

CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE  
2004 SEA TURTLE MONITORING PROGRAM

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Cape Lookout National Seashore is grateful for the commitment of Student Conservation Association resource assistants Tiffany Harvey, Elena Grillo and T.J. Mascia. Their dedication and enthusiasm was crucial to the success of an intensive turtle-monitoring program. The park also appreciates the continued assistance from Keith Rittmaster, Allen Brooks, and Natalie Woods on South Core Banks.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Cape Lookout National Seashore (CALO) began monitoring marine turtles in 1976. Baseline data was collected for a portion of South Core Banks during an extensive six-year study from 1978 - 1983. Nesting turtles were tagged and nests marked during nightly patrols. Since 1984 Cape Lookout has conducted daytime monitoring to document strandings, protect nest sites, relocate nests in danger of being flooded and protect hatchlings. Cape Lookout is a significant northern nesting beach and supports among the highest number of loggerhead turtle nests in North Carolina. Each year data have been collected, analyzed, and presented to management in hopes of better protecting our marine turtle population. This report will summarize the 2004 project, consolidate many years of data and make recommendations for management of these federally protected species. In addition to providing CALO with management data, the information gathered on CALO beaches continues to be an important link for many state, federal, and private Atlantic coast sea turtle managers.

## **COOPERATING AGENCIES**

Cape Lookout National Seashore cooperates with numerous agencies, including the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on sea turtle protection. The North Carolina Sea Turtle Program Coordinator receives all original stranding reports and annual nesting activity reports. NCWRC also issues Cape Lookout National Seashore an Endangered Species permit for possession and disposition of stranded marine turtles and relocation of nests.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Cape Lookout National Seashore is located in the central coastal area of North Carolina between

Beaufort and Ocracoke Inlets. The park is currently divided into four barrier islands. The northernmost island, North Core Banks (NCB) is approximately 19 miles long, extending from Ocracoke Inlet to Old Drum Inlet. From Old Drum Inlet to New Drum Inlet is a 3-mile long island of land formerly connected to NCB known unofficially as Middle Core Banks. South Core Banks (SCB) extends southward from New Drum Inlet 25 miles to the Cape Lookout bight area. Both NCB and SCB have a northeast to southwest orientation and exhibit a low profile landscape. The fourth island, Shackleford Banks (SH) is 9 miles long and has an east-west orientation with a higher dune system and larger areas of vegetation. All islands in the park are subject to constant and dramatic change by the actions of wind and waves.

## **METHODS**

Three of the four islands comprising the Seashore were monitored for turtle nesting activity. The three-mile long area between Old Drum Inlet and New Drum Inlet was not accessible by vehicle and was not monitored regularly. Student Conservation Association resource assistants, volunteers and NPS staff patrolled NCB and SCB from June 1 to August 15. Patrols were conducted seven days a week and each patrol began early enough so that the island was checked for turtle activity by 12:00 PM. Patrols of Shackleford Banks were conducted two or three times a week. Once a turtle activity was located, data were collected and the activity was marked. For detailed information on procedures used in the 2004 Sea Turtle Program refer to Appendix I.

Nest losses to tidal flooding and predation are the primary threats to nesting success at CALO. Nests laid in the tidal wash zone, primary berm, and back swale are considered in danger of erosion or tidal flooding. These nests were relocated to a higher elevation on the primary dune. The park

closed six beach areas, up to one mile in length, to vehicles. Relocated nests were moved into these closures and vehicles were detoured around the backside of the primary dunes. Beach closures eliminated the need to construct and maintain numerous individual barricades. However, individual barricades were erected around those nests that were not relocated and were outside the beach closures. Beach vehicle closures provide a rut-free corridor from the nest site to the ocean thus preventing hatchlings from becoming entrapped in tire ruts and dying from predation or desiccation. Camping and campfires were not permitted in the closures to prevent disturbance of hatchlings by artificial lights.

Nests relocated onto the primary dunes and into beach closures may introduce factors that increase egg and hatchling mortality. Sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*) are dominant on the primary dunes and their roots invade the nest. Hatchlings that emerge from nests located high on the primary dunes are exposed to mainland lights and may travel toward the lights away from the ocean. Records were therefore kept of hatchlings entangled in roots and eggs destroyed by roots in the egg chamber. Hatchling tracks that were observed to go away from the ocean were also noted. Finally, relocating nests into a single beach closure increases the risk of a large loss due to storms, pathogens, or predation. Any sign of predation was noted and the approximate numbers of eggs or hatchlings destroyed were recorded. To discourage raccoon predation, wire screens anchored by rebar were placed over all nests. Wire cages were used on most nests between the lighthouse and Power Squadron Spit, the area with the most problems from raccoons in the past. Nests were monitored for hatching activity through November. Nests were excavated after hatching to determine nest success.

## RESULTS

The monitoring procedures used at CALO prior to 1990 were significantly different than those used after that year. Records from those years will not be included in this report. 1990 marked the beginning of monitoring procedures following the USFWS Index Nesting Beach program (See Appendix I, Attachment 7).

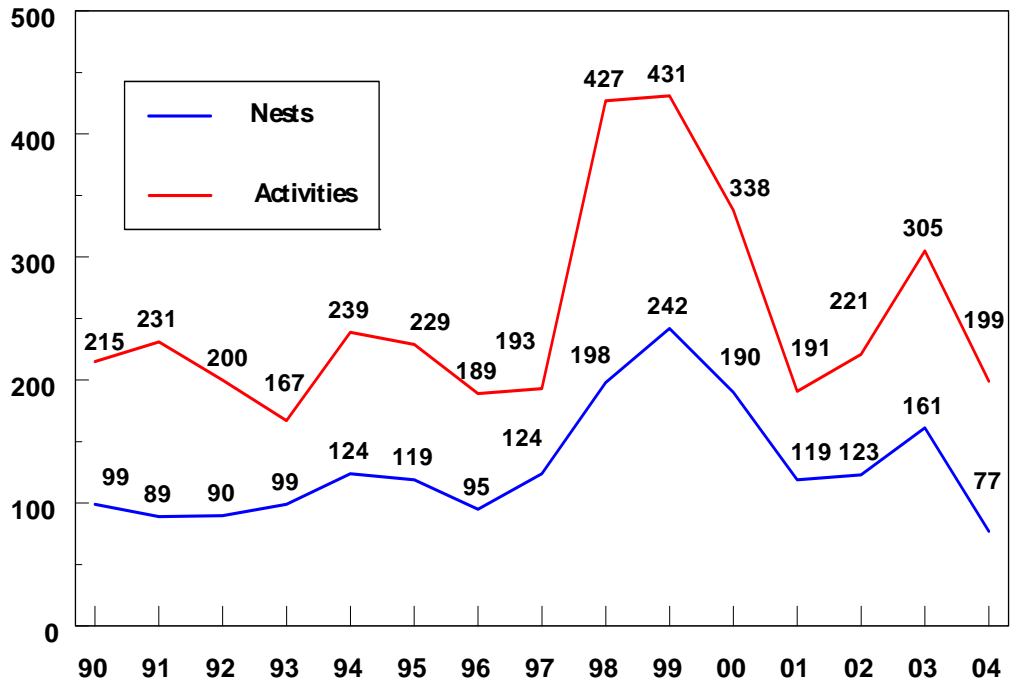
### *NESTING RESULTS*

The first recorded nesting activity in 2004 was on April 21 and the last on August 30, for a 131 day nesting season. A total of 199 activities were documented of which there were 77 nests, 15 digs, and 107 crawls, (Table 1; see Appendix I for activity definitions).

