

Finding Solutions: Sea Turtles: Threatened Species



Project Partners

Rookery Bay Reserve
Ten Thousand Islands
National Wildlife Refuge
Collier County
Conservancy of
Southwest Florida
(CSWF)

Funding

Friends of Rookery
Bay (FORB)
Adopt A Nest Program

Project Dates

Yearly: April-October

Three species of sea turtle inhabit the waters of Southwest Florida. Kemp's Ridley sea turtles are listed as endangered and use the area primarily as a foraging area. Loggerhead and Green sea turtles are listed as threatened in Florida and nest along our local beaches.

Sea turtles nest May through August, with hatching season extending until October. Loggerheads can nest up to 5 times in a season and nest every 2 – 4 years. Each nest can have 80 – 120 ping pong ball sized eggs.

Sea turtles face many challenges 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.



The Solution

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (RBNERR) works with Project Partners to protect these threatened species.

RBNERR staff, FORB interns, volunteers and partnering agencies patrol the beaches in the Reserve to document nesting activity. Our remote beaches are accessed via boat to conduct nesting surveys. Nests are located and caged to protect them from predation by raccoons and coyotes. The incorporation of caging has significantly increased nesting success in the Reserve. Nests

are later inventoried to determine hatching success. All monitoring efforts are permitted and conducted under strict Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) guidelines.

The Reserve also works closely with other researchers so we can learn more about sea turtles and how we can further protect them. Current and past studies have included: Kemp's Ridley foraging (Jeff Schmid, CSWF), stable isotopes (Simona Cerani, FWC), population genetics (Brian Shamblyn, UGA) and

incubation temperatures (Jill Schmid, RBNERR in partnership with CSWF).

In 2016, the Friends of Rookery Bay began the Adopt a Nest program to help fund the Reserve's monitoring efforts. The program funds sea turtle internships and were used to purchase a boat.

MORE 'FINDING SOLUTIONS' CAN BE FOUND ONLINE



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.

