

Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle

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Why did the turtle cross the road? To get to the shell station. Unfortunately many turtles don't get to the shell station, otherwise known as the ocean. "There are 7 different species of Sea Turtles that live around the world but only 4 of which swim off the coast of Delaware" (Ocean Today). Our wonderful state legislatures are thinking of naming one of these incredible animals as our state turtle. I believe the "Kemp's Ridley Turtle should be the state turtle because it is the rarest turtle from many species of all kinds of sea turtles, it has many ecological benefits, and needs awareness to survive but, let's find out why." (National Park Service).

"Kemp's Ridley turtles are the rarest turtles because they're the closest to extinction" (Sea Turtle Conservancy). "There are only 7000-9000 of these incredible animals left in the world." (National Parks Conservation Association). Many people identify turtles as cute, adorable, small, but in reality they are defenseless, helpless. It is our responsibility to protect, help, and care for those who can't themselves. This is a lesson that can be applied not only in this instance but for our entire lives. "Thousands of nesting areas are destroyed by humans every year" (Sea Turtle Conservancy). We are the main cause for these animals' loss of population. We can change that.

As we are protecting the turtles we need to take into account how small these animals really are. "They grow to a maximum length of 2 feet and weigh no more than 100lbs. For example they weigh about the weight of your common household punching bag" (Oceana). "The

Kemp's Ridley turtle also has a triangular shaped head with a slightly hooked beak. Adults and younglings also have very different coloring. The adults have a greenish - gray shell and the younglings have a dark green color on their skin and shell" (NOAA Fisheries).

The amazing prehistoric creatures have been around forever too. "Two hundred thirty million years ago was the first turtle ever discovered" (Nature Magazine). This is incredible and also an amazing statement to our ecosystem and humankind persistence. If we have kept these animals alive for so long then why stop now! These beautiful creatures have also kept us alive. They benefit our ecosystem in so many ways. "Kemp's keep it growing and thriving by eating unwanted animals in the ocean like invertebrates, such as marine sponges, jellyfish, molluscs and crustaceans. They also eat crabs. All of these insipid animals are decreasing which increases the amount of tourism which ultimately helps our economy. The turtles graze throughout the ocean and make new habitats for not only themselves but for animals after them. Finally they contribute to the food cycle and the mineral cycle" (NOAA Fisheries).

When one considers the benefits of tourism, its beauty, ecological benefits, and endangerment, it is clear that the Kemp's Ridley turtle should be deemed the state turtle. Please vote to make this turtle the state turtle to ensure its survival and awareness. If we let this species die, what will be the next? Do something. Vote.

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