

## Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Wilson, R.V. and G.R. Zug. 1991. *Lepidochelys kempii*.

***Lepidochelys kempii* (Garman)  
Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle, Tortuga Lora**

*Testudo Viridi-squamosa* La Cépède, 1788:444. Type-locality, none given; restricted to "Bocas del Toro, Panama, Golf von Mexico" by Wermuth (1956:405). No type designated. *Nomen oblitum*.  
*T. Mydas minor* Suckow, 1798:30. Type-locality, "in dem Amazonen-Fluss ... in der Südsee ... Cap Blanco im Mexiko." No type designated. *Nomen oblitum*.

*Thalassochelys Kempii* Garman, 1880:123. Type-locality, "Gulf of Mexico;" restricted to "Key West, [Monroe Co.] Florida" by Schmidt (1953:107). Syntypes, Mus. Comp. Zool. 46538-46539 (2), donated by Richard M. Kemp (not examined by authors).

*Colpochelys Kempii* Garman, 1880:120. Proposed as a subgenus.

*Lepidochelys kempii*: Baur, 1890:487. Resurrection of *Lepidochelys* for this species and *olivacea*.

*Colpochelys kempi*: Hay, 1908:183. Emendation of specific name.

*Caretta kempii*: Siebenrock, 1909:551.

*Lepidochelys kempii*: Carr, 1952: 396. Established current usage.

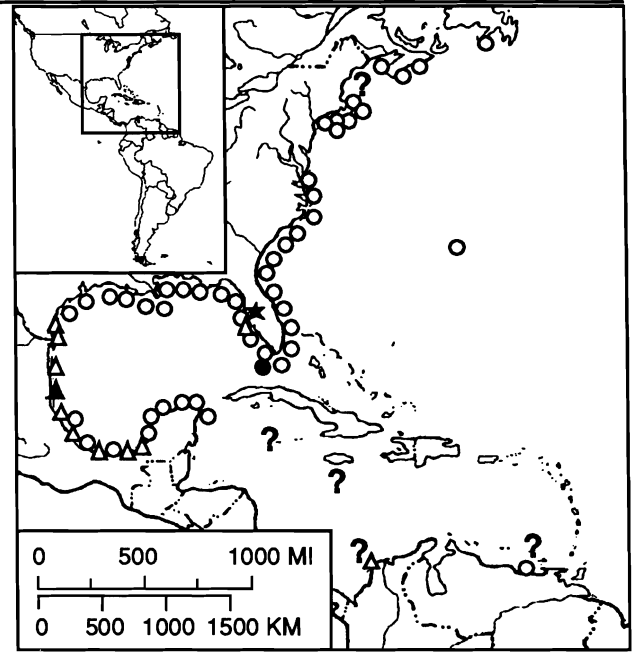
*Lepidochelys olivacea kempi*: Schmidt, 1953:107. Relegated to sub-specific status with no explanation.

• **Content.** This species consists of a single breeding population.

