

Marine Reptiles

For photo see:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/species/turtles/loggerhead.html

Loggerhead sea turtle

Caretta caretta

SPECIES STATUS:

Federally Listed as Threatened

State Listed as Threatened

IUCN Red list – Endangered

SPECIES INFORMATION: Mature male loggerhead sea turtles are distinguished by longer and thicker tails. Little information exists on the feeding behavior of post-hatchlings in pelagic waters, but they are most likely exclusively carnivorous (e.g., eating invertebrates and fish eggs). Juveniles and adults feed on benthic invertebrates and occasionally fishes. Loggerheads exhibit slow growth rates; subadults grow approximately 1 centimeter per year. Turtles likely reach sexual maturity at 20 to 30 years of age. Females generally breed once every three or more years. Females lay clutches of about 120 eggs every 14 days during the nesting season. Incubation lasts about 70 days. Sex determination is temperature-dependent.

DISTRIBUTION: Worldwide, loggerhead sea turtles occur throughout temperate and tropical regions of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, and adults are known to make extensive migrations between foraging areas and nesting beaches. The majority of nesting occurs in the western rims of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. In the North Pacific, most nesting occurs in Japan. Historically, loggerhead sea turtles may have occurred in the waters around all the Hawaiian Islands. Today, juveniles are very rarely seen in the Hawaiian Islands.

ABUNDANCE: The population size in the North Pacific is unknown but is likely declining. The nesting population in Japan has declined significantly in recent decades.

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: Loggerhead sea turtles in Hawaiian waters are likely part of the Japanese population. Nesting occurs on sandy beaches, but does not occur in Hawai'i.

THREATS:

- Fisheries bycatch. Mortality of adult and juvenile turtles results from fisheries bycatch. Due to federally mandated take reduction measures implemented by Hawaiian longline fisheries, bycatch rates have been reduced by approximately 90 percent since 2004. Bycatch remains a threat in other regions.
- Habitat loss and degradation. Nesting beaches (all of which are outside Hawai'i) are critical to the species' survival and are subject to natural and human-caused threats such as tsunamis, oil spills, sea level rise from climate change, light pollution, vehicular traffic on beaches, and coastal development.
- Harvest of eggs and adults. Harvest occurs on beaches in many countries, although conservation efforts have reduced this threat.
- Marine debris. Entanglement by, or ingestion of, marine debris is a source of mortality.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: Actions specific to loggerhead sea turtles should include the following:

- Cooperate with jurisdictions where nesting occurs to restore nesting habitat and reduce take of eggs and females.
- Reduce marine debris in the marine environment and on beaches.
- Continue partnerships with local conservation groups to monitor and conserve turtles, respond to stranding, and conduct research and outreach programs.
- Conduct education and outreach efforts, particularly to address threats such as fishing interactions, marine recreation interactions, and marine debris.

MONITORING: Continue to monitor turtles harmed or killed by marine debris and fisheries bycatch.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES: Determine distribution, abundance, and status of post-hatchlings, juveniles, and adults in the marine environment.

References:

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