



REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE

ABOUT

The Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta Caretta*) has a carapace (shell) that is reddish brown and skin of brownish-yellow, with a medium yellow plastron (under shell). On average they weigh 170 to 315 lbs and reach a length of 31 to 49 inches. Loggerheads are named for their broad, massive skulls and have very strong beak-like jaws, which crush their prey of mollusks, crustaceans, crabs, shrimp, jellyfish, and other medium-sized marine animals. Most Loggerheads reaching adulthood live over 30 years and can often live to be more than 100. This turtle is the most common nesting in the U.S., ranging from Texas to North Carolina and Virginia. In the southeastern US, adult females begin to nest as early as late April and continue until early September. They nest at night and average clutch size varies from 100-125 eggs. After about 60 days the hatchlings emerge – usually at night when protection from predators is greater. When they reach the ocean, baby Loggerheads use ocean currents to travel to the Sargasso Sea using the Sargassum (gulf-weed) as protection until they mature.

DID YOU KNOW?

Florida has the largest concentration of nests, but their numbers have declined from 85,988 in 1998 to just over 45,000 in 2007. This number represents approximately 35-40% of the world population. Loggerhead Sea Turtles need soft, sandy beaches to nest where there is little to no light, because hatchlings usually follow the brightest light, and lighting at beach homes can lead them away from the ocean and to certain death. Historically, Loggerheads were intensively hunted for their meat and eggs, along with their fat, which was used in cosmetics and medication. The Loggerhead shell was also prized for making items such as decorative combs and jewelry. However, the modern threat to this species, and all marine turtles, lies in being caught and drowning in industrial fishing nets, as well as being injured by speedboat propellers. The Loggerhead was listed as threatened in 1978 and the US government has listed the Loggerhead as endangered worldwide.

For more detailed information visit: www.turtles.org or www.wikipedia.org.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The number of Loggerheads in the U.S. represents what percentage of the world population?

- a) 35-40%
- b) 85-90%
- c) 20-27%
- d) 17-19%

Answer is A.