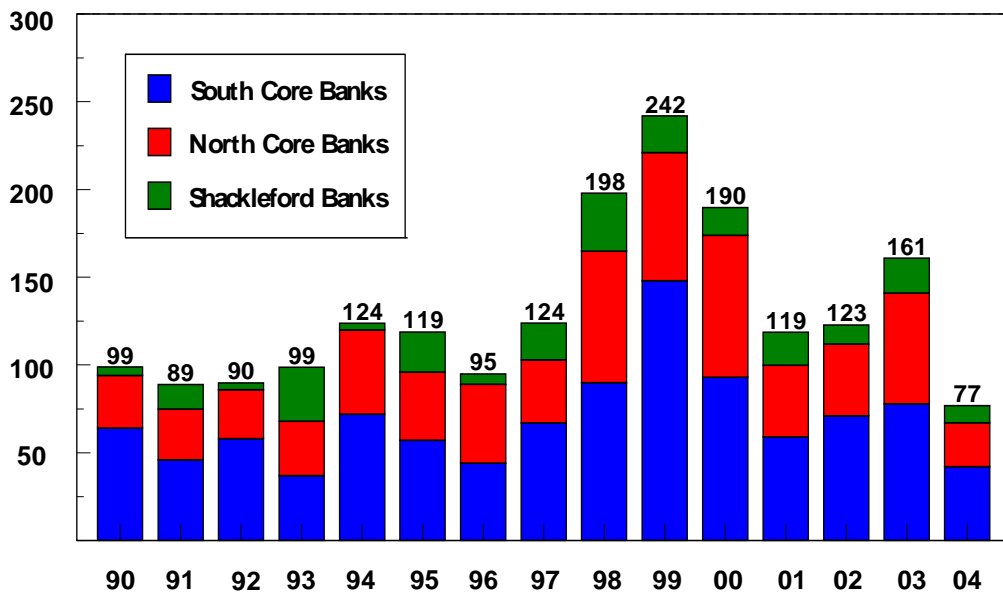
Table 1. 2004 ACTIVITIES BY STUDY AREA

	North Core Banks	South Core Banks	Shackleford Banks	CALO Total
NESTS	25	42	10	77
DIGS	6	9	0	15
CRAWLS	25	75	7	107

**Figure 1. Cape Lookout Turtle Activities 1990-2004**



**Figure 2. Turtle Nests 1990-2004**





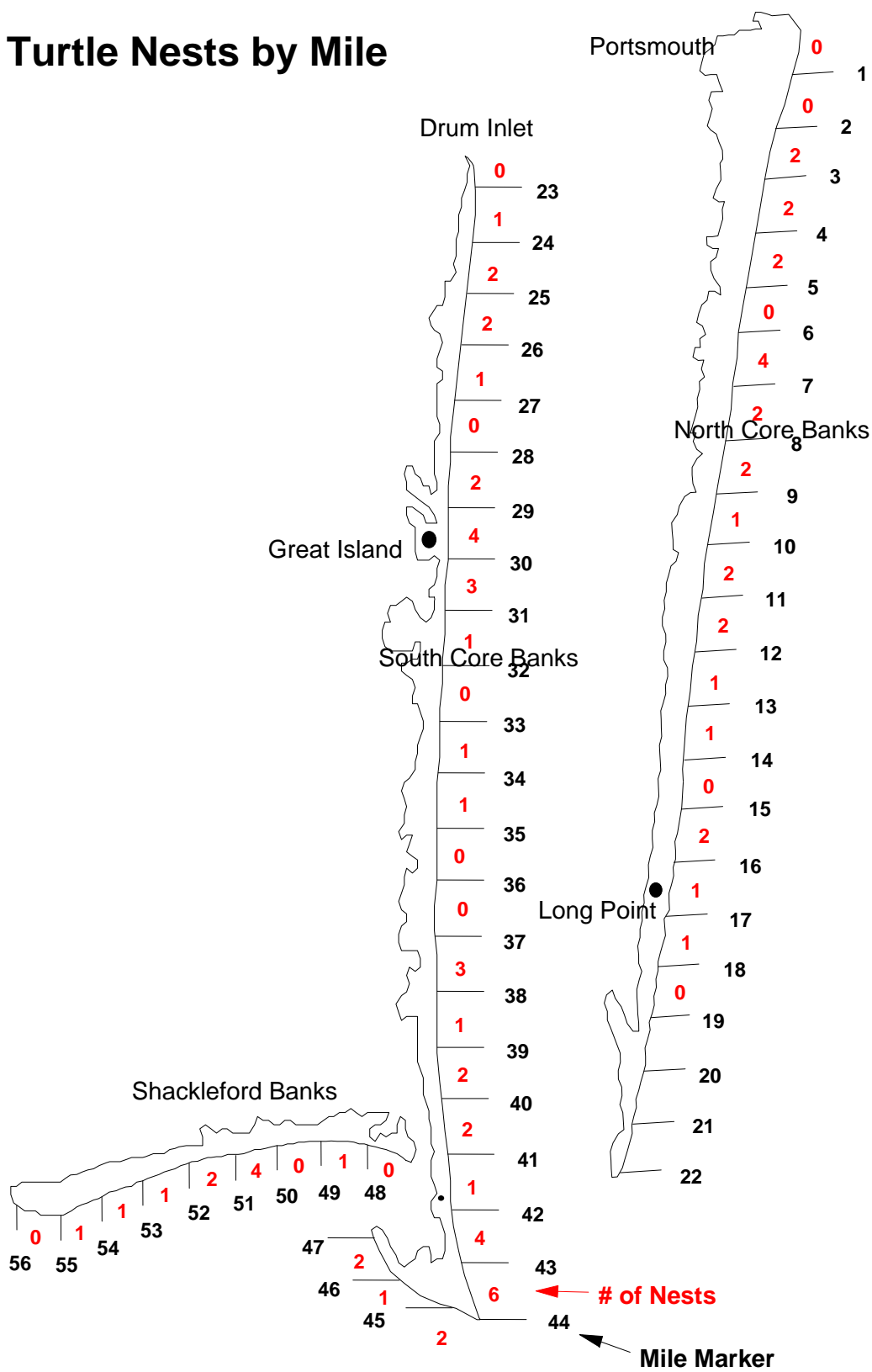
The number of nests found in the park in 2004 was the lowest total since 1988 and well below the annual average of 131 nests (Fig. 2). The greatest concentration of nests in the park occurred between Mile 42 and 44 on SCB (Fig. 3). Seven leatherback turtle nesting activities were found, including three confirmed nests. The leatherback activities were found at intervals of six to thirteen days and may have been from a single female. A confirmed green turtle crawl was found on NCB June 24. One nest on South Core Banks was possibly a green turtle nest but this could not be confirmed because the nest was washed away before hatching. All other nesting activities in the park were by loggerhead turtles.

#### *HATCHING RESULTS*

Follow-up of nesting activity involved observing nest and dig sites for signs of hatching, recording relevant data, and excavating the site. By collecting hatch information, often it can be determined if predators, human disturbance or environmental occurrences have adversely affected a nest. Individual nest data for SCB, NCB and SH are given in Appendix II.

**Figure 3.**

**2004 Turtle Nests by Mile**



The last nest was excavated on November 3. The average clutch size was 104 eggs. It took an average of 64 days for nests to incubate. 43% of the eggs produced hatchlings that made it out of the nest (emergence success), the highest for any one nest being 98% and lowest 0%. A total of 7,309 eggs were counted. Seven nests were washed away with the numbers of eggs unknown. 3,139 of these eggs hatched and hatchlings emerged or were released from the nest (Table 2). Flooding during Hurricane Alex and several other storms had a great impact on the 2004 nesting season. A total of 53 nests were flooded by the ocean. Thirty six nests were washed away or failed to hatch due to flooding.

