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Marine Turtle Newsletter

Scutes Reserved for Living Tags

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Living-tags on carapace scutes are being used to distinguish year-classes of head-started Kemp's ridley sea turtles, *Lepidochelys kempi* (Fontaine and Caillouet 1985). In this report, we provide information on which scutes have been used to place living-tags in past years and also outline our plans for placing living-tags on particular scutes of future year-classes of Kemp's ridleys.

Available records indicate that turtles released from year-classes 1978 and 1979 were not living-tagged. For year-classes 1980-1995, the scutes used or proposed for Kemp's ridleys living-tags are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Scutes used or proposed for head started and living-tagged Kemp's ridleys.

1980	LC2, LC3, RC2, RC3, RC4, N2, N3, LH, LP, LA (some individuals were tagged between scutes RC2 & RC3, RC3 & RC4, LP & RP or LH & RH)
1981	None living tagged
1982	LC3
1983	LC4
1984	LC5
1985	RC5
1986	N4
1987	N1
1988	RC1
1989	LC1
1990	RC4
1991	N2
1992	N3

1993	RC2
1994	LC2
1995	RC3

(RC = right costal; LC = left costal; N = neural; LH = left humeral; LP = left pectoral; LA = left abdominal; RP = right pectoral; RH = right humeral)

The scutes proposed for year-classes 1985-1995 were selected to minimize the probability of overlap between year-classes in use of the same scute. For example, under this scheme the reuse of a given scute would not occur until 1990 when right costal scute 4 (RC 4) would be used on the 1990 year-class (Table 1). Only one turtle of the 1980 year-class was living-tagged on RC 4. For the 1991 year-class, neural scute 2 (N 2) is proposed, as only 4 turtles on the 1980 year-class were tagged on that scute. [Neural scute 5 is avoided because it occasionally is split into a sixth neural. Reuse of humeral, pectoral and abdominal scutes also is not proposed.] Coordination among sea turtle investigators proposing use of living-tags will remain with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Bowman, 1983).

We request that anyone encountering what they believe to be living-tagged Kemp's ridleys contact us at the given address below or by telephoning any of the following numbers: (409) 766-3500; (409) 766-3517; (409) 766-3523; (409) 766-3507; (409) 766-3525. We would appreciate your noting the particular scutes on which living-tags are located, as well as details concerning the size, location, date and method of recapture, sighting or stranding of the turtle.

Bowman, D. 1983. Tag locations reserved. [MTN 25:12-13](#).

Fontaine, C. T. and C. W. Caillouet, Jr. 1985. The Kemp's ridley sea turtle head start project: an annual report for fiscal year 1984. NOAA Tech. Mem. NMFS-SEFC-152.