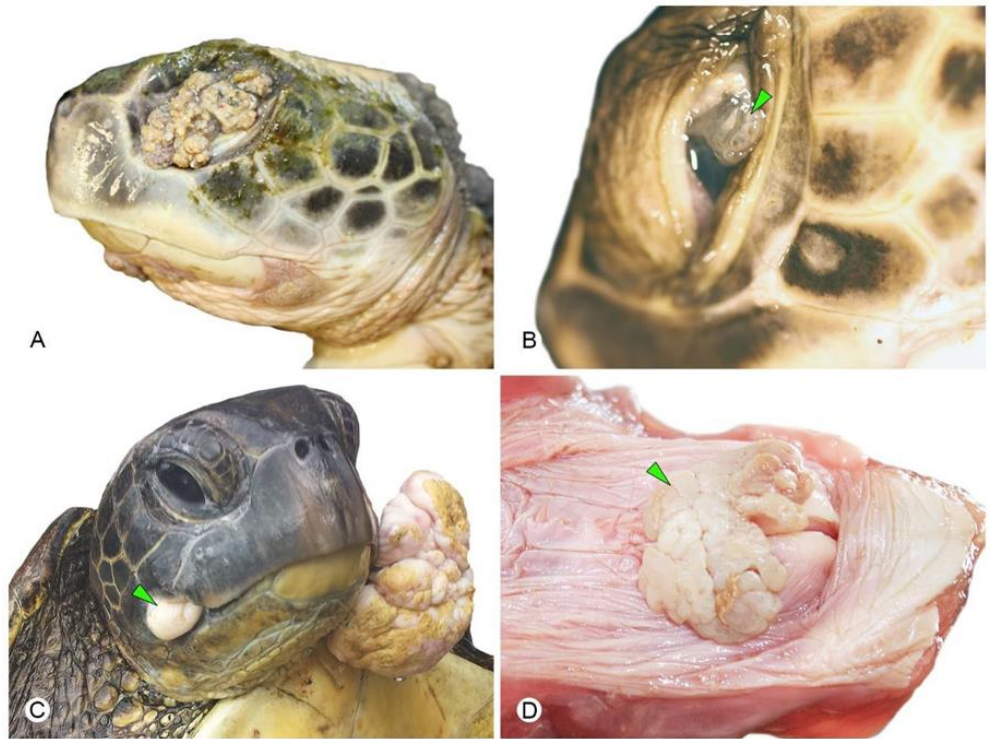




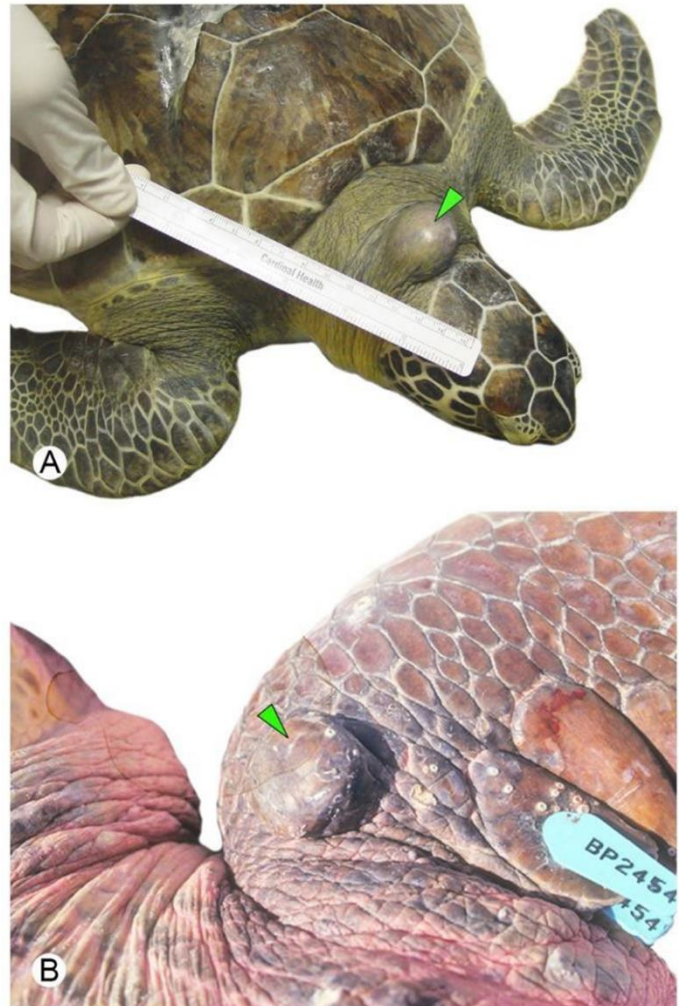
## IDENTIFYING DISEASE – FIBROPA PILLOMA-LIKE TUMORS (CONTINUED) AND NON-FP TUMORS