Table 2. SEA TURTLE HATCH SUMMARY 1990-2004

Year	Nests	Relocated	Excavated	Avg. Clutch	Flooded	Avg. Incu	Eggs	Emerged	EMR %
1990	99	68	89	115	1	57	10,376	7,369	71%
1991	89	56	74	115	6	62	8,393	5,197	62%
1992	90	39	84	114	4	63	9,419	6,791	73%
1993	99	54	89	115	9	59	10,365	7,544	74%
1994	124	98	119	120	3	62	14,459	11,296	79%
1995	119	66	103	115	38	57	12,357	6,157	51%
1996	95	69	85	115	16	65	10,091	5,602	57%
1997	124	92	120	122	3	63	14,824	10,740	73%
1998	198	117	169	114	39	62	19,672	13,315	69%
1999	242	123	191	116	90	62	23,224	11,751	53% *
2000	190	120	176	111	2	67	19,527	13,471	69%
2001	119	60	106	113	5	65	12,358	9,555	79%
2002	123	56	115	119	7	61	13,657	10,758	79%
2003	161	66	138	119	45	65	16,440	10,067	61% **
2004	77	34	75	104	36	64	7,309	3,139	43%

\*does not include 37 nests washed away with unknown egg totals

\*\*does not include 20 nests washed away with unknown egg totals

Calculating a true emergence success for the year always proves to be difficult. Raccoons may

dig into a nest at hatching making it impossible to know how many turtles escaped from the nest. A nest may be washed away that wasn't relocated, thus an emergence success of zero is known but the original number of eggs laid is not known. The emergence success reported is for those nests in which the number of eggs laid and the number of emerged turtles is known. The number of nests excavated for the year provides a basis for knowing how many nests the emergence success is based upon (Table 2).

To provide a more accurate emergence success rate we have calculated an estimated emergence success of 40% in 2003. This figure includes seven nests with unknown egg numbers that were washed away. The average clutch size for the year was given to those nests as the number of eggs laid, allowing them to be calculated into the estimated emergence success.

Table 3. 2004 ACTIVITY SUMMARY BY STUDY AREA

	NCB	SCB	SH	TOTALS
NESTS	25	42	10	77
RELOCATED	11(44%)	22(52%)	1(10%)	34
AVERAGE CLUTCH	106 eggs	105 eggs	97 eggs	104 eggs
EMERGE SUCCESS	21%	48%	64%	43%
AVERAGE INCUBATION	62 days	66 days	61 days	64 days
# LOST TO FLOODING	18	15	3	36
# LOST TO PREDATORS	0	0	0	0

In 2004 44% of the nests were relocated. Most nests that were relocated would have been lost to flooding had they not been moved. Non-relocated nests, in most cases, were laid on the primary

dunes and met the park's criteria for a safe distance above the high tide line. The emergence rate for relocated nests was almost three times higher than the rate for untreated nests in 2004 (Table 4).

Table 4. EMERGENCE SUCCESS OF RELOCATED VS. NON-RELOCATED NESTS BY STUDY AREA IN 2004

<i>RELOCATED</i>	NCB	SCB	SH	CALO Total
Nests	11	22	1	34
Eggs	1,144	2,449	58	3,651
Hatchlings	428	1825	51	2304
Emergence Rate	37%	74%	88%	63%
<i>NON-RELOCATED</i>				
Nests	14	20	9	43
Eggs	873	1,876	909	3,658
Hatchlings	5	264	566	835
Emergence Rate	0.5%	14%	62%	23%
Estimated Total Emergence Rate	17%	47%	64%	40%

Since 1990 emergence success has been similar for relocated and non-relocated nests (Table 5). The presence of good relocation areas and the impacts of major storms have been the key factors in the success of relocated nests.

In 2004, two nests lost eggs or hatchlings to ghost crabs. Ghost crab predation was recorded when eggshells were found on the surface. Raccoon predation did not occur on any nests.

Table 5. 1990-2004 EMERGENCE SUCCESS FOR RELOCATED  
vs. NON-RELOCATED NESTS

YEAR	PERCENT OF NESTS RELOCATED	EMERGENCE RATE-RELOCATED	EMERGENCE RATE-NON RELOCATED	% OF NESTS EXCAVATED
1990	69	71	77	94
1991	63	57	76	97
1992	43	71	76	97
1993	54	74	73	90
1994	79	80	73	96
1995	55	61	38	86
1996	73	56	64	89
1997	74	69	86	95
1998	59	77	55	85
1999	51	49	59	79
2000	63	66	74	93
2001	50	81	76	89
2002	45	73	84	93
2003	41	47	75	86
2004	44	63	23	97
<i>AVERAGES</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>89</i>

No problems with root invasion in nests or artificial lights attracting hatchlings were observed.

Off-road vehicles disregarding beach closures threaten the survival of hatchlings. Only ten violations of vehicle closures for turtle nests were documented which was a great improvement from previous years. These vehicles drove between posts and the ocean at low tides.

## DISCUSSION

An objective of the *Recovery Plan for U.S. Population of Loggerhead Turtle* is to implement nest protection measures "to ensure (a) greater than 60 percent hatch rate." This should be done using the "least manipulative method ... to avoid interfering with known or unknown biological processes." Tidal flooding continues to be the principal threat to nesting success at CALO. Nest relocation is the primary management tool used to enhance hatching success in the park and was effective in achieving a hatch rate of 63 percent for relocated nests in 2004. Unfortunately the changes in the beach profile from Hurricane Isabel in 2003 and flooding from Hurricane Alex combined to make overall nesting success in the park low.

Nests and hatchlings are protected from vehicles and human disturbance through education and beach closures. Egg losses to raccoons can be limited through the use of screens and cages, although "smart predators" are providing new challenges. The management procedures used at CALO have been successful at increasing hatching success with minimal manipulation of natural sea turtle nesting.

## **STRANDINGS**

Collecting information from stranded turtles is also an important phase of the CALO Sea Turtle Monitoring Program. Research has indicated that sea turtle population stability is much more sensitive to change in the large juvenile stage (subadult) than in earlier stages. The key to improving the outlook for this population lies in reducing mortality in large juveniles. CALO documents strandings, collects data for the N.C. Sea Turtle Project Coordinator and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and assists in the transportation of live strandings to rehabilitation facilities.

Seventy eight strandings occurred at CALO in 2004. All strandings were reported to the Sea Turtle Program Coordinator for North Carolina. Loggerhead turtles accounted for the majority of the strandings (45). There were also 28 green turtles, four Kemp's Ridleys and one leatherback. The month of January had the greatest number of strandings (Table 6). Forty four (56%) of the strandings were found on the soundside of the islands, the remainder on the ocean beach.

Five live strandings occurred in the park. A live leatherback found stranded on a shoal off the east end of Shackleford Banks was euthanized. A green turtle found with a wound was sent to the Topsail Turtle Hospital where it recovered and was released. Two loggerheads and one green turtle were found cold stunned in December and were transported to rehab facilities.



Table 6. 2004 SEA TURTLE STRANDINGS AT CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE

	NCB	SCB	SH	Other	TOTAL
January	1	17	1		19
February	0	0	0		0
March	0	1	0		1
April	1	1	1		3
May	3	1	5		9
June	3	1	2	1	7
July	2	0	1		3
August	0	3	0		3
September	1	0	1		2
October	0	1	4		5
November	6	4	1		11
December	3	10	2		10
Total for 2004	20	39	18	1	78

Injuries or abnormalities were recorded on each stranding report. Six turtles were missing part or all of a flipper, three had flipper wounds, two were missing heads, two had head wounds, eight had carapace damage, one was found with prop scars, and two were found entangled in nylon line. Two loggerheads were found very emaciated in the spring. The remaining turtles showed no apparent cause of death. Turtles were scanned for Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags. PIT tags or metal tags were found on five loggerhead turtles and one leatherback turtle (Table 7). All or parts of 32 turtles were salvaged for NOAA Fisheries researchers.

