Conservation Measure 14/09: To Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in SEAFO Fishing Operations.

Preamble:

Recognizing the cultural and ecological significance of sea turtles in the Southeast Atlantic Ocean;

Recognizing that the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) endorsement "Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations" at its Twenty-sixth Session, held in March 2005, and that these guidelines are directed towards members and non-members of FAO, fishing entities, subregional, regional and global organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental concerned with fisheries management and sustainable use of aquatic ecosystems;

Further recognizing that implementation of these guidelines should be consistent with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries as well as with the Reykjavik Declaration on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem with regard to ecosystem considerations and based on the use of the best available science;

Taking into account the importance placed by the guidelines on research, monitoring, the sharing of information, and public education on sea turtle;

The Contracting Parties of SEAFO resolve as follows:

1. Contracting Parties should, as appropriate, individually and collectively implement the FAO "Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations" to reduce the incidental catch of sea turtles and ensure the safe handling of all turtles that are captured.

2. Contracting Parties should continue to enhance the implementation of their existing turtle mitigation measures using best available scientific information on mitigation techniques.

3. Contracting Parties should collect and provide to the Secretariat, all available information on interactions with and by-catch of sea turtles in fisheries managed by SEAFO in the Convention area and foster collaboration with other Contracting Parties in the exchange of information in this area. The new SEAFO catch forms have provision for recording detailed by-catch data on a set-by-set basis, and these should be used at all times

4. SEAFO should cooperate with other regional, sub-regional and global organizations to share data on sea turtle by-catch and to develop and apply compatible by-catch reduction measures as appropriate.

5. Contracting Parties should continue to provide to the Secretariat a detailing of sea turtle fishery interaction/by-catch data (e.g. species identification, fate and condition at release, relevant biological information and gear configuration) collected by observers, in fisheries managed by SEAFO in the Convention Area. Observers should use the pictorial key in Appendix A (derived from the FAO field guide applying to fisheries in Namibian waters). This information shall be compiled by the Secretariat and reported to the Scientific Committee and to the Commission.

6. All information on sea turtles available to the SEAFO Secretariat will be forwarded to the FAO.

Status of Conservation Measure 14/09

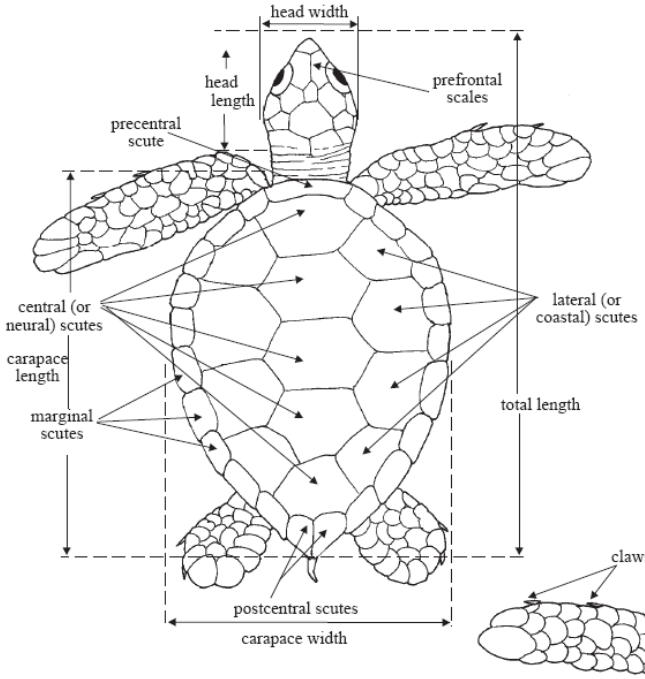
Resolution 01/06 is herewith repealed.

