

Rookery Bay Research Reserve

Finding Solutions



Threatened Sea Turtles on SW Florida Beaches

Three species of sea turtle are known to inhabit the waters of Southwest Florida. Kemp's Ridley and Atlantic Green turtles are both listed federally as Endangered species and the Loggerhead is listed as a Threatened species. Loggerhead sea turtles

are our most common local species and females come ashore to lay eggs each summer from May through August. Populations of Loggerheads are decreasing worldwide due to loss of nesting habitat, predation of eggs by raccoons and

other animals, ingestion of floating trash and entanglement in fishing line or other marine debris. In addition, impacts from the Gulf oil spill have reinforced the need for sea turtle nesting protection in the Gulf ecosystem.



Project Partners
Rookery Bay Research & Stewardship Teams in cooperation with the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Collier County Environmental Services and the Conservancy of SWF

Funding
NOAA/College-supported Internship Program, Friends of Rookery Bay

Project Dates
Yearly: April-October



The Solution

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve works in cooperation with the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Collier County Environmental Services and the Conservancy of Southwest Florida to preserve this threatened species. Rookery Bay staff and partnering agencies patrol the beaches of Sea Oat Island, Cape Romano, Kice Island, Keewaydin

Island and other islands in the Ten Thousand Islands. Beach patrols occur seven days a week during nesting season to locate nests. Since 2005, monitoring efforts have been expanded to include placement of cages over nests to protect eggs from predation by raccoons. Each nest contains between 80 and 120 eggs. Rookery Bay resource managers work with college students

through a grant-funded internship program to monitor nests throughout the nesting season each year. Although cages cannot protect nests from inundation by storm events or fire ant predation, the enhanced monitoring program and incorporation of caging efforts has significantly increased nesting success in the Reserve.

Rookery Bay, located in southwest Florida, is recognized as one of the few remaining pristine, mangrove-forested estuaries in the U.S. As part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, it serves as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for students and scientists. For more information, visit www.rookerybay.org.