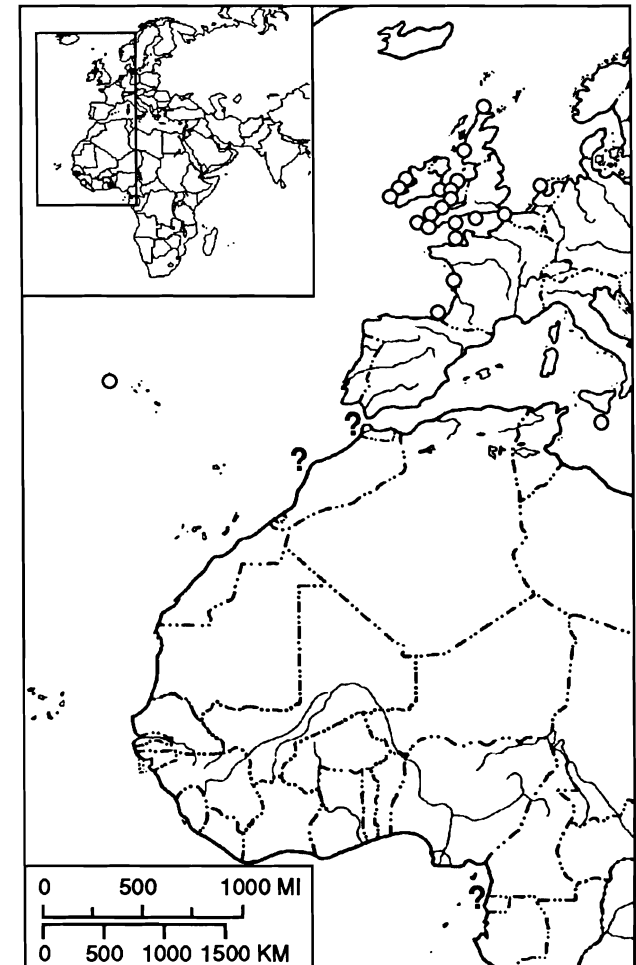
• **Definition.** Adults are 525-750 mm (annual means, 615- 657 mm for nesting females) in straight carapace length and 30-50 kg body mass, with no apparent sexual dimorphism in body size. They are moderate-headed sea turtles with a head length and width subequal and approximately 20-30% of carapace length; the head outline is triangular (equilateral). General coloration is grayish green dorsally; the carapace and upper surface of limbs and head are uniformly colored, the skin somewhat grayer than the shell; the plastron and underside of limbs and head are creamy white. The shell outline is nearly circular in adults with a lightly serrated posterior edge. A series of three to five raised, middorsal knobs are commonly well-developed in hatchlings and juveniles, becoming proportionally smaller and lower in adults; they are absent in most adults. The carapace has a cervical scute touching the first marginals, first pleurals, and first vertebral. Five pleurals are present on each side, rarely more or less. The bridge bears four large inframarginal scutes, each with a musk gland pore medially on its posterior edge. The head is covered with enlarged scales or shields; dorsally, the nares lie in a single nasal scale, followed sequentially by two pairs of prefrontals, a frontal, a parietal, and three or four postparietal or nuchal scales. The horny sheath of the upper jaw has a distinct, hooked beak and an unserrated cutting edge; its triturating surface has a single, unserrated ridge, cleft middorsally. The horny lower sheath is also strangely hooked at its tip; a single, unserrated ridge on the triturating surface has an enlarged, triangular projection. The limbs have enlarged scales along leading and trailing edges; a pair of claws occur on the anterior margins of fore- and hindfeet. Hatchlings are 34-49 mm in straight carapace length, the carapace cordiform in outline. Hatchlings are dark brown to black dorsally and ventrally, becoming progressively lighter as they grow larger, lightening first ventrally then dorsally.

• **Descriptions.** General descriptions of adults are in Carr (1952), Chávez et al. (1967, 1968a), Deraniyagala (1961), De Sola and Abrams (1933), Ernst and Barbour (1972, 1989), Garman (1880), Hay (1908), Márquez (1990), Pritchard and Márquez (1973), Schmidt and Dunn (1917), Smith and List (1955). General descriptions of hatchlings and juveniles are in Bleakney (1955), Brongersma (1961, 1968a), Brongersma and Carr (1983), Carr and Caldwell (1958), Chávez et al. (1967, 1968b), Deraniyagala (1939a, 1957), Hardy (1962), Schmidt and Dunn (1917), Werler (1951). Descriptions of eggs are in Chávez et al. (1967, 1968b), Werler (1951); and of the skull in Duron-Dufrenne and Bour (1989), Gaffney (1979), Hay (1908).

• **Illustrations.** Black and white photographs of adults are in Adams (1966), Atz (1954), Barbour (1942), Burchfield and Mongrell (1986), Caillouet and Revera (1985), Caldwell (1966), Carr (1955, 1961, 1963), Carr and Caldwell (1958), Chávez (1968, 1969), Chávez et al. (1967, 1968a, 1968b), Cochran and Goin (1970), Deraniyagala



**Map 1.** Distribution of *Lepidochelys kempii* in the Western Hemisphere. The solid circle marks the type-locality. Open circles indicate occurrence records, triangles breeding beaches, solid triangle the major breeding beach, stars fossil localities, and question marks localities of uncertain or strange occurrence.



