

Rookery Bay Reserve *Finding Solutions*



Threatened Sea Turtles on Southwest 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 (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.



Project Leaders

Rookery Bay Resource Stewardship Team in cooperation with the Rookery Bay Research Team & Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge Staff

Funding

Collier County Community Foundation

Project Dates

Yearly: May – Sept.

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 SW Florida to preserve this threatened species. Staff from partnering agencies patrol the beaches of Sea Oat Island, Cape Romano, Kice 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. Resource managers monitor each nest and although cages

cannot protect nests from inundation by storm events or fire ant predation, the incorporation of caging efforts has increased nesting success in the Reserve tremendously.



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.

