

Aiden Smith

The Kemp's Ridley: A Species Begging For Attention

The Kemp's Ridley is a lesser-known sea turtle, despite being one of the most interesting. Possessing that cute triangle-shaped head, little hooked beak, and beautiful shell patterns, there's no reason not to pick the Kemp's Ridley. So why hasn't it become the state's official turtle?

The Kemp's Ridley is a species of sea turtle, and, being the smallest sea turtle species known, is the perfect turtle for one of the smallest states in the union. Delaware is also one of the more diverse states in the union, boasting a score of 81/100, based on cultural and ethnical diversity. The Kemp's Ridley is also very diverse, claiming different features, such as claw formations and locations, shell colors and structures, and eating patterns. And one of the craziest coincidences? The Kemp's Ridley's preferred food is crabs, just as hundreds of thousands of Delawareans regularly enjoy. With all of these similarities, who isn't down to have the Kemp's Ridley be the official Delaware sea turtle?

The Kemp's Ridley is a lesser known species of sea turtle, and it's also one of the most endangered. Having only 9,000 laying females, at a high estimate, it is begging for help. If the point of this project is to bring attention to sea turtle species, then the Kemp's Ridley is perfect. The turtle is considered the most endangered out of all sea turtles, and this is exactly why it needs that attention. Engaging and educating students, parents, and teachers on the Kemp's Ridley would bring attention to the turtle, which happens to be one of two turtle species, partnered by the Olive Ridley, who participate in 'arribada', which is spanish for arrival, a process in which all laying females go to the beach in which they were laid. Raising awareness around these majestic animals and their equally impressive natural processes can protect these laying nests. Educating everyone means less fishing, netting, crabbing, and boating accidents with the turtles, further increasing Kemp's Ridley populations.

While many others may argue for the well-known *Chelonia Mydas*, or Green Sea Turtle, these animals are not nearly as impressive as the Kemp's Ridley. Some argue that, because they are the most common species found in Delaware, they deserve the spot. However, they aren't nearly as critically endangered as the Kemp's Ridley. Despite their listing of endangered status under the IUCN, they have almost 85,000 laying females, at a low estimate. At a high estimate, Green Sea Turtles have over 10x the amount laying females, compared to the Kemp's Ridley. If the point of the contest is to bring attention to these incredible animals, then the Green Sea Turtle is rather obviously not the right choice. Neither are the other two potential suitors, the Loggerhead and Leatherback sea turtles. None of these turtles come close to the uniqueness of the Kemp's Ridley, and the lack of awareness around the turtles. Both the Loggerhead and Leatherback have higher populations than the Kemp's Ridley, with the Loggerhead being classified as endangered and the Leatherback as only vulnerable.

The Kemp's Ridley is the superior choice over other sea turtle species for the unique position, for its unequivocal uniqueness, undeniable uncommonness, and its unrivaled similarities with Delaware and its culture. With the turtles cuteness, as well as the unfortunate situation surrounding their populus, the Kemp's Ridley is the ultimate choice for Delaware's official sea turtle, both for their benefit and all Delawareans.

Bibliography and Works Cited

“5 Types of Sea Turtles Found in Delaware! (ID Guide) - Bird Watching HQ.” *Bird Watching HQ*, <https://www.facebook.com/birdwatchinghq/>,

<https://birdwatchinghq.com/sea-turtles-in-delaware/>. Accessed 3 May 2022.

“Arribada - What A Sight! - Sea Turtle Camp.” *Sea Turtle Camp*, 7 Dec. 2018,

<https://www.seaturtlecamp.com/arribada-what-a-sight/>.

“Information About Sea Turtles: Green Sea Turtle – Sea Turtle Conservancy.” *Sea Turtle Conservancy – Helping Sea Turtles Survive Since 1959*,

<https://conserveturtles.org/information-sea-turtles-green-sea-turtle/>. Accessed 3 May 2022.

“Kemp’s Ridley Turtle | NOAA Fisheries.” *NOAA*,

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/kemps-ridley-turtle>. Accessed 3 May 2022.

“Race, Diversity and Ethnicity in Delaware.” *BestNeighborhood.Org*,

<https://bestneighborhood.org/race-in-delaware/>. Accessed 3 May 2022.

“Sea Turtle Conservancy.” *Information About Sea Turtles: Green Sea Turtle*,

<https://conserveturtles.org/information-sea-turtles-green-sea-turtle/>. Accessed 3 May 2022.

“Sea Turtles | Merrinstitute.” *Merrinstitute*, <https://www.merrinstitute.org/sea-turtles>.

Accessed 3 May 2022.