

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING STSSN STRANDING REPORT FORMS

OBSERVER'S NAME/ADDRESS/ PHONE: This is the person who handled the turtle in the field. Please give an address and phone number where you can be reached in the event we need to contact you for clarification of the reported data.

STRANDING DATE: This is the date the stranded turtle was first reported or encountered. If you did not investigate until a later date, please note that in the remarks section at the bottom of the form. "Turtle Number by Day" is used to keep track of more than one turtle investigated on a single day by the same volunteer – your first turtle of the day is 01, second of the same day is 02, etc. Please notify the state coordinator within 24 hours for any strandings you document and check the box describing how the coordinator was notified.

SPECIES: Use the species identification key on the back of the form to positively determine species. If you are not positive of the species identification, check "Unidentified", please do not guess. Check boxes to indicate if photos were taken and if the state coordinator verified species. The state coordinator may verify species based on photos taken and submitted with the stranding report form.

SEX: Check appropriate box(es). Sea turtles cannot be sexed externally until they are mature adults. If the turtle is not adult-sized (generally at least 92 cm straight length for loggerheads and green turtles, 60 cm straight length for Kemp's ridleys, 80 cm straight length for hawksbills and 130 cm curved length for leatherbacks) then you should check "immature, undetermined" if the turtle is not necropsied. Some males may begin to mature at slightly smaller sizes than those listed above and tail length should be documented if it is being used to externally sex a turtle.

STRANDING LOCATION: Check "Offshore" if the turtle was found on an ocean beach or "Inshore" if the turtle was in a bay, river, sound, inlet, etc. Give a detailed descriptive location of the stranding using a reference point that can be found on a NOAA navigation chart. Local names or landmarks not found on most charts do not help pinpoint a location. **Good reference points are inlets, fishing piers, light houses, water tanks, etc.** Latitude/Longitude – if you have a GPS unit or are familiar with latitudes and longitudes and you have a navigation chart, please include the latitude/longitude of the stranding location. If you cannot provide accurate lat/longs, please leave this space blank. It then becomes even more important to provide a location description than can be pinpointed on a chart.

CONDITION: Check the box that best describes the stranding. If the turtle seems intermediate between two stages of decomposition, pick the one that fits best. Fresh dead turtles should have no foul smell; moderately decomposed turtles smell bad, but skin and scutes are intact or are only beginning to peel, internal organs are still distinguishable; severely decomposed turtles smell very bad with scutes lifting or gone and skin beginning to peel or liquefy, internal organs beginning to liquefy, hard to distinguish individual organs; dried carcasses, leathery, internal organs completely decomposed.

FINAL DISPOSITION: Check the box(es) next to the number that best describes what was done with the stranding after it was documented on the beach. Provide additional information regarding salvaged specimens. Record what rehabilitation facility live turtles were taken to.

TAGS: Contact state coordinator before disposing of any tagged animal!!

Flipper tags – check all flippers on all species and record information; note also if tag scars are seen.

PIT tags – scan front flippers and shoulder areas of all species (see PIT tag scanning protocol for specific instructions).

Coded wire tag scan – currently only being placed in front flipper region of Kemp's ridleys (see wire tag scanning protocol for specific instructions). Both front flippers and associated shoulder and "armpit" areas of all Kemp's ridleys should be salvaged for later scanning if a magnetometer is not available).

Living tags – check all Kemp's ridleys for light-colored areas on the dark carapace. Living tags are tissue transplants of the plastron onto the carapace which grow with the turtle and were used to

mark headstarted turtles to distinguish between different ages. If you suspect a living tag is present the entire carcass should be salvaged. In most cases, Kemp's ridleys with living tags were also marked with external flipper tags, PIT tags and coded wire tags as well. The Cayman Turtle Farm has also used living tags on some green turtles to distinguish age and a couple of these have been documented by the STSSN; these turtles should have external flipper tags or tag scars as well.

CARAPACE MEASUREMENTS: Use calipers to obtain straight measurements and/or flexible, non-metal measuring tape to obtain curved measurements. Measurement points are noted on drawings on left side of form. Circle units of measure – centimeters or inches; if units are not circled we cannot include measurements in the database.

REMARKS SECTION AT BOTTOM OF FORM: Mark wounds/abnormalities on the diagrams at left and describe in detail. The more information you include, the easier it will be for us to code the record. Use the back of the data sheet to continue your remarks if needed. Always note anything unusual about a stranding event.