

The **Marine Conservation Society (MCS)** is the Joint Lead Partner in the Marine Turtles Grouped Species Action Plan for the UK and is the UK Charity dedicated to the protection of the marine environment and its wildlife. For more information about MCS visit www.mcsuk.org

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is the Scottish Executive's statutory advisor on the conservation, enhancement, enjoyment, understanding and sustainable use of Scotland's natural heritage. SNH has played a leading role in the development of the UK Action Plan for Marine Turtles. For more information on SNH visit www.snh.org.uk

Turtles in Scotland



For more information about the Roadshow contact:

Peter Richardson, MCS Species Policy Officer
Marine Conservation Society
Unit 3, Wolf Business Park, Alton Rd, Ross-on-Wye
Herefordshire HR9 5NB.
Tel: 01989 566017 Mobile: 07793 118383
Fax: 01989 567815 E-mail: peter@mcsuk.org

If you have seen a turtle in Scottish waters please contact: Dr Martin Gaywood at Scottish Natural Heritage Tel: 0131 4474784
E-mail: Martin.Gaywood@snh.gov.uk

**The Scottish
Turtle Roadshow**
*Finding out more about
Scotland's marine turtles*

Image: Leatherback turtle. Doug Perrine/Seapics.com

For more information on identifying turtles or to report a turtle sighting online visit www.euroturtle.org/turtlecode

The Scottish Turtle Roadshow is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) as part of the national Action Plan for turtles.



Turtles in Scotland

There are seven species of marine turtle swimming the world's oceans, and four of these, the Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and green (*Chelonia mydas*) turtles, have been recorded in Scottish waters.

The critically endangered leatherback turtle regularly visits Scottish waters in summer to feed on the abundance of jellyfish found here, while the other species inhabit warmer climates and only tend to occur in Scottish waters as strays. Studies have shown that leatherback turtles migrate thousands of kilometres from their tropical nesting beaches to get here, but little is known about their ecology while they are in Scottish waters.

The Scottish Turtle Roadshow

The Roadshow has been organised by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), with the aim of increasing awareness of turtles and encouraging sea-users to report turtle sightings and strandings in Scotland. The more reports of turtle encounters we receive, the better our understanding will be of their conservation needs in Scotland.

MCS staff will be hosting a series of public, illustrated talks in Scottish fishing towns between February and July 2005. In addition MCS is distributing the UK Turtle Code, a code of conduct for sea-users that includes information about reporting sightings and strandings and dealing with turtles that have accidentally entangled in fishing gear.

Entangled leatherbacks

MCS is also investigating why leatherback turtles get entangled and drown in fishing gear. The world's largest turtle on record was a male leatherback that washed up dead in Harlech, North Wales in 1988. This leathery leviathan weighed 916kg and measured 2.91m in length and had entangled and drowned in buoy ropes attached to crab pots.

During the Roadshow, MCS would like to meet and interview any fishermen who have accidentally caught turtles in their fishing gear in Scottish waters.



Leatherback turtle off the Cornish coast



Juvenile loggerhead turtle



Leatherback turtle stranded in 2004 at Port William



The largest leatherback turtle ever recorded, stranded at Harlech, Wales in 1988.



Lion's mane jellyfish *Cyanea capillata*

Entangled leatherbacks and the law

While turtles are fully protected in British waters as "European Protected Species" under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended), no offence is committed if a turtle accidentally and unavoidably entangles in fishing gear during lawful fishing activity. Fishermen's accounts of turtle entanglements will help us understand why they occur. If a turtle has accidentally entangled in your gear and you would be happy to share your experience with MCS, please contact Peter Richardson on the numbers given overleaf.

Turtle work in the UK

The Grouped Species Action Plan for Marine Turtles in UK waters and the UK Overseas Territories (www.ukbap.org.uk) prioritises the conservation of leatherback turtles in UK waters. The Action Plan is being implemented by a coalition of organisations, government agencies and academic institutions known as the Turtle Implementation Group (TIG).

As a contribution to the Action Plan, MCS is carrying out various programmes, including:

- Distribution of the UK Turtle Code.
- Surveys of UK fishermen who have entangled turtles to understand why such entanglements happen.
- Transect surveys recording marine turtles, jellyfish, fishing activity and marine litter off the South West coast, the Irish Sea and the seas off the West coast of Scotland.
- The MCS National Jellyfish Survey.

With data generated by these programmes, MCS will investigate the marine environmental factors that influence seasonal distribution of leatherback turtles while they visit UK waters.

The dark blue dots indicate leatherback turtle sightings and strandings in Scotland recorded in the national TURTLE database between 1998 and 2004. (www.strandings.com/Wales)