Table 7. TAGGED SEA TURTLES FOUND AT CALO IN 2004

Stranding #	Date Found	Island	Metal Tags #	PIT tag #
04-05	21 January	SCB	XXQ333 & XXQ334	435C2F3D35
04-18	30 January	SCB	RRS549 & RRS550	45265E2C45
04-19	19 January	SCB	RRF793 & RRF794	Not Scanned
04-28	12 May	SB	VA1888 & 69523	None
04-46	22 September	NCB	RRF404 & RRF405	442C5EOE6F
04-75	29 December	SB	RRS280 & RRS281	4338187A33

Table 8. CALO SEA TURTLE STRANDINGS 1990 – 2004

YEAR	NCB	SCB	SHACK	OTHER	TOTAL
1990	11	18	14		43
1991	8	8	4		20
1992	18	16	10	1	45
1993	18	12	10	3	43
1994	22	27	12	1	62
1995	11	23	9		43
1996	29	33	29		91
1997	21	18	17	1	57
1998	20	21	20	2	63
1999	21	58	14	1	94
2000	28	47	24	2	102
2001	30	24	10		64
2002	13	38	19	1	71
2003	13	30	21		64
2004	20	39	18	1	78

Table 9. CALO TURTLE STRANDINGS BY SPECIES 1990-2004

YEAR	LOGGERHEAD	GREEN	KEMP'S RIDLEY	LEATHERBACK	HAWKSBILL	UNKNOWN
1990	33	7	1	2	0	0
1991	16	2	1	0	0	1
1992	30	13	1	1	0	0
1993	29	6	5	2	0	1
1994	30	24	5	2	0	1
1995	27	7	6	1	0	2
1996	63	21	4	3	0	0
1997	49	1	7	0	0	0
1998	43	8	12	0	0	0
1999	36	41	15	2	0	0
2000	46	40	11	4	0	1
2001	38	15	9	2	0	0
2002	33	26	5	7	0	0
2003	44	9	7	2	1	1
2004	45	28	4	1	0	0



## **MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. CALO should continue to use the US Fish and Wildlife Service's standards for conducting sea turtle monitoring and continue the current relocation standards and procedures; these appear to be very successful.
2. All park staff and volunteers involved with turtle monitoring should be given complete training in current monitoring procedures.
3. Educational efforts should continue to be directed toward park visitors to prevent inadvertent disturbance to nesting females, eggs, and hatchlings. This should include posted signs, site bulletins and interpretive programs. The park should to continue to work in cooperation with the North Carolina Maritime Museum and Cape Lookout Environmental Education Center to educate visitors about sea turtles.

APPENDIX I

2004 SEA TURTLE PROGRAM PROCEDURES

## **2004 SEA TURTLE PROGRAM PROCEDURES**

The basic procedures for the 2004 sea turtle program are outlined below. The monitoring program encompasses both turtle nesting activity and turtle strandings. The primary goal of the program is to ensure continued survival of sea turtles. This is done by:

- collecting data that can be used by the NPS and other organizations in developing sea turtle conservation programs
- protecting sea turtle nests and hatchlings

These procedures outline the basic organization of monitoring staff, describe field identification of nesting activities, and provide instructions on the monitoring system. In order to standardize data collection methodology and provide year to year consistency of data collection Cape Lookout will adopt the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's "Index Nesting Beach Survey Protocol". This protocol is given in Attachment 7.

### **ORGANIZATION OF MONITORING PROGRAM STAFF**

The organization of the sea turtle monitoring staff is as follows:

#### Resource Management Specialist (RMS)

- Oversees the total program and assures all permits are current
- Acts a liaison with other agencies
- Represents CALO at public hearings regarding sea turtles
- Reviews and routes turtle related reports to appropriate authorities

#### Field Coordinator

- Reviews turtle activity reports
- Checks nest sites for proper marking
- Provides field guidance on locating nests, relocations, marking and follow-up
- Assures turtle monitoring staff are carrying out the program as described in the procedures
- Purchases related supplies and equipment
- Schedules staffing requirements
- Ensures follow-up checks are conducted on all nests and digs
- Completes the annual turtle program summary report

### **TYPES OF NESTING ACTIVITIES AND FIELD IDENTIFICATION TECHNIQUES**

Nesting activity is defined as any terrestrial activity by sea turtles possibly related to nesting. There are three types of nesting activities. Determining the type of nest activity is the initial step in field observations. The types of nesting activities and field techniques for identifying them are:

Nest: Nesting occurs when eggs have actually been laid. Usually, there is a body pit associated with a nest. A body pit is a large shallow depression or disturbance made in the beach from the turtle's initial digging activities; loggerhead body pits are about 2.5' in diameter and 6" deep. There are tracks associated with nesting activity. Loggerhead tracks are approximately 3.5' to 4' wide.

Choose the most likely spot(s) in the body pit and carefully dig down 10 to 15 inches by hand to locate the nest. You may determine the most likely spot by determining the direction of the turtle crawl and digging on the trailing edge of the body pit. The actual nest may be anywhere in or at the edge of the body pit. A methodical approach may be the easiest and most effective way of locating nests. Place surveyor flags in a circle around the area in which the nest is most likely to be found. Such a circle should encompass an area larger than the typical body pit. Divide the circle into quarters and excavate one quarter at a time. Do not refill any portion of the circle until either the nest is found or the entire circle has been checked. Nests are often difficult to find; you may have to dig several times to locate the nest. If eggs are found, do not disturb them unless the nest is to be relocated, refill the nesting area with sand. Pack the sand tightly; this is important for proper incubation.

Dig: A dig occurs when the turtle excavates a body pit or disturbs a large amount of sand but does not lay eggs. A nest is occasionally misidentified as a dig because an egg chamber is difficult to find, often because the body pit is indistinct or obscured by the turtle's activities. For this reason, every "dig" will be accurately marked, recorded, and monitored just as if it is a confirmed nest.

Crawl: Crawls are defined as turtle tracks that are not associated with any type of digging activity by the turtle. Crawls will only be counted if they extend above the most recent high tide line.

## **TURTLE NESTING ACTIVITY MONITORING SYSTEM**

A uniform system to locate, mark, and record turtle nesting activity is necessary for coordinating staff efforts in collecting related data. This will enhance the long-term value of the data collected by making it easier to analyze and retrieve data. Equipment and materials needed for the monitoring program are listed in attachment 1.

Mile Markers: Mile markers are the primary means of recording locations of sea turtle nesting activity. It facilitates determining concentrations of nesting activity and relocating nests for follow-up. Beach areas are marked at one-mile intervals. Attachment 2 shows the "mile marker locations." More information on using the markers is contained in the instructions for completing the "Turtle Nest Data Sheets" (Attachment 3A).

Marking Nesting Activity Sites: Techniques for marking each activity are given below.

Nest Marking: Each nest is marked with four stakes. Stake #4 is placed two feet from the seaward side of the egg chamber. Stake #3 is placed three feet from the dune side of the egg chamber. Stake #1 is placed at the primary dune line and perpendicular to the shoreline (See attachments 4 and 4A).

Stake #2 is placed three feet from the seaward side of stake #1 and in line with stakes #1, 3 and 4.

If the nest is laid behind the dune line, also place an extra stake at least 25' seaward of stake #4 so that it may be seen from the beach but not be below the high tide line.

The nest number will be written in waterproof ink on stakes number 1 and 3. This will facilitate identifying nests at a later time. This number is assigned from the "Activity No." column of the "Master Log of Sea Turtle Nesting Activity" (Attachment 5 and 5A). When marking a nest or dig measure 12" up from the surface of the sand at stakes #3 and 4 and mark the stakes at this height with a line completely around the stake using a permanent marker. Observe the mark daily for drastic sand deposition or erosion. Around the time of hatch, level sand over the nest to the original 12" mark.

Dig Marking: Digs will be marked the same as nests. Since the location/existence of any associated nest is in doubt, use the center of the body pit for the nest as a reference in setting stakes. This will require that you carefully excavate the stake locations by hand to check for presence of eggs prior to setting stakes.

Crawl Marking: Simply flag the highest point of the crawl. The flag should be removed when the tracks are no longer visible.

Recording Nesting Activity: Records of sea turtle nesting activity are kept on "Turtle Nest Data Sheets" (Attachment 3) and the "Master Log of Sea Turtle Nesting Activities" (Attachment 5 and 5A). Individual data sheets are used for each nest and dig. The log is used to summarize and keep track of turtle activities. Attachment 3A provides instructions on completing data sheets.

GPS Locations: The latitude and longitude of all activities will be recorded using a Garmin GPS unit. To mark a position press "mark" and "enter." The waypoint number should be the same as the activity number on the Master Log.

Relocating Nests: Nests laid in areas likely to be flooded will be relocated. Nests not in areas subject to flooding should not be relocated. Three areas on each island will be designated as closed to vehicles and nests will be relocated into the closed area closest to the original nest site. Attachment 8 indicates which areas will be closed to vehicles for relocation purposes. Nests on Shackleford Banks will be relocated to the nearest suitable area.

