

**Kemp Ridley Turtle as Delaware state animal**

Madysen Myers

Caesar Rodney High school

May 6, 2022

At only 70-100 pounds the Kemp Ridley is a majestic creature, with its white underbelly contrasting with its round gray shell and body beautifully. Despite this beauty, the Kemp Ridley Turtles are threatened by climate change and endangerment. The Kemp Ridley Turtle parallels closely to our great state and by making this creature our state's animal we would be giving the Kemp Ridley the opportunity to survive.

The Kemp Ridley Turtles parallels closely our great state by both size and population creating a stronger connection to Delaware and then generating an interest benefiting all sea life. Similar to Delaware, being the second smallest state in the United States, the Kemp ridley is also small in size. According to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the Kemp Ridley Turtle is the smallest sea turtle in the world ( NWF, N.D.). The Size of these turtles may give Delawareans a connection to our state animal and promote interest in it. By bringing interest they would be bringing interest in helping the Kemp Ridley but also bring awareness of the effects of climate change and endangered species. With the Kemp Ridley being small it would remind Delawareans that just like the Kemp ridley we are small but mighty. With the small land area it is no surprise that Delaware is the least populated state in America (Melson, 2021) and Kemp Ridley also shares this characteristic. While it is no problem to us Delawareans the Kemp Ridley population is so small that they are an extremely endangered species of turtles according to NWF( NWF, N.D.). While all of the other turtles nominated for state animals are classified as endangered or vulnerable, the Kemp Ridley is the most endangered turtle in the entire world(U.S. Department of the Interior, N.D.). As Delawareans, we should want to help this turtle survive as it reminds us of the uniqueness of our state and would bring attention to the endangerment of the Kemp ridley turtles saving countless Kemp lives.

The Kemp Ridley Turtles are the most endangered turtles in the entire world and with this status, Delawareans should not only want to make this our state animal but must, in order to bring attention and awareness to this endangered species. There are only 7,000 to 9,000 nesting females of the species according to the NCPA(National Parks Conservation Association, N.D.). Currently one of the main organizations that support the Kemp ridley turtle is FOAA fisheries. While it is admirable that they are supporting the turtles there are many other sea life that are supported by fisheries that try to hide their true contribution to the endangerment of wildlife. FOAA explains the main reasons for endangerment are plastic fishing nets and getting caught in, “traps, and dredges in the Gulf of Mexico and northwest Atlantic”(Fisheries, N. O. A. A., 2021). Many of the organizations that support endangered animals do not shine the light on the majority of pollution, their own nets. While the FOAA have taken measures to protect the Kemp Ridley and oppey admit fishing endangers these animals many do not admit that it is their nets that are the key contributor. By making the Kemp Ridley our state animal we would be bringing attention to the main contribution of pollution in the ocean, killing animals, and the fishing industries. More organizations could bring light to the Kemp Ridley turtle's reasons for endangerment. The Kemp Ridley as our state animal will bring the most awareness as it is the most endangered and from this awareness more vulnerable sea creatures including the other sea turtles could be helped.

Like many other animals, the Kemp Ridley Turtle is impacted by climate change in a negative way. With the fast rate of climate change ice is melting and rising sea levels. Kemp Ridley Sea Turtles live in shallow seagrass habitats in warm waters, but they nest on beaches. These beaches are where all of the new Kemp ridley turtles are born. The rising sea caused by climate change can make shorelines and beaches disappear where turtles return to lay their eggs

and also wash away and flood nests. The rising temperature of climate change can also be lethal to eggs as the sand gets very hot(Nasa, 2019). The food sources of the Kemp turtle which alter,“distribution of food resources, leading to a shift in the migratory and foraging range and nesting season of kemp's ridleys”(Fisheries, N. O. A. A., 2021). The effects of climate change on all wildlife is countless and the Kemp ridley turtle is a victim of it. Even if some do not care about the effects of climate change on wildlife it is important to note that our sources of food are also being negatively affected. With its already extremely endangered status the Kemp ridley may not be able to survive with the effects of climate change on them and their reproduction which is key to bringing them out of endangerment. By making the Kemp ridley sea turtle Delaware's state animal they would bring attention to the Kemp ridley sea turtle. If attention is brought to the turtle it could bring awareness and interest in the turtle and the effects of climate change. With this attention, Delawareans would be contributing to the global wide movement to save the Earth.

Our world is full of endangered suffering animals and wildlife. The Kemp Ridley turtle is one of them, one of the turtles closest to extinction. Making the Kemp Ridley turtle the state's animal will remind Delwarineans of the state and by doing so generate attention and interest in climate change and the reason why millions of animals are close to extinction. The Kemp Ridley must be named our great state animal to bring an entire nation together to fight against climate change and engagement of our animals.

## References

- Fisheries, N. O. A. A. (2021, July 26). *Kemp's ridley turtle*. NOAA. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/kemps-ridley-turtle>
- Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle*. National Wildlife Federation. (n.d.). Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Reptiles/Sea-Turtles/Kemps-Ridley-Sea-Turtle>
- Melson, B. (2021, March 29). *Interesting facts about Delaware: Harvard Business Services*. The HBS Blog. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://www.delawareinc.com/blog/interesting-facts-about-delaware/>
- NASA. (2019, July 23). *Climate change puts pressure on sea turtles – climate change: Vital signs of the planet*. NASA. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2879/climate-change-puts-pressure-on-sea-turtles/#:~:text=Now%2C%20climate%20change%20is%20exposing,of%20them%20need%20to%20survive.>
- Pariona, A. (2017, April 25). *What is the environmental impact of the fishing industry?* WorldAtlas. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-environmental-impact-of-the-fishing-industry.html>
- The rarest sea turtle in the world*. National Parks Conservation Association. (n.d.). Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://www.npca.org/articles/3004-the-rarest-sea-turtle-in-the-world#:~:text=In%20early%20September%2C%20staff%20at,females%20of%20the%20species%20exist.>
- U.S. Department of the Interior. (n.d.). *Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles*. National Parks Service. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/pais/learn/nature/kridley.htm>