**Map 2.** Distribution of *Lepidochelys kempii* in the Eastern Hemisphere. Symbols as above.

(1938a, 1938b), Ernst and Barbour (1972, 1989), Fletemeyer (1990), Hay (1908), Pope (1939, 1956), Pritchard (1969, 1976), Pritchard and Márquez (1973), van Schravendijk and Dissel (1981), and Zwinenberg (1977); of hatchlings and juveniles in Adams (1966), Anderson (1987), Anon. (1981), Arnold (1983), Brongersma and Carr (1983), Caillouet (1984), Caldwell (1966), Carr (1942, 1952, 1961), Carr and Caldwell (1958), Deraniyagala (1939a), Meylan (1986), Shaver et al. (1988), van Schravendijk and Dissel (1981), and Zwinenberg (1977); and of anatomical structures in Hirsch (1983). Colored illustrations and/or photographs of adults are in Anderson (1987), Behler and King (1979), Conant and Collins (1991), Ernst and Barbour (1972), Phillips (1989), Pritchard (1976), and Smith and Brodie (1982); of hatchlings and juveniles in Anderson (1987) and Phillips (1989). Line drawings of juveniles and adults are in Brongersma (1967, 1968a, 1972), Caillouet (1984), Carr (1963), Delikat (1981), Hardy (1962), Hildebrand (1963), Mertens (1960), and Rebel (1974). Line drawings illustrate anatomical structures in Bons and Girot (1962), Brongersma (1972), Carr and Caldwell (1958), Hay (1908), and King et al. (1982) (carapace); Brongersma (1972) and Deraniyagala (1943) (head); Brongersma (1972) and Hay (1908) (horny jaw sheaths); Brongersma (1972), Carr (1952), and Hay (1908) (lower jaw); Brongersma (1961, 1972) and Deraniyagala (1938b) (mandibular scales); Owens et al. (1985) (nasal region); Deraniyagala (1943) (palate); Bons and Girot (1962), Brongersma (1961, 1972), Deraniyagala (1938a, 1938b), and Hay (1908) (plastron); Brongersma (1967, 1968b, 1972) and Deraniyagala (1943) (inframarginals); Hay (1908) (right sixth peripheral); Carr (1942, 1952), Duron-Dufrenoy and Bour (1989), Gaffney (1979), and Hay (1908) (skull); and Hirsch (1983) (eggshells).

• **Distribution.** The general range of *Lepidochelys kempii* is the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean, north of 18° N and south of 35° N. This species has a single, major nesting beach at Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, México. A secondary nesting area occurs at Tuxpan, Veracruz, and sporadic nesting has been reported from Mustang Island, Texas, southward to Isla Aquada, Campeche (Ross et al., 1989). Single, extralimital nesting has been reported for Magdalena, Colombia (Chávez and Kaufmann, 1974), and Madiera Beach, Florida (Meylan et al., 1990a, b; Ross et al., 1989). The Atlantic population is principally composed of small to medium-sized juveniles, averaging smallest at the northern end of the range and becoming larger southward. Adults are rarely found outside of the Gulf of Mexico. There are a number of reports of extralimital occurrence (Cameron, Loveridge and Williams, 1957; Colombia, Niceforo Maria, 1953; Venezuela, Donoso-Barros, 1965). Many of these reports represent misidentified *Lepidochelys olivacea* as was so argued by Pritchard and Márquez (1973); however, they did not examine the specimens for these extralimital records or give evidence of their source of reidentification so the status of many of these records remains questionable, not denied.

Juvenile occurrences are reported in Agardy and Hernandez (1989), Bamard et al. (1989), Bleakney (1955), Bolten and Martins (1990), Brongersma (1961, 1968a, 1968b, 1972, 1981), Brongersma and Carr (1983), Byles (1989a), Carr (1957, 1987), Carr and Caldwell (1956), Collard (1987), Danton and Prescott (1988), Deraniyagala (1939a, 1939b), Duguay (1986, 1988), Epperly and Veishlow (1989), Fontaine et al. (1988), Fritts et al. (1983), Fugler and Webb (1957), Hardy (1962), Henwood and Ogren (1987), Keinath et al. (1987), Lazell (1976, 1977, 1980), Liner (1954), Manzella et al. (1989), Matheson (1960), Mertens (1968), Meylan and Sadove (1986), Morreale et al. (1989), Ogren (1989), O'Riordan (1969, 1984), Pouvreau (1987), Rabalais and Rabalais (1980), Rault (1988), Ross et al. (1989), Ruckdeschel (1980), Rudloe et al. (1989, 1991), Shaver and Amos (1988), Stephen (1953), and Wibbels (1983).