Nests should be relocated within 12 hours after the eggs were laid or wait until 14 days after the date the nest was laid. The following procedures should be followed for relocating nests.

1. Dig a nest cavity, approximately 18" deep and 12" wide in a suitable location.
2. Place approximately 6" of cool sand (from the nest cavity) in the bottom of a bucket.
3. When relocating a nest, be careful not to rotate the eggs.
4. Gently move the eggs from the nest into the pail.



5. Fill in the original excavation and mark with a surveyor flag. After wind, rain, or tide has erased the tracks, remove the surveyor flag.
6. Transport the eggs preferably by foot to the new nest site. If the eggs must be moved by vehicle, do so slowly and try to minimize jarring.
7. The eggs should be placed in the new nest site in the same layered fashion as the original nest.
8. Cover the eggs with sand.

This process should be completed quickly so that the temperature of the eggs will not change drastically.

## **PROTECTING NESTS**

Nest protection will start as soon as the nest is discovered. "Digs" will be treated as "nests." Each nest will be staked/marked as described in attachments 4 and 4A. The main purpose of the stakes is to warn ORV Drivers away from nests and facilitate relocating nests later.

Place a 3' by 3' (2"x 4" mesh) screen over each nest. The 4" side of the wire opening should be parallel with the waterline. Anchor the four sides down with steel rebar and cover with 1" to 2" of sand. The screen is designed to protect the nest from raccoon predation. Some nests on SCB will be covered with a 3'x3'x2' wire cage to prevent raccoons from digging through the screen. Bury the edges of the cage about 6" and anchor it with rebar.

After 50 days have passed the turtle monitoring staff will erect a funnel-shaped barricade around those nests/digs not in protected areas from the nest to a point at least 15 feet below the high tide line and smooth any ORV tracks in the enclosure. (The barricade should extend down to a point where the sand is usually hard enough to prevent formation of tire ruts). Attachment 6 diagrams the closure. This action provides a natural beach surface for the hatchlings to crawl to the ocean, protecting them from becoming trapped in ORV tracks. This barricade is removed after the hatch. Barricade stakes will also be wrapped in orange or red reflector tape.

## **FOLLOW-UP ON NESTS AND DIGS**

Follow-up of nesting activity involves excavating nests, looking for signs of turtle hatching, and recording related data.

Follow-up of nesting activity begins fifty days after the nest was laid. Smooth the sand over and around the nest to a height equal to the original sand level indicated by the 12" line on stakes #3 and 4. This facilitates observing the small (2" to 4" inch) depression usually formed in the sand above the nests when hatching begins. Smoothing the sand also facilitates observing hatchling tracks. Excavate the nest on the fifth day after a major hatch (indicated by distinctive hatchling tracks), 10

days after the depression forms, or excavate the nest 75 days after the date laid if there has been no sign of hatching. If many live hatchlings are found in the nest, simply refill the nest with sand and continue to check until hatching occurs. Check the condition of the hatchlings prior to placing them back in the nest. If the egg yoke sack has not been fully absorbed by the hatchlings, then place them back in the nest, cover lightly with sand and allow them to complete this process. If the hatchlings are weak and or dehydrated (plastrons concave) they should be released as soon as possible. If there are hatchlings with fully absorbed egg yokes found in the nest after the main hatch, release them in the evening hours, preferably after dark. Such hatchlings should be allowed to crawl at least a short distance of beach and enter the ocean under their own power. Create/maintain a clear path to the ocean for the hatchlings; visitors should be kept back from the hatchlings to avoid stressing them. *It is a violation of our permit to dig into nests prior to hatch.*

When motionless hatchlings (apparently drowned) are located in a recently flooded nest, the following resuscitation efforts should be attempted.

1. Remove the hatchling from the water.
2. Invert hatchlings (head lower than tail).
3. Stimulate hatchlings by slight compressions of the plastron.
4. Raise the head to provide an open airway.
5. Continue stimulating for approximately 15 minutes.

If the hatchlings regain consciousness, monitor their progress and assist them in reaching the surf.

During late fall excavations, if sluggish turtles are located well after the 75-day normal incubation period, these measures may be taken.

1. Remove the turtles from the nests.
2. Allow them to warm on the sand or in a warm tidal pool until they become more active.
3. Assist the turtles to hard packed sand near the surf. If the turtles do not respond, the N.C. Aquarium may be telephoned for possible long-term care.

Digs are monitored daily beginning 10 days prior to estimated hatch date and ending at hatch or 75 days from date of lay, whichever occurs first. Look for signs of a depression or hatchling tracks within a 15-foot radius of the nest stakes.

Complete the "Hatching Data" section of the Turtle Nest Data Sheet. Remove the turtle nest stakes.

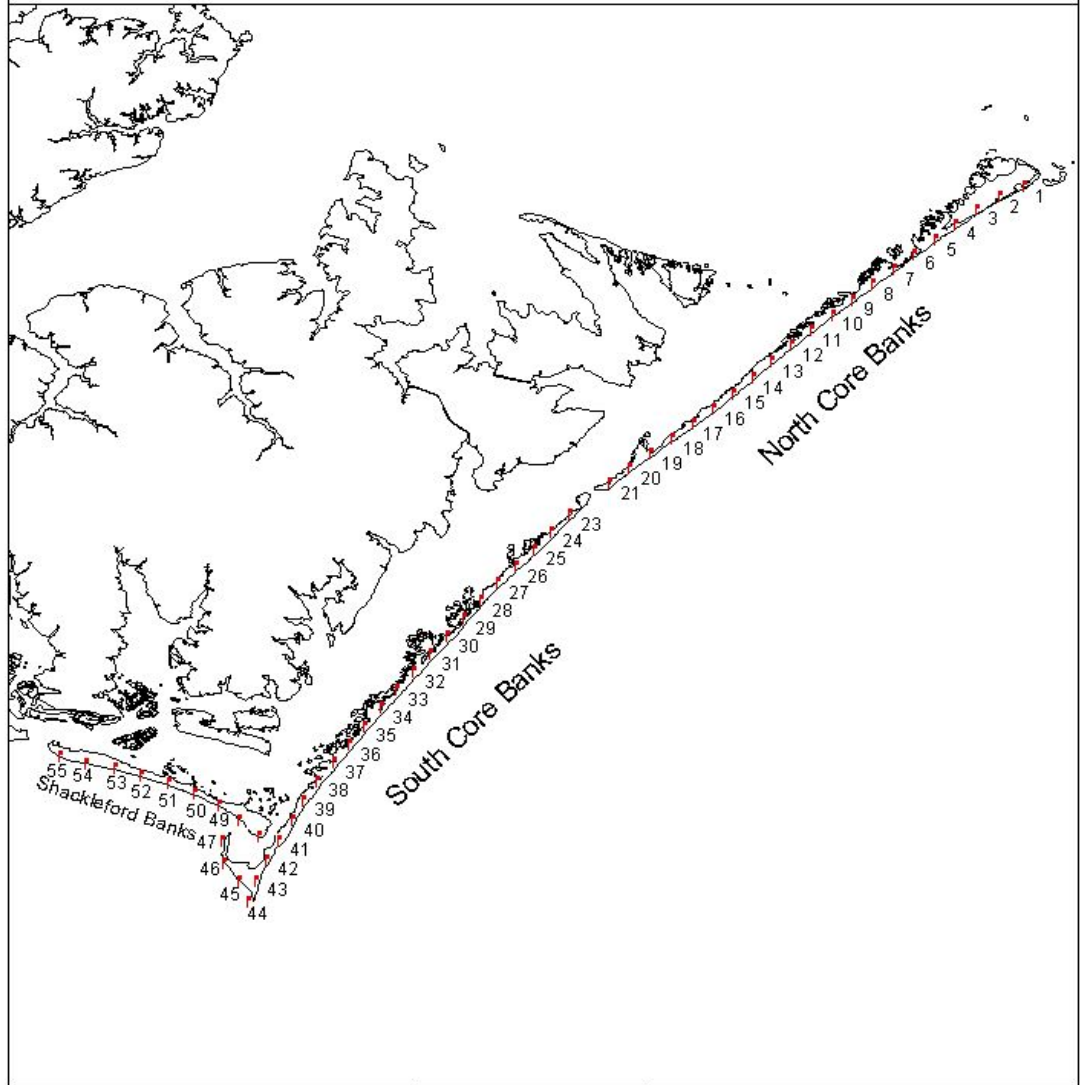


## ATTACHMENT 1

### EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS FOR SEA TURTLE NEST MONITORING PROGRAM

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>
Marker stakes	PVC 1 1/4" x 5' post and Wood 2"x2"x5' post	2 per nest  2 per nest
Post hole diggers		
Turtle monitoring kit	in pack, with contents as described below	1 for each island
Orange reflective tape	2" wide	
Tape measure	100'	
Marker	waterproof (permanent ink or paint)	
Pens		
Clip board	standard size	
Binder	for data sheets	