Appendix A

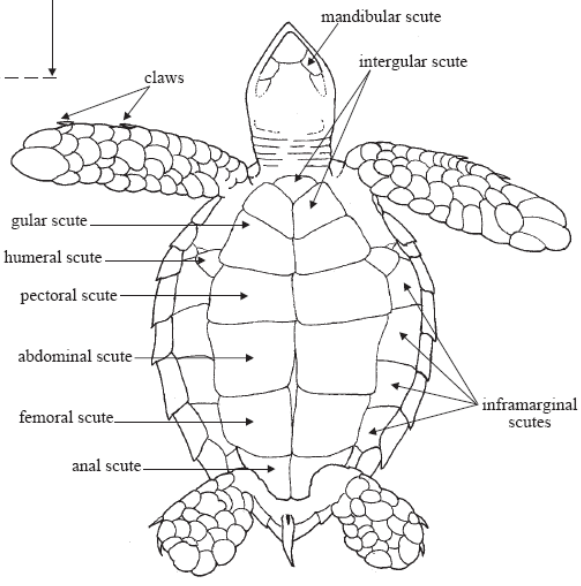
SEA TURTLES

Of the 8 species of sea turtles worldwide, 5 occur in Namibia. Most sea turtle species are considered endangered and are protected under an international agreement. All turtles receive total protection in Namibia. In the past they were incidentally exploited for their fresh meat, their eggs, for ornamental crafts made from their shell, and for leather from their skin. Today they are inadvertently caught in some fisheries. This guide is intended as an aid for conservationists in the management of this endangered group.

TECHNICAL TERMS AND MEASUREMENTS



dorsal view of a juvenile sea turtle (Family Chelonidae)



ventral view of a juvenile sea turtle (Family Chelonidae)

Caretta caretta (Linnaeus, 1758)

CHELONIIDAE

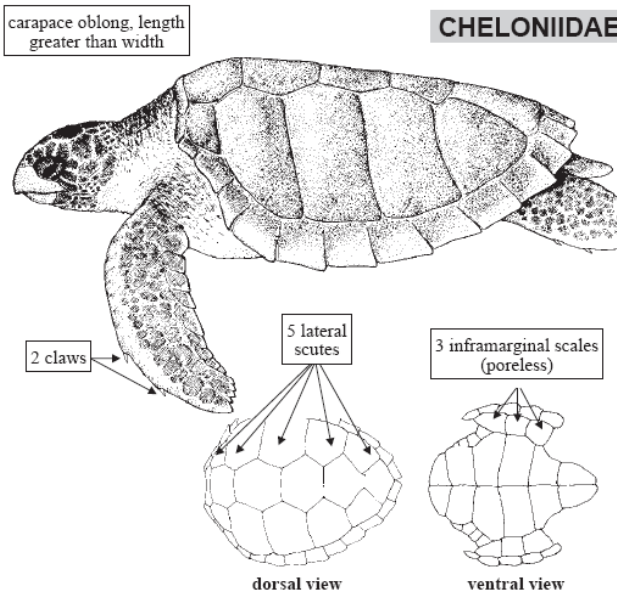
FAO names: **En** - Loggerhead turtle; **Fr** - Tortue caouanne; **Sp** - Caguama.

Local names:

Size: Mean straight carapace length of mature females between 80 and 105 cm.

Fisheries: Caught accidentally by trawlers.

Habitat and biology: Primarily in shallow waters of the continental shelf. Feeds on a wide variety of invertebrates as well as on bony fishes. It is preyed upon by sharks, at all age classes.



Chelonia mydas (Linnaeus, 1758)

CHELONIIDAE

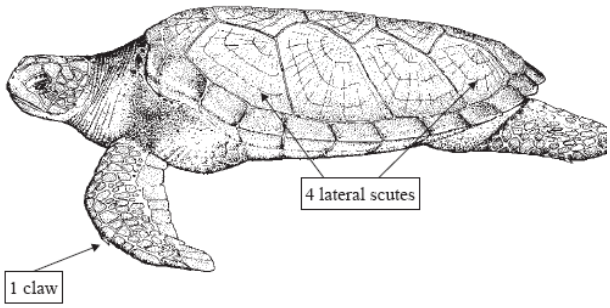
FAO names: **En** - Green sea turtle; **Fr** - Tortue verte; **Sp** - Tortuga blanca.

Local names:

Size: To 140 cm curved carapace length.

Fisheries: Caught inadvertently in trawls.

Habitat and biology: A solitary, nektonic species, sometimes forming feeding aggregations in shallow waters. Feeds, during daytime, on algae and sea grass. High predation on this species occurs at all its life stages, sharks being its worse enemies.