### Examples of fibropapilloma tumors involving the eyes and mouth.

(A) FP tumor growth completely obscures the eye. (B) A smaller growth arises from the margin of eye. This is a common location where tumors begin to form. Any tumors that clearly arise from or otherwise prevent the eye from being seen are considered as being ocular tumors regardless of size or extent. (C) Oral tumors protruding from the sides of the mouth. (D) The exposed tongue and glottis showing a tumor (green arrowhead). Any tumor protruding from or visible within the mouth is an oral tumor.



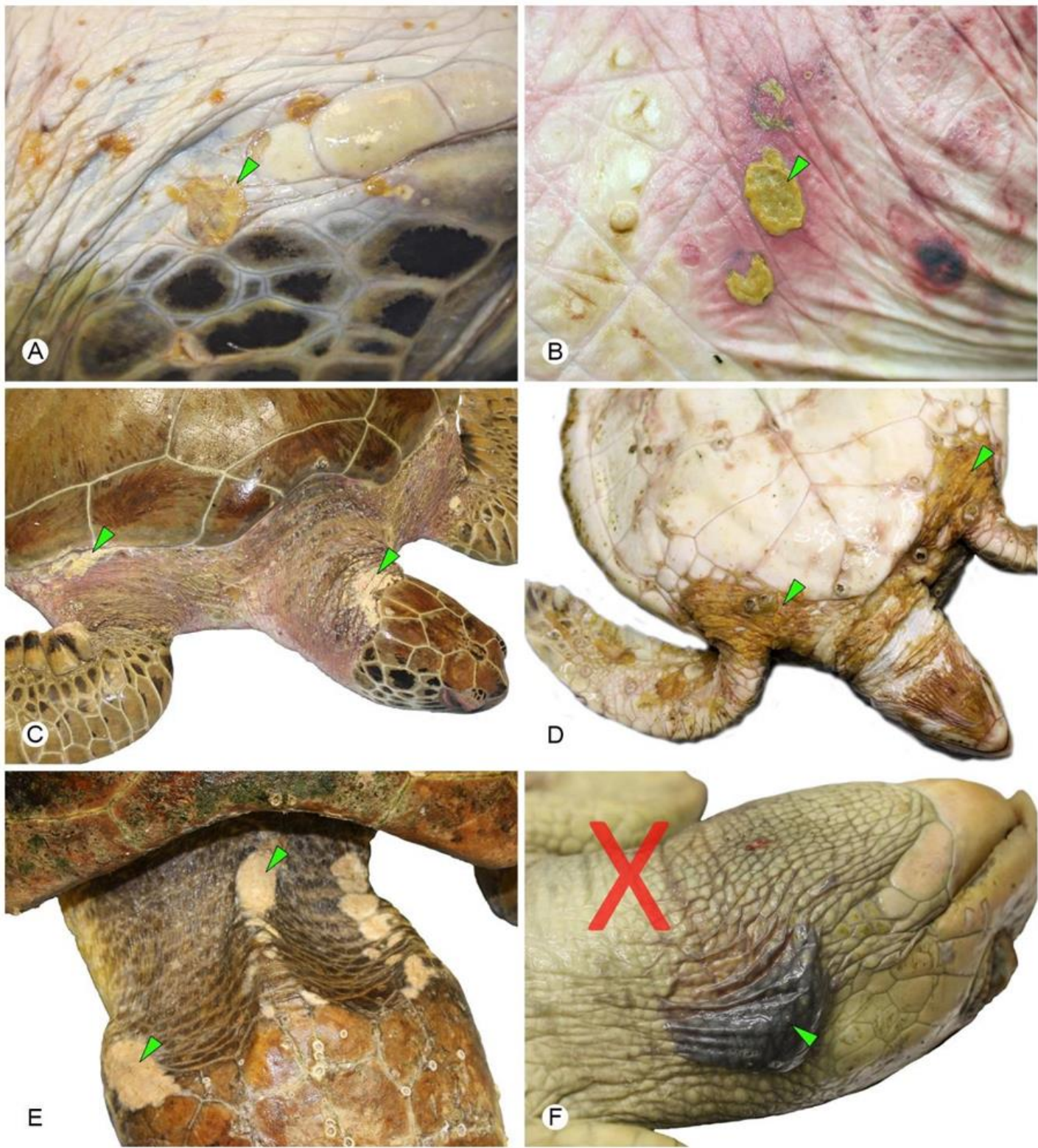
**Examples of tumors that are recorded as “non-fibropapilloma-like tumors.”** Note that these tumors are well-defined space-occupying masses that elevate the skin, are not associated with any apparent injuries, and are covered by skin that still has a recognizable scale or skin pattern like the surrounding skin (A and B).