## Attachment 2- Mile Marker System Cape Lookout National Seashore



National Park Service  
Cape Lookout National Seashore  
Resource Management



Plot date: December 1, 2000 c:\my documents\gisbase maps.apr

**ATTACHMENT 3**

**TURTLE NEST DATA SHEET**

**CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_*North Core Banks* \_\_\_\_\_*South Core Banks* \_\_\_\_\_*Shackleford Banks*

Activity \_\_\_\_\_ (check one)  
Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Nest \_\_\_\_\_ Dig \_\_\_\_\_ Turtle Observed? Y/N Species \_\_\_\_\_

Original Nest

Location (tenths of mile): \_\_\_\_\_  
Site Desc. \_\_\_\_\_  
Dist. above high tide \_\_\_\_\_  
Distance below high tide \_\_\_\_\_  
Dist. dune stake to nest \_\_\_\_\_

Relocated Nest

Location (tenths of mile): \_\_\_\_\_  
Site Desc. \_\_\_\_\_  
Dist. above high tide \_\_\_\_\_  
Date and Time Relocated \_\_\_\_\_  
Dist. dune stake to nest \_\_\_\_\_  
# of Eggs Relocated \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude \_\_\_\_\_ N  
Longitude \_\_\_\_\_ W

**Nest Damage/Predation (prior to hatchling emergence)**

Date eroded/washed away \_\_\_\_\_  
Date(s) flooded by tide \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
Human disturbances (circle one): ORV, Dug-up, Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Ghost crab predation (date)? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
Raccoon predation (date)? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

**HATCHING DATA**

Dates nest hatched: \_\_\_\_\_ (circle major hatch date)  
Excavated by \_\_\_\_\_ Date nest excavated \_\_\_\_\_

Hatched eggs, from which hatchlings escaped from egg ..... H = \_\_\_\_\_

Hatched dead,  
hatched from egg but dead in nest ..... HD = \_\_\_\_\_

Unhatched eggs, includes turtles pipped dead..... UH = \_\_\_\_\_

Total eggs in Clutch (H+UH) ..... TC = \_\_\_\_\_

Emergence success (H-HD/TC) ..... ES = \_\_\_\_\_%

Live Hatchlings released from nest LH= \_\_\_\_\_

## ATTACHMENT 3A

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING "TURTLE NEST DATA SHEET"

Activity Number - This number is assigned on the chronological order that the nesting activity (nest, dig, crawl) occurred in the area being monitored (South Core Banks, North Core Banks, or Shackleford Banks). For example, the number one would be entered for the first nest laid on North Core Banks (NCB); a three would be entered if it was the third nest laid on NCB.

Mileage - Mile Markers are the primary tools used in determining location. Mileage is obtained by using the mile markers and the ATV's odometer. For example, mileage of a nest that is .2 mile south of mile marker 40 on SCB is entered as 40.2. Refer to Attachment 2 for a diagram of the marker system.

Site Desc. - Descriptions such as "nested in grass", "nested among dunes", or "nest relocated to front of primary dune", etc. may be entered here.

Dist. above/below high tide - Give the distance in feet from the estimated high tide line.

Dist. dune stake to nest - This is the distance from the base of the stake farthest from the nest (stake #1), to the center of the egg chamber. This distance is measured following the natural grade between the stake and nest.

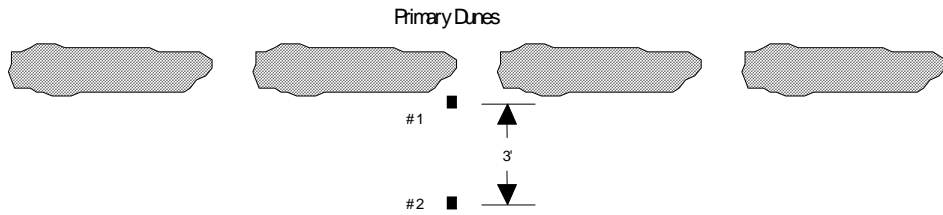
Latitude/ Longitude- If the nest is relocated, record the latitude and longitude of the new nest location using the GPS unit.

Predation- Record ghost crab predation if eggshells are found on the surface.

Emergence success - Percent of the eggs that hatched and produced turtles that emerged or were released from the nest.

# ATTACHMENT 4

## TURTLE NEST MARKER SYSTEM

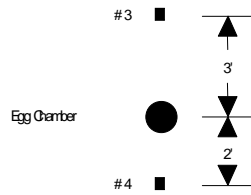


**NOTES**

- 1) Nest stakes are PVC range stakes  
may be wooden or PVC
- 2) Stakes 1 through 4 must be on  
a straight line.
- 3) Stakes 3 and 4 should have  
orange reflector tape on top.

