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First Record of the Olive Ridley and of Nesting by the Loggerhead Turtle in **Curacao**

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OLIVE RIDLEY

On July 26, 1991, **Curacao** fisherman landed a sea turtle from the wave-exposed north mast of the island. The animal was caught by hook and line baited with fish. As the sea on the north mast is rough, the turtle's carapace was damaged during landing. The animal was donated to the **Curacao** Seaquarium, where treatment with antibiotics prevented infection of the wounds. The animal accepted food for the first time on October 3, 1991.

Seven pairs of nonoverlapping lateral scutes and a disc-shaped carapace, identified the specimen as an olive ridley, *Lepidochelys olivacea* (Eschscholtz, 1829) (Pritchard et al., 1983) (Fig. 1). The animal was a female and weighed 30 kg. Straight-line carapace length was 62 cm (curved-line carapace length 64 cm) and carapace width was 57 cm (curved-line carapace width: 67.5 cm). Tail measurements were tip of tail to posterior margin of carapace: -2 cm; posterior margin of plastron to mid-vent: 7 cm; mid-vent to tip of tail: 3 cm. Four sea turtle species have been reported from the waters around the island of **Curacao**: the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) (Hermans, 1961; Fischer, 1978). This record is the first confirmed identification of *Lepidochelys olivacea* from the waters of **Curacao**.

The species has been most commonly reported from the masts of Venezuela (Isla Margarita) and French Guiana. Major nesting beaches are located in Surinam

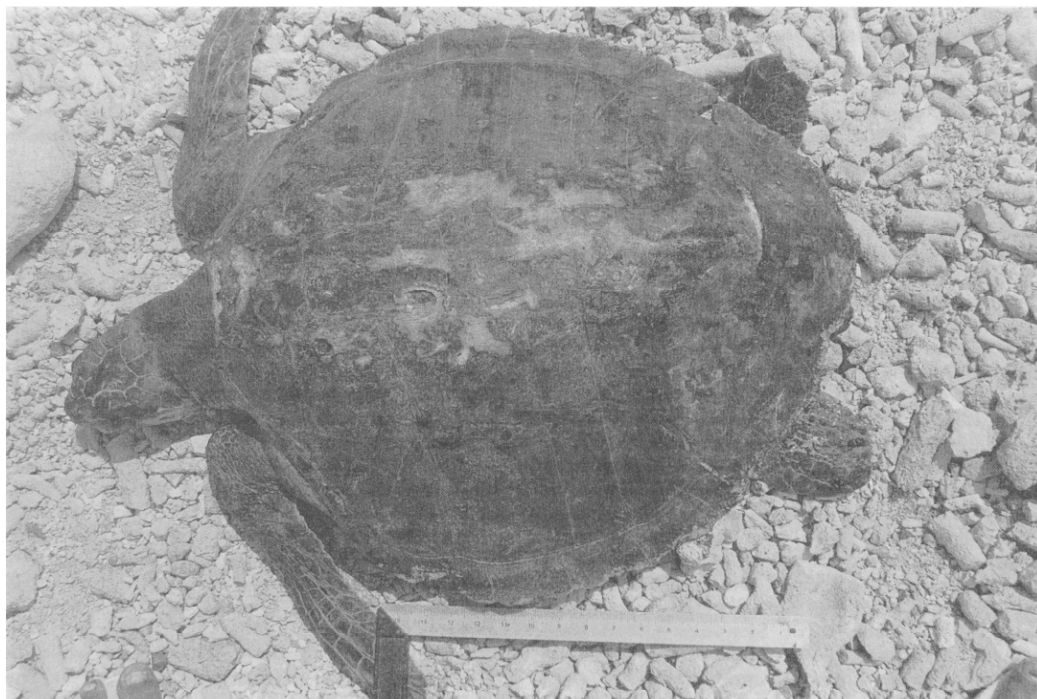


FIG. 1. Dorsal view of the Olive Ridley, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, landed in Curacao, July 1991.

and Guyana (Ogren et al., 1989). Ogren et al. (1989) note some nesting also occurs in French Guyana and Trinidad, and an extreme range from Cuba to Uruguay, but suggest major foraging areas are near the Guianas and Venezuela in the Western Atlantic. Márquez M (1990) mentions a distribution for the olive ridley along the northern Atlantic side of South America to Panama and also along the Caribbean chain of islands. The olive ridley is known as "bastardo" or bastard sea turtle in the Netherlands Antilles and is reported by Schulz (1984) to be one of the rarest sea turtles in the Western Atlantic region.

LOGGERHEAD TURTLE

At approximately 1700 hours on July 30, 1991, Ms. L. van der Kar observed 80-100 turtle hatchlings emerge from the sand and head towards the sea at Boca **Manzaliña**, a secluded pocket beach at the western side of the northern coast of **Curaçao**. Photographs of the juveniles showed five pairs of lateral scutes, identifying the hatchlings as loggerheads, *Caretta caretta* (Pritchard et al., 1983). Although loggerheads are regularly observed in the waters around the island and records of possible nesting in **Curaçao** date back to 1984 (Van Buurt, 1984) and 1907 (Euwens as cited in Hermans, 1961), this is the first documented case of hatching from a **Curaçao** beach. Loggerheads are considered rarer in the Netherlands Antilles than either the green turtle or the hawksbill. Loggerheads are usually seen in open water while green turtles and hawksbills are seen in coastal areas.

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First Record and Establishment of the Shiny Cowbird in **Curaçao**

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The Shiny Cowbird, *Molothrus bonariensis* (Gmelin), is widely distributed across South America and the West Indies (Schauensee and Phelps, 1978) but has not been recorded before from the Netherlands Antilles (Voous, 1983; Bond, 1985). From March 8 through May 12, 1991, 13 specimens were collected (by shooting) from areas around human habitation at Soto, Girouette and Jan Sofat, on the island of **Curaçao**. The collection sites were separated by a maximum linear distance of approximately 18 km. At Soto, the westernmost site, two birds were collected at a feeder where a maximum of nine birds was seen. At Girouette, ten birds were collected in open farmland with scattered trees as well as from a feeder. At this site the birds showed a preference for several large mesquite trees, *Prosopis juliflora* (Sw.) DC., and were occasionally observed in flocks of up to 22 birds. At Jan Sofat, the easternmost site, one bird was collected at a feeder where more than eight birds were seen simultaneously.

The sample consisted of eight males and five females. Four males were adults and four were juveniles, based on their plumage. The state of maturity of two females could not be determined due to the poor condition of the specimens; three were considered juvenile on the basis of straight and narrow oviducts. For the males, average weight (± 1 SD) was 51.3 ± 4.4 g, average wing length (not stretched) was 110 ± 3.2 mm and average length of total culmen was 21.5 ± 0.9 mm. For mature males considered separately, the corresponding measurements were 52.6 ± 2.4 g, 112 ± 2.6 mm and 21.1 ± 0.6 mm. For the females these were 42.0 ± 3.7 g, 99 ± 1.4 mm and 20.1 ± 0.5 mm, respectively. All specimens have been deposited in the collections of the Zoological Museum of Amsterdam (ZMA 37.475-37.482, 37.521-37.525).

The Shiny Cowbird has generalist food habits and is a brood parasite known to lay eggs in the nests of over 201 host species (Cruz et al., 1989). In recent years it has undergone a population expansion in the Caribbean. The populations which have invaded the region belong to the subspecies *minimus* Dalmas (Post and Wiley, 1977; Cruz et al., 1989), which is also found from northeastern Venezuela to northeastern Brazil. The birds from **Curaçao** were considerably larger than