**IDENTIFYING DISEASE – SUPERFICIAL CRUSTS AND DEEP LESIONS**

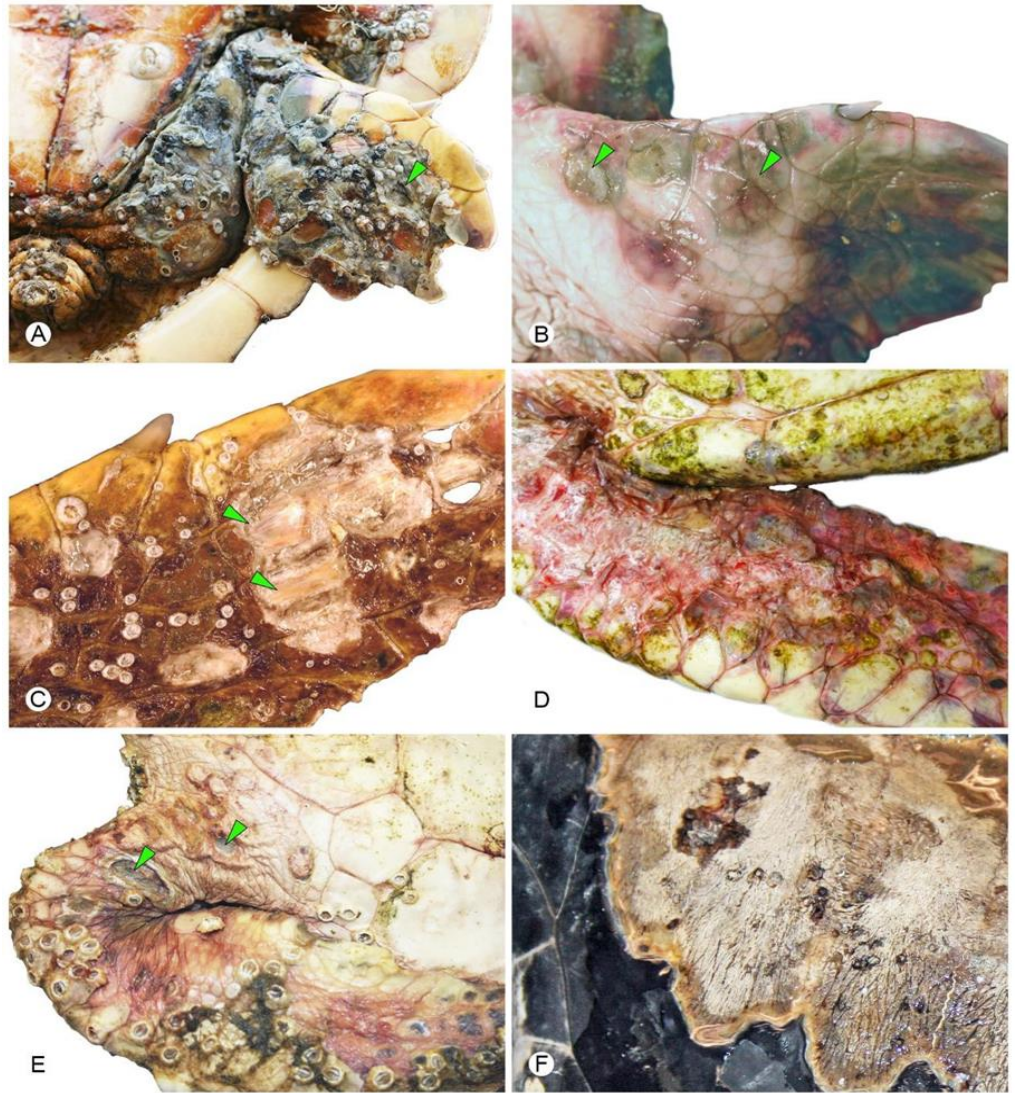
**Examples of superficial crusts on the skin surface.** (A-E) All of the examples are characterized by the formation of yellow or tan crusts. The lesions are neither depressed nor is deeper tissue exposed. (F) Detachment of the outer layers of the skin occurs postmortem and should not be confused with a skin lesion (or injury).