Legend

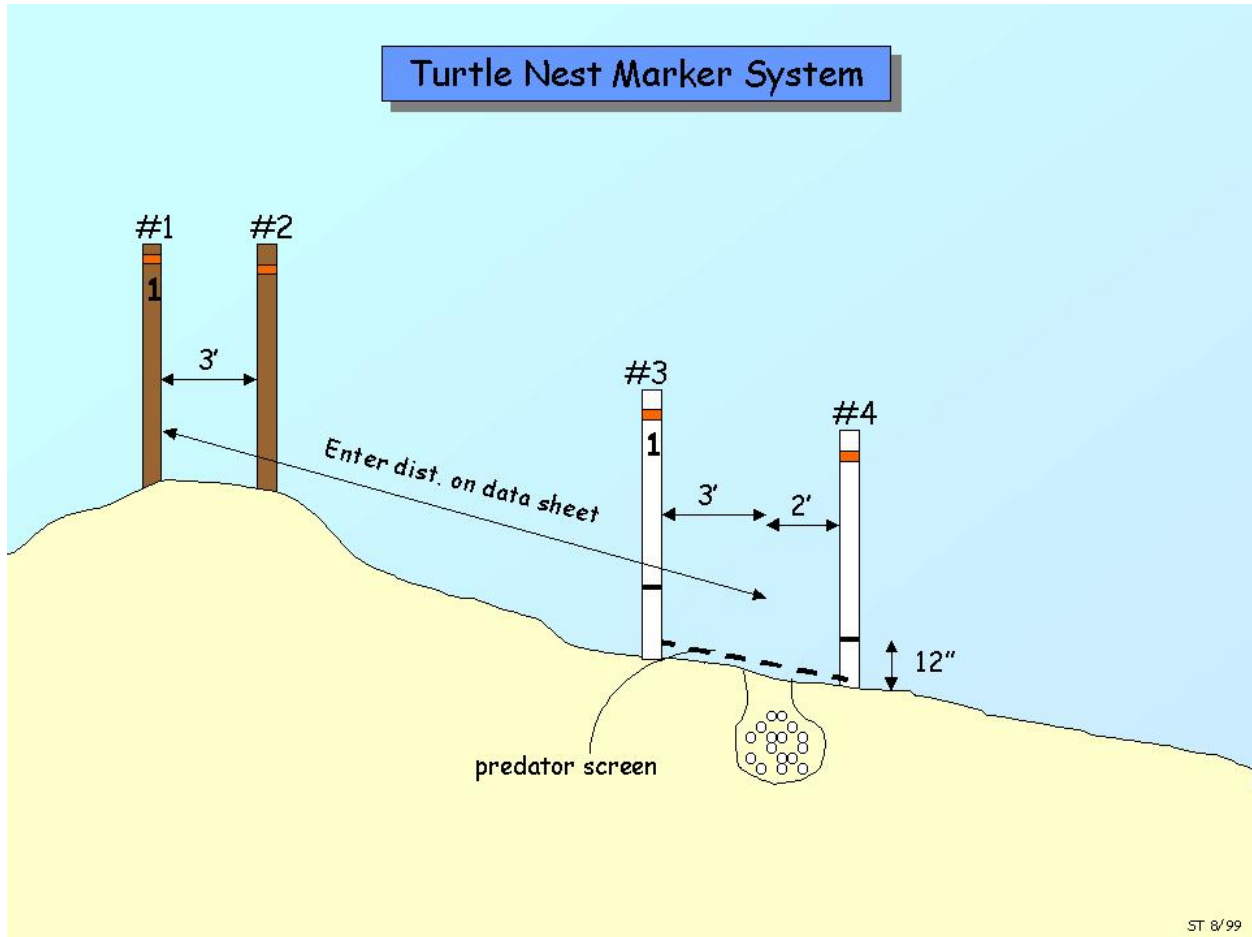
■ - Stake





ATTACHMENT 4A

TURTLE NEST MARKER SYSTEM



**ATTACHMENT 5- MASTER LOG OF SEA TURTLE NESTING ACTIVITIES 2004**

         *North Core Banks*

         *South Core Banks*

         *Shackleford Banks*

Activity Number	Location			Latitude	Longitude	Date Occurred	Barricade Date	Estimated Hatch Date	Depress Date	Actual Hatch Date	Date Excavated
	N	D	C								

## ATTACHMENT 5A

### Instructions for Master Log of Sea Turtle Nesting Activities

Activity Number. This number is assigned sequentially and entered as the "Activity Number" on the turtle nest data sheet completed for each nest, dig, or crawl (N, D, or C) observed.

Location. Enter "mile" to the nearest tenth as entered on "Turtle Nest Data Sheet" in the "location" block for the original nest site and the relocated nest site.

Latitude and Longitude. Use a GPS unit to obtain the location. Record the location in DD MM.MMM format.

Date Occur. This is the date the activity is discovered.

Barricade Date. Add 50 days to the "Date Occurred" date to get this date. Smooth/level the sand over the egg chamber to facilitate observing formation of a "depression", an indication of hatching.

Estimated Hatch Date. This date is obtained by adding 60 days to the "Date Occurred." Start looking for a "nest depression" ten days before this date; continue watching the nest until either evidence of hatching occurs or 75 days have passed.

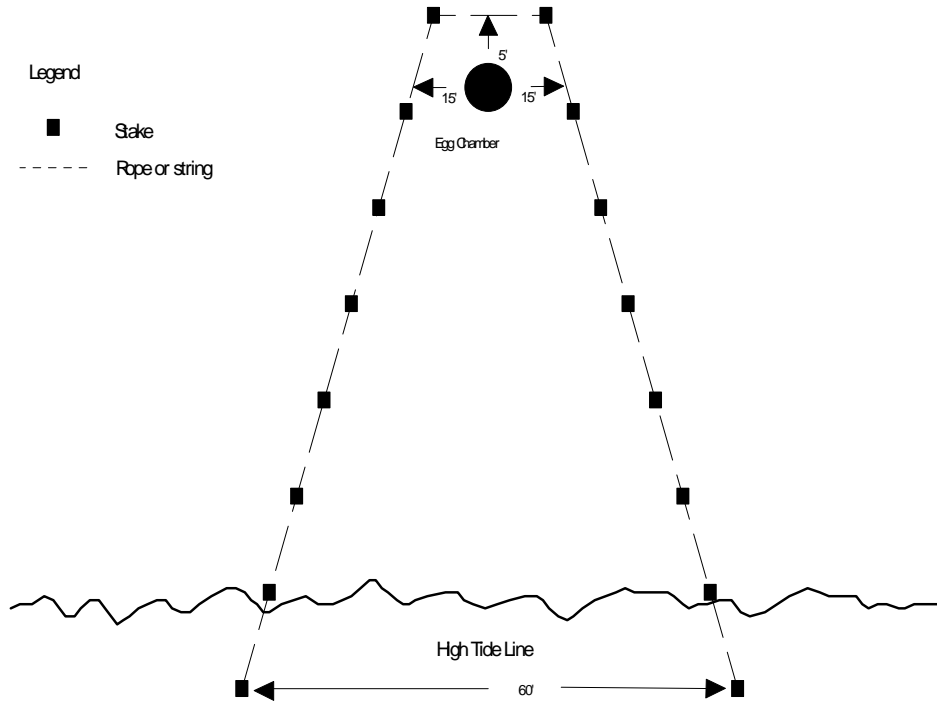
Depression Date. This date is taken by direct observation.

Actual Hatch Date. The day most hatchling tracks were observed or the day of the main emergence of hatchlings from the nest. If no sign of hatching was observed, excavate 75 days after the "Date Occurred".

Date Excavated. This is the date the nest was excavated by CALO personnel. Excavate five days after nest hatches.