General data on distribution are presented in Aguayo (1953), Babcock (1930), Barbour (1942), Bleakney (1958), Brongersma (1968a, 1972), Carr (1952, 1957), Chávez (1968, 1969), Chávez and Kaufmann (1974), Deraniyagala (1938a, 1938b, 1939b), De Sola and Abrams (1933), Dobie et al. (1961), Dodge (1944), Donoso-Barros (1964, 1965), Duellman and Schwartz (1958), Dunn (1918), Ehrhart (1983), Flores (1966, 1969; the photograph in the latter article shows a *L. olivacea*), Fontaine et al. (1989), Frazer (1949), Henwood (1988), Hildebrand (1981), Iverson (1986), Knepton (1956), Lee and Palmer (1981), Logier and Toner (1955), Loveridge and Williams (1957), Márquez (1989, 1990), Martof (1963), Medem (1958), Mowbray and Caldwell (1958), Neill (1958), Niceforo Maria (1953; the photograph shows a *L. olivacea*), O'Riordan (1972), Pasteur and Bons (1960), Penhallurick (1973), Rabalais and Rabalais (1980), Reed (1956, 1957a, 1957b, 1958), Shoop (1987), Smith (1954), Smith and List (1955), Squires (1954), Sweat (1966), and Taylor (1948).

Nesting sites are given in Brongersma (1972), Carr (1961, 1963), Chávez and Kaufmann (1974), Fletemeyer (1990), Hildebrand (1963), Márquez (1989), Márquez et al. (1989), and Ross et al. (1989).

• **Fossil Record.** *Lepidochelys kempii* has been reported only from the early Pliocene (Bone Valley Formation, central Florida) (Dodd and Morgan, 1991).

