

The Leatherback Sea Turtle



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

The leatherback is the largest turtle in the world. A grown leatherback weighs 750 to 1,000 pounds and is 5 to 6 feet long. It is the only sea turtle without scales and a hard shell. Instead it has tough, rubbery skin, which gives it its name. Leatherbacks have looked the way they do now since the age of the dinosaurs.

Leatherbacks eat soft animals, such as jellyfish. They have no crushing beak like other sea turtles; spines in their mouth and throat point backward to hold on to slippery food.

They are strong swimmers. Some swim more than 10,000 miles a year, and they can dive about 4,000 feet deep, deeper than any other turtle.

Females come out of the sea at night to lay their eggs on warm beaches. A balloon that ends up in the ocean can look like a jellyfish to a hungry turtle, so it helps never to let balloons go outside.

1. How did the leatherback get its name?

2. How deep can a leatherback dive?

3. Why can a balloon in the ocean hurt a leatherback?

4. What do you think people can do to help leatherbacks?

Answer key

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1. How did the leatherback get its name?
From its tough, rubbery skin.
2. How deep can a leatherback dive?
About 4,000 feet, deeper than any other turtle.
3. Why can a balloon in the ocean hurt a leatherback?
The turtle can take it for a jellyfish and try to eat it.
4. What do you think people can do to help leatherbacks?
Sample answer: keep balloons and plastic out of the ocean, and leave turtles and their nests alone on the beach.