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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Biscayne National Park
Species Focus: Loggerhead Sea Turtles



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

A loggerhead hatchling emerges from its nest and begins its seaward journey.

Why does Biscayne National Park focus on the loggerhead?

Loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) are the most common sea turtles observed swimming in the park's waters and nesting on the park's beaches, and almost all nests observed in the park are from loggerheads. In the U.S. loggerheads are currently classified under the Endangered Species Act as "threatened" (bad!), but their status could even be elevated to "endangered" (worse!).

Why is the loggerhead turtle a threatened species?

There are several reasons why loggerhead populations have declined in recent years. Primary threats include habitat loss (as increasing human populations encroach upon critical nesting habitat), nest predation by natural predators such as the raccoon, mortality from boat collisions and entanglement in fishing and boating gear, and failure of hatchlings to make it to sea due to light interference (lights along the coast confuse the hatchlings, which normally rely on the reflection of the moon on the water to guide them to the sea).

More facts about loggerhead sea turtles:

- Loggerhead turtles are so named because of their very large heads.
- Female loggerheads begin laying eggs around the age of 20 years.
- On average, one female turtle will nest four separate times per nesting season, with an interval of about two weeks in between.
- Each nest contains an average of 100 eggs.
- A female turtle works hard to dig a large hole, followed by a narrower but deeper chamber (egg chamber) to hide her eggs. Then she compactly buries the chamber and the hole.
- After nesting and returning to sea, the female loggerhead will likely never see the eggs again, and will never encounter the resulting hatchlings again. From that point, the eggs are on their own to develop, hatch, make it to sea, and survive in the ocean.
- A fully grown loggerhead turtle can weigh up to almost 400 pounds!
- The carapace (shell) of an adult loggerhead can be up to 3.5 ft long.
- The color of an adult loggerhead turtle ranges from red to brown.

Click here to return to the Sea Turtle Main Page, or click on one of the links below to learn more about sea turtles:

- **Basic sea turtle biology and background information**
- **Biscayne National Park's sea turtle conservation and monitoring efforts**

- **How you can help protect sea turtles**
- **Summary of 2011 sea turtle nesting and habitat restoration activities**

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