• **Pertinent Literature.** General accounts are in Anderson (1987), Brongersma (1972), Caldwell (1966), Carr (1942, 1952, 1955, 1988), Carr and Caldwell (1958), Chávez et al. (1967, 1968a), Ernst and Barbour (1972, 1989), Hildebrand (1963, 1981), Márquez (1986, 1990), Meylan (1986), Mrosovsky (1983), Pope (1939, 1956), Pritchard (1976), Pritchard and Márquez (1973), Walker (1959), and Zwinenberg (1977). Anatomy and morphology are discussed in Fuchs (1920), Harwell (1982), Hirsch (1983), Landry (1989), Lenhardt et al. (1983, 1986), Mast and Carr (1989), Mlynarski (1961), and Pritchard (1989). Aspects of conservation are treated in Anon. (1977, 1981), Balazs (1979), Berry (1987), Burchfield and Foley (1989), Caillouet (1987), Caillouet and Revera (1985), Caillouet et al. (1986, 1987), Clary and Leong (1984), Dodd and Seigel (1991), Duronslet et al. (1989), Ehrenfeld (1981), Finnley (1978), Fletcher (1989), Fontaine et al. (1990), Fontaine and Caillouet (1985), Francis (1978), Henwood and Stuntz (1987), Kerivan (1989), King (1989), Klima and McVey (1981), Manzella et al. (1987), Márquez (1978, 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1985, 1989, 1990), Márquez et al. (1986, 1987), Phillips (1989), Pritchard (1969, 1990), Raymond (1989), Thompson (1989), Wood (1982), and Woody (1989). Bellmund et al. (1987), Burchfield (1981), Burchfield and Foley (1983), Burchfield and Mongrell (1986), Burke et al. (1989), Carr (1980), Carr and Caldwell (1956), Carr et al. (1982), Chávez (1968, 1969), Chávez et al. (1967, 1968b), Collard and Ogren (1990), Delikat (1980), Dobie et al. (1961), Frazer (1986), Hall et al. (1983), Keinath et al. (1987), Lutz and Lutcavage (1989), Márquez (1989), Márquez et al. (1981), Musick (1988), Shaver (1991), Shaver et al. (1988), van Vleet and Pauly (1987), Whistler (1989), and Witherington and Ehrhart (1989) covered aspects of ecology. Embryology, growth, and age are discussed in Caillouet and Koi (1985), Caillouet et al. (1986, 1989), Caldwell (1962), Fontaine et al. (1989), King et al. (1982, 1983, 1985), McVey and Wibbels (1984), Shaver and Chaney (1989), Shaver et al. (1986, 1987, 1988), Standora et al. (1989), and Zug and Kalb (1989). Burchfield (1981), Burchfield and Foley (1983), Burchfield and Mongrell (1986), Burke et al. (1989), Byles (1989b), Carr (1963), Carr and Caldwell (1956), Chávez (1968, 1969), Chávez et al. (1967, 1968b), Collard and Ogren (1990), Henwood (1988), Henwood and Ogren (1987), Hildebrand (1963), Keinath et al. (1987), Lutcavage and Musick (1985), Manzella et al. (1989), McVey and Wibbels (1984), Mendonca and Pritchard (1986), Parrish (1958), Shoop (1980), Standora et al. (1989), Walker (1971), and Wibbels (1984) treated movement and activity patterns. Physiology and endocrinology are discussed in Dozy et al. (1964), Follett (1967), Frair (1969), Friedman et al. (1985), Grassman and Owens (1989), Grassman et al. (1984), Lenhardt et al. (1983), Malone and Guarisco (1988), Manzella et al. (1989), Owens et al. (1985), Owens and Morris (1985), Radhakrishna et al. (1989), Schwartz (1978), and Weldon et al. (1990). Bentley (1989), Chávez et al. (1967, 1968b), Delikat and Wachtel (1989), Demas et al. (1990), Ehrhart (1982), Hirth (1980), Márquez et al. (1989), Owens et al. (1989), Rostal et al. (1989), Shaver (1989), Werler (1951), and Wood and Wood (1984, 1988) treated reproduction. Systematics and taxonomy are discussed in Baur (1890), Bons and Girot (1962), Brongersma and Carr (1983), Carr (1942), Deraniyagala (1938a, 1943), Dozy et al. (1964), Frair (1969, 1979), Garman (1880), Hay (1908), Schmidt (1945), Smith (1954), and Smith (1962). Miscellaneous information is given in Allen and Barr (1989), Caillouet et al. (1986, 1989), Collard (1990), Coreil (1989), Fontaine et al. (1985, 1988, 1989), Gitschlag and Renaud (1989), Klima et al. (1989), Leong et al. (1989), Loetscher (1989), Márquez (1990), Márquez et al. (1989), Murphy and Hopkins-Murphy (1989), Mysing and Vanselous (1989), Oravetz (1989), Rayburn (1989), Rebel (1974), Seidel and Oravetz (1989), Shoop and Ruckdeschel (1989), Wibbels et al. (1989), and Wood and Wood (1989).

• **Etymology.** This species' name is a patronym honoring Richard M. Kemp, a resident of Florida, who called Samuel Garman's attention to the "Bastard" sea turtle of the Gulf of Mexico and then sent Garman a pair of specimens.

• **Comments.** La Cépède's name *Viridi-squamosa* is cited usually as appearing on page 92 of his "Histoire naturelle ..." (1788). This page designation is incorrect, because page 92 contains only a

vernacular name. *Viridi-squamosa* occurs as a Latin binominal and with a description in a table labeled "Synopsis methodica Quadrupedum oviparorum." The problem of citation is compounded because "Histoire naturelle ..." appeared in two editions, fortunately both published in 1788. In the octavo edition, the synopsis table is a free, folded insert; in the quarto edition, the table is bound and given a page number, p.444. We recommend the use of this latter page number. Historical information is from Bour and Dubois (1983) and Bour (pers. comm., Oct. 1989).

Wermuth's restriction (1956:405) of the *Viridi-squamosa* type locality to Panama is inappropriate owing to this species' distribution being centered in the Gulf of Mexico.

Mertens and Wermuth (1961) petitioned the International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature for the suppression of *Testudo Viridi-squamosa* and *Testudo mydas minor*. The names were subsequently suppressed and are not available now for nomenclature use.

Smith and Smith (1979) provide a detailed discussion of the nomenclature history of the epithet *kempii* and its synonyms; their synonymy contains a few errors of attribution and citation. Also they provide a detailed bibliography with emphasis on the Mexican literature.

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