# ATTACHMENT 6 NEST BARRICADE

Primary Dunes



## NOTES

- Approx 15' between posts
- Nest markers not shown

## ATTACHMENT 7

### U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE INDEX NESTING BEACH PROTOCOL

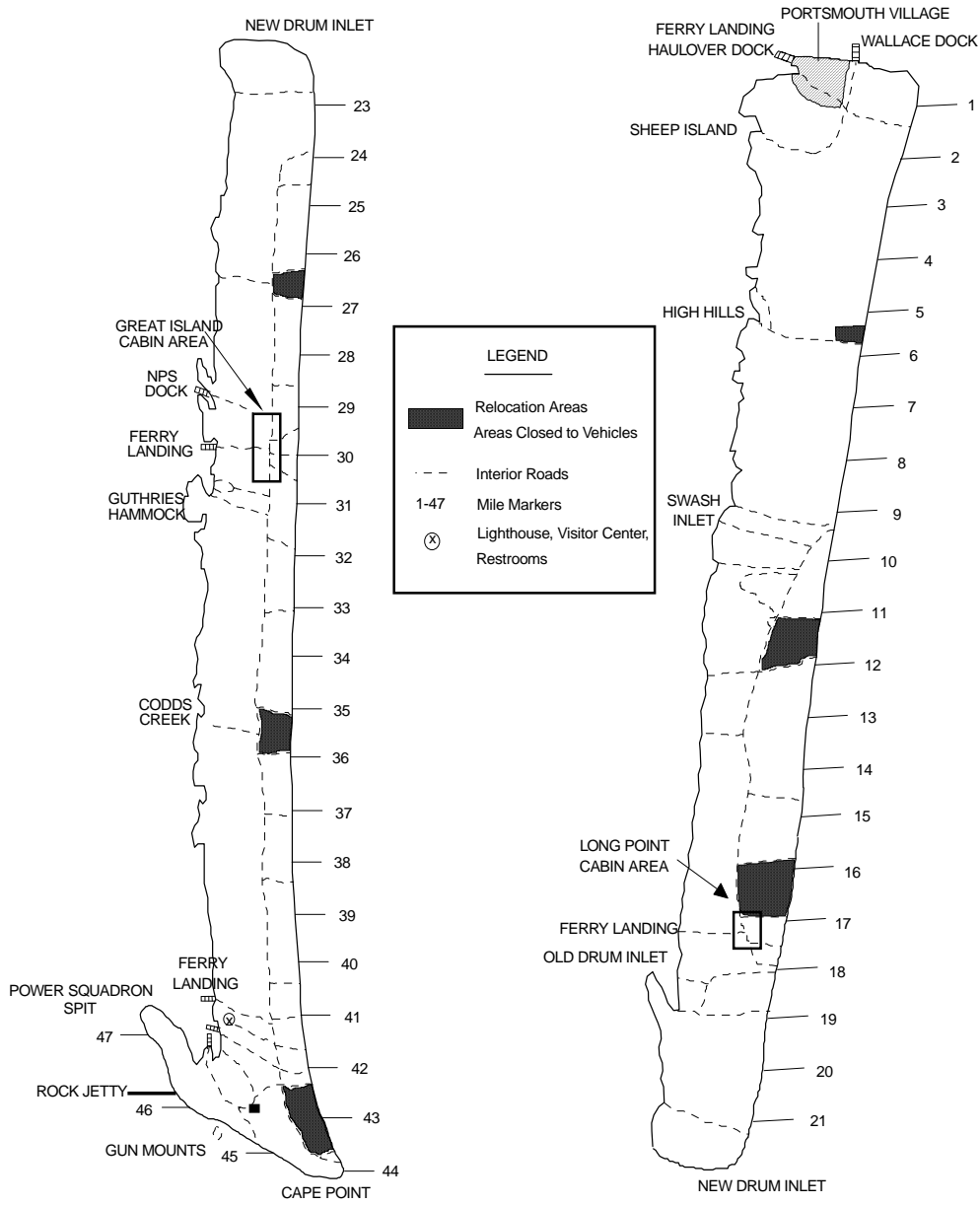
1. **Survey Consistency:** Standardization of data collection methodology and year to year consistency of data collection efforts are crucial to the long term success of the project. Adherence to the protocol outlined herein is necessary to eliminate survey bias. Deviations from this protocol must be relayed to project leaders in order to accurately interpret the data base.
2. **Survey Period:** All index beaches (east and west coast) south of and including Cape Canaveral National Seashore will be surveyed 15 May - 31 August of each year. All index beaches north of Canaveral National Seashore will be surveyed 1 June - 15 August of each year.
3. **Survey Time:** Surveys should be conducted in the early morning hours, preferably beginning at dawn.
4. **Survey Frequency:** There are several options, but one option must be selected and adhered to. Options are:
  - a. Seven (7) days per week. All crawls are marked daily to avoid duplicate counts on subsequent survey days.
  - b. Six (6) days per week with randomized non-survey day and no "marking" of crawls on the non-survey day. Randomized non-survey days have been generated and will be provided by USFWS. Data is not reported from the non-survey day or from the survey immediately following the non-survey day. In other words, six (6) survey days without "marking" on the non-survey day result in 5 daily reported counts per week.
  - c. Six (6) days per week with randomized non-survey day and "marking" of crawls on the non-survey day. Randomized non-survey days have been generated and will be provided by USFWS. All crawls present on the non-survey day are "marked" prior to sundown. Data is reported from the survey day immediately following the non-survey day. Six (6) survey days with "marking" on the non-survey day result in 6 daily reported counts per week.
5. **Unplanned Missed Survey Days:** For projects surveying six days per week, an unplanned missed survey day may be substituted for a scheduled random non-survey day within the same week, provided the non-survey day has not already occurred. For all other situations follow the procedures above in 4(b) and 4(c) as appropriate. Explain in remarks section of data report

form for the affected week.

6. **Crawl Identification:** Surveyors will identify and record all "new" crawls by species and as nests or false crawls. False crawls will only be counted if they extend above the most recent high tide line. Crawl data will be reported by beach sector. The preferred length of beach sector is 1 km or 1/2 mile. Sectors must be identified with a unique numbering or lettering system.
7. **Crawl Verification:** Nest and false crawl determinations should be based on observable crawl characteristics. Digging for verification should not be routinely carried out. Probing for verification purposes is strongly discouraged.
8. **Data Reporting:** Data will be recorded on CALO Turtle Nest Data Sheets. Annual Sea Turtle Nesting Reports will be submitted to: NC Sea Turtle Program Coordinator

Attachment 8

Relocation Areas for Sea Turtle Nests



APPENDIX II

2004 INDIVIDUAL NEST DATA



Table 10. North Core Banks Sea Turtle Nesting Data-2004

#	Date	Mile	Reloc.Mile	Hatch Date	Incubation	#Eggs	#Emerge	%Emerge	COMMENTS
2	21-May	2.7		26-Jul	66				WASHED AWAY AFTER HATCH
4	25-May	13.7				92	5	5	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
6	3-Jun	3.4					0	0	WASHED AWAY 8/3
7	5-Jun	10.5	5.3			120	0	0	WASHED AWAY 8/2
8	5-Jun	6.4				108	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
10	7-Jun	8.3				106	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
11	10-Jun	3.7					0	0	LEATHERBACK-WASHED AWAY 8/3
12	14-Jun	9.3	5.2			109	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
13	15-Jun	6.9	5.2			123	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
14	16-Jun	6.1				78	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
19	22-Jun	17.9	16.7			109	0	0	FLOODED
20	24-Jun	10.7				94	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
25	30-Jun	12.3	11.8			85	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
26	30-Jun	11.7	11.7	31-Aug	62	94	91	97	
29	6-Jul	15.8	16.1	7-Sep	63	127	107	84	
30	7-Jul	7.9				112	0	0	FLOODED AND BURIED
31	7-Jul	4.9				127	0	0	FLOODED
32	8-Jul	15.7	15.9	3-Sep	57	151	126	83	
35	11-Jul	2.1					0	0	WASHED AWAY 8/3
44	18-Jul	4.6	5.1			118	0	0	FLOODED
46	22-Jul	11.0				106	0	0	FLOODED
48	25-Jul	6.2					0	0	WASHED AWAY 8/3-TOTALS UNKNOWN
49	1-Aug	8.5	5.2				0	0	WASHED AWAY 8/1
53	8-Aug	16.1	16.1			108	104	96	
55	17-Aug	7.9				50	0	0	COLD TEMPS STOPPED DEVELOPMENT

Table 11. South Core Banks Sea Turtle Nesting Data-2004

#	Date	Mile	Reloc. Mile	Hatch Date	Incubation	#Eggs	#Emerge	%Emerge	Comments
1	1-May	40.5				101	0	0	LEATHERBACK-FLOODED
2	13-May	23.5				26	0	0	LEATHERBACK
5	5-Jun	43.2				104	0	0	FLOODED
13	11-Jun	29.8				109	16	15	FLOODED
15	14-Jun	43.2				128	0	0	FLOODED
16	15-Jun	24.2				115	0	0	FLOODED
17	15-Jun	37.0	35.9	19-Aug	65	115	27	23	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
18	20-Jun	34.3				137	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
24	22-Jun	33.1				110	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
26	22-Jun	25.1				110	13	12	FLOODED
28	23-Jun	39.2				122	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
29	24-Jun	29.5				71	64	90	
31	26-Jun	38.6				80	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
32	27-Jun	43.9	42.6	26-Aug	60	130	117	90	
33	26-Jun	30.0				96	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
34	29-Jun	43.9	42.6			100	94	94	
36	5-Jul	28.4	26.3	1-Sep	62	116	85	73	
37	6-Jul	44.5	42.6			121	114	94	
41	7-Jul	37.6	35.8	6-Sep	61	125	120	96	
48	8-Jul	25.6				93	0	0	FLOODED
55	10-Jul	43.4	42.7			144	133	92	
56	10-Jul	42.7	42.7			101	94	93	
57	10-Jul	28.0	26.4			92	0	0	FLOODED
65	12-Jul	41.0	42.7			59	45	76	GHOST CRAB PREDATION-2 EGGS
66	12-Jul	44.1	42.8			95	91	96	
71	14-Jul	37.2	35.6			105	72	68	
79	22-Jul	40.6	35.7	23-Sep	63	124	122	98	
80	22-Jul	29.1				96	0	0	FLOODED

#	Date	Mile	Reloc. Mile	Hatch Date	Incubation	#Eggs	#Emerge	%Emerge	Comments
81	22-Jul	26.2				99	0	0	FLOODED AND BURIED
82	23-Jul	42.0	42.8	25-Sep	66	126	122	97	
83	23-Jul	30.4	26.6			118	0	0	FLOODED IN HURRICANE ALEX
93	24-Jul	45.0		30-Sep	68	106	97	91	
96	25-Jul	24.6	26.2			149	121	81	
104	25-Jul	42.8	42.8	2-Oct	69	135	122	90	
106	26-Jul	31.6	35.6	8-Oct	74	99	6	6	FLOODED
107	