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**Figure 1.** The geographical location of the study area in Québec, Canada.

- The leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempi*), and green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) are known to occur in temperate waters off Atlantic Canada seasonally between June and November.
- In the province of Québec, the leatherback is the only sea turtle known to use the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence (**Figure 1**).
- Since the first documented sea turtle observation in 1981, little effort has been made to collect additional information in Québec.
- To improve the situation, an action plan was developed and implemented in 2003 to assess sea turtle abundance, distribution, and biology in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence.

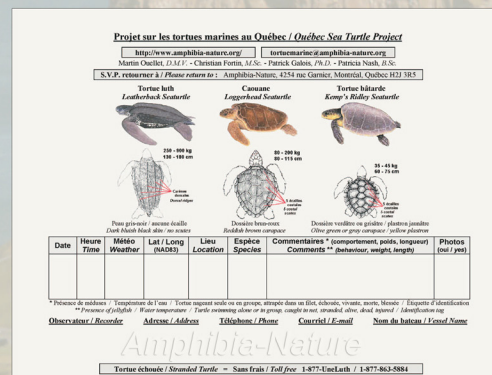


The first documented leatherback seaturtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) in Québec was caught by a fisher in 1981 offshore from Baie de Brador, near Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon.

- Establishment of a network of volunteers in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- Bilingual (English and French) observation kits which include data sheets (**Figure 2**), species information, proper release techniques, contact information, and cameras are being distributed to coastal fishing communities, local organizations, and schools to improve public awareness, create a sense of stewardship, and document sightings.
- A toll-free telephone number (1-877-UneLuth) and a website ([www.amphibia-nature.org](http://www.amphibia-nature.org)) have recently been created to facilitate the collection and dissemination of information.



Fishing communities can provide important information on sea turtle abundance and distribution.

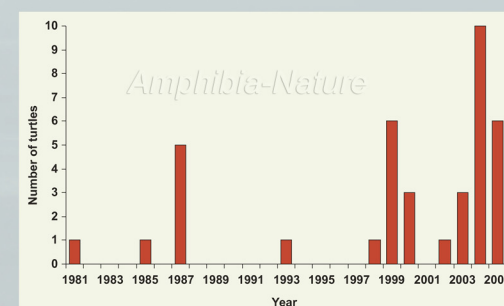


**Figure 2.** Data sheet used to document observations.

- In the past three years, anecdotal (incomplete sighting reports) and documented (GPS, photographs, caught or stranded turtles) records ( $n = 38$ ) have been collected or reported (**Figure 3**).
- Leatherback seaturtles have been encountered in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence as far west as Île aux Coudres and east to Blanc-Sablon (**Figure 4**).



An adult leatherback seaturtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) entangled in fishing gear off Îles de la Madeleine in 2005. The turtle was later released alive.



**Figure 3.** Numbers of leatherback scaturtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) recorded in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence, Québec, between 1981 and 2005.



**Figure 4.** Documented leatherback seaturtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) occurrences in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence.

**Photo credits:** Marlene Bertani, Charles Cormier, Benoît Roberge, Pierre Vigneau  
**Cartography:** Alain Chouinard

**Data sharing:** Robert Anderson, Dany Arseneau, Esther Blier, Hugo Bourdages, Anne-Marie Cabana, Sylvain Cormier, Albert Cyr, Ghislain Cyr, Jérémie Cyr, Véronique de la Chenellière, Ronald Derasp, Bruno Déraspé, Kristin Doucet, Ivan Etheridge, Sylvain Hurtubise, Melvin Jones, Sylvette Leblanc, Jean-Guy Martinet, Yves Martinet, Donald McAlpine, Selma Pereira, Michael Perry, Henri-Paul Renaud, Louis Richard, Yves Richard, Richard Sears, Rob Tice, Yann Troutet, Steve Vallender

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OUELLET, M., C. FORTIN, P. GALOIS et P. NASH, 2006. Les tortues marines: un plan d'action pour mieux cerner leur situation au Québec. *Le Naturaliste Canadien*, 130, (1): 37-43.



The leatherback seaturtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) is easily identified by fishers and local people.

- Leatherback sea turtles are fairly common seasonally in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence, Québec.
- This area may provide important foraging habitat for this species.
- Other sea turtle species may occur in the region based on anecdotal reports.
- It is unclear whether leatherback sea turtles are more abundant in recent years due to an increase in public awareness or from other factors such as climate change.
- It will be essential to include Québec waters in international efforts to recover sea turtles in the Atlantic Ocean.



An adult leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) is released by fishers off Îles de la Madeleine in 2000.