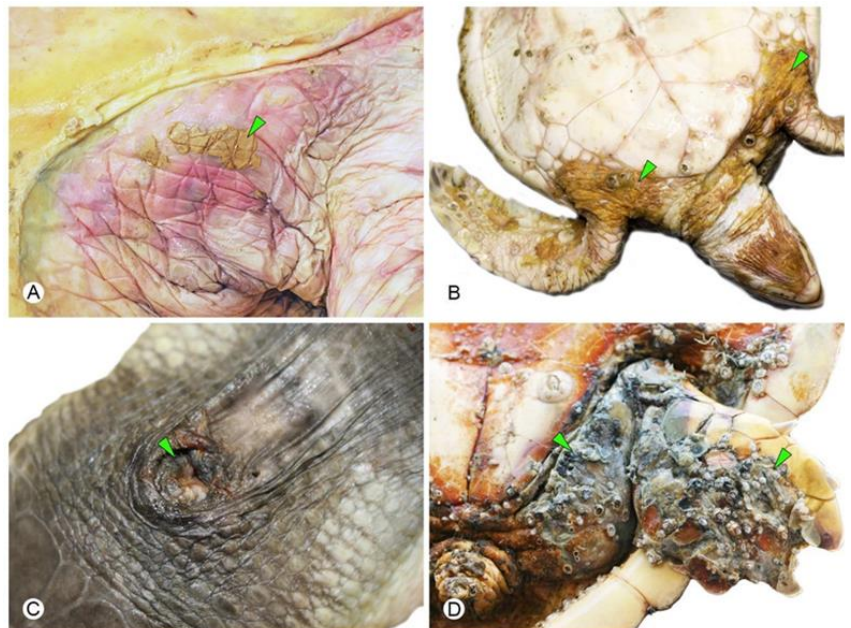


## IDENTIFYING DISEASE – SUPERFICIAL CRUSTS AND DEEP LESIONS (CONTINUED)

**Examples of deep skin lesions.** (A) In this example, areas of the skin are discolored and falling away (sloughing). Note the deep ulcer (green arrowhead). (B) Shown is a different stage of a deep lesion – well-defined areas of the skin are discolored (arrowheads). This is a sign of death of the tissue and/or inflammation. (C) Deep ulceration exposing the bones of the flippers. (D) Deep ulceration recognized in this case by loss of scales and bleeding. (E) Multiple deep, depressed ulcers affecting the base of the flipper. (F) Deep ulceration exposing a large area of carapace bone.



**Examples of the extent of skin lesions.** (A) Single or small isolated areas of superficial crusts. (B) Crusts affecting large areas. (C) A single isolated deep lesion. (D) Deep lesions affecting large areas.

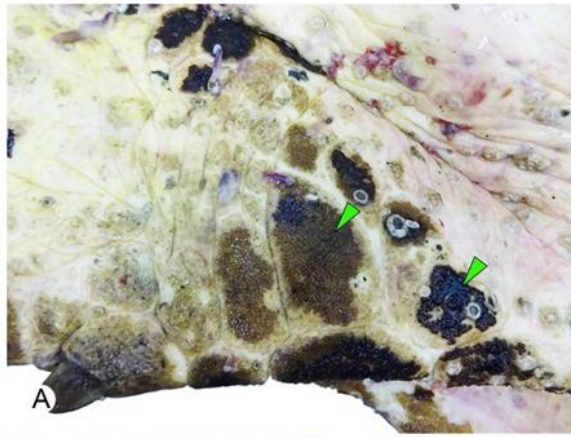




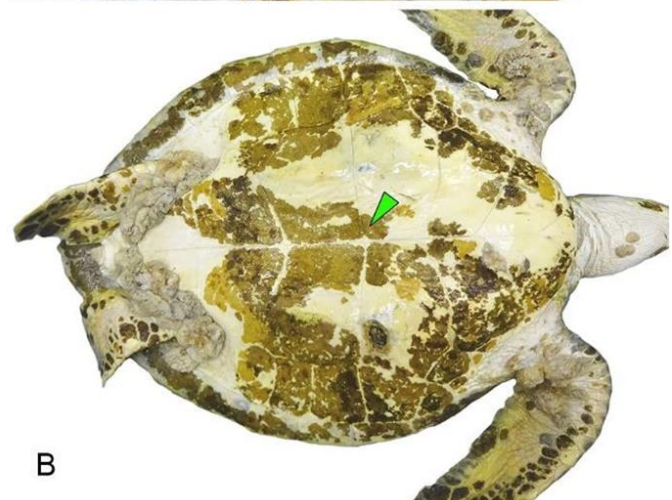
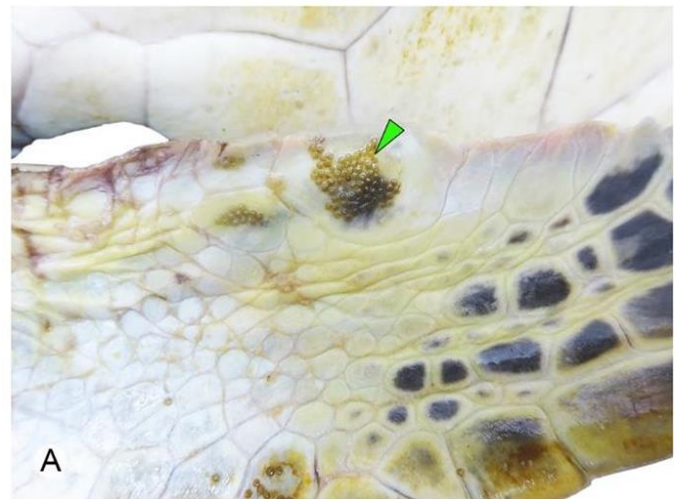
## IDENTIFYING DISEASE – LEECHES AND LEECH EGGS

### Examples of leeches found on sea turtles. (A, B)

Patches of brown leech eggs. The individual eggs are less than a millimeter in diameter and are deposited in groups. The egg patches tend to be most visible on the underside of turtles. (C, D) Adult leeches range from a few millimeters to a couple of centimeters in length and are recognized by their distinct oral sucker. They often are found in the corners of the mouth or around the base of the flippers.



**Examples of relative numbers of adult leeches or eggs.** (A) In this example of a small, isolated egg patch, note that much of skin is uncovered. Single or small clusters of leeches (estimated in the tens or less) or eggs are documented “small, isolated egg patches or few adults.” (B) Large egg patches cover much of the ventral side of the turtle. Such accumulation over larger areas of skin or numerous (hundreds or more) adults are documented in the database as “large egg patches or many adults.”



## Sea Turtle Strandings Useful Contact Information

- FWC Sea Turtle Stranding Staff are available from 8am – 8pm EST, 7 days a week including holidays.
- Send a text message or e-mail to [SeaTurtleStranding@MyFWC.com](mailto:SeaTurtleStranding@MyFWC.com)
  - Include name, phone number, location, species, size, condition of the turtle and any anomalies.
- We will reply in 10-15 minutes.

## Forms and Additional Resources

- Stranding staff can also be reached through the 24 hr. **FWC Wildlife Alert Hotline: 1-888-404-FWCC (3922)**; staff will respond 8am – 8pm EST. This is the best number to give out to the public.
- Stranding data and photos can be entered directly into the FWC stranding database once responders have received training: [SeaTurtleStranding.com](http://SeaTurtleStranding.com)
  - To create an account or to report a database outage, please contact us at [SeaTurtleStranding@MyFWC.com](mailto:SeaTurtleStranding@MyFWC.com).
- If responders are not using the FWC stranding database, stranding forms can be e-mailed to [STSSNForm@MyFWC.com](mailto:STSSNForm@MyFWC.com), along with properly labeled photographs.
- STSSN forms and resources:  
<https://ocean.floridamarine.org/SeaTurtle/flstssn/flstssnresources.htm>
- Near real-time STSSN data and annual archived data:  
<https://ocean.floridamarine.org/SeaTurtle/flstssn/default.htm>
- Nationwide STSSN data (including Florida):  
<https://connect.fisheries.noaa.gov/content/cb3f4647-9e4f-4f3d-9edf-e7a87a1feef6/>