Eretmochelys imbricata (Linnaeus, 1766)

CHELONIIDAE

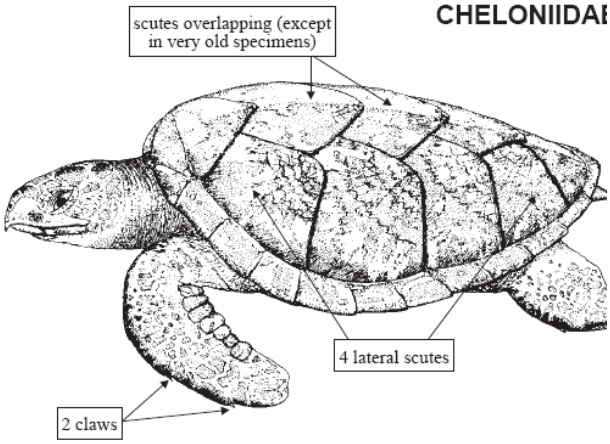
FAO names: **En** - Hawksbill sea turtle; **Fr** - Tortue caret; **Sp** - Tortuga de carey.

Local names:

Size: Adult females measure from 50 to 115 cm straight carapace length.

Fisheries: Elsewhere caught by turning the females while crawling on the beach, by spearing, entangling nets, and incidentally in trawls. This species is particularly valuable because of the scutes covering its carapace which are used in some countries in jewelry (tortoise shell), though not in Namibia.

Habitat and biology: Occur in clear littoral waters. Carnivorous, feeds on a wide variety of invertebrates. It is heavily preyed upon at all life stages.



Lepidochelys olivacea (Eschscholtz, 1829)

CHELONIIDAE

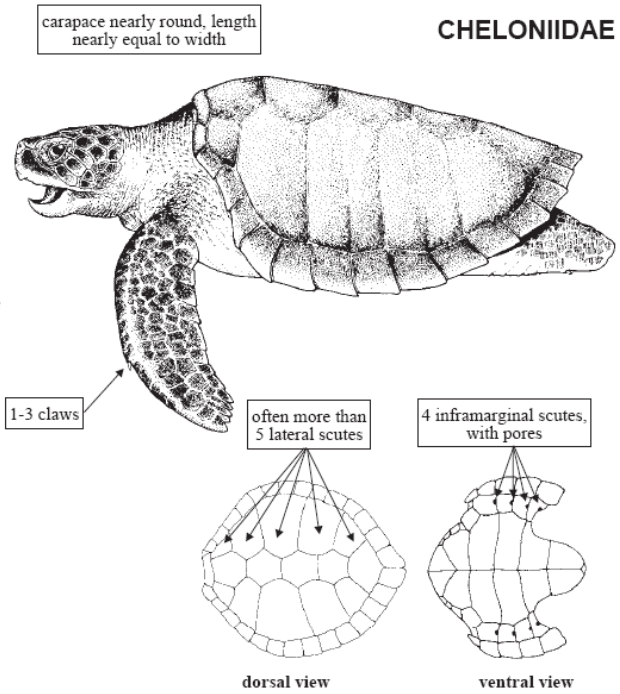
FAO names: **En** - Olive ridley turtle; **Fr** - Tortue olivâtre; **Sp** - Tortuga golfina.

Local names:

Size: Mature specimens between 50 and 75 cm straight carapace length.

Fisheries: Caught inadvertently in some fisheries.

Habitat and biology: Occurs in shallow coastal waters and offshore. Feeds on a wide variety of fishes and invertebrates. Juveniles and adults are preyed upon by sharks.



Dermochelys coriacea (Vandelli, 1761)

DERMOCHELYIDAE

FAO names: **En** - Leatherback turtle; **Fr** - Tortue luth; **Sp** - Tortuga laud.

Local names:

Size: Maximum about 270 cm carapace length.

Fisheries: Caught accidentally with drift nets, longines, and in trawls.

Habitat and biology: Pelagic species, approaching the coast for spawning. It feeds on jellyfish, tunicates, and other soft-bodied invertebrates with highest concentrations in the upwelling regions. Preyed upon by sharks and killer whales. Adults are able to stand temperatures as low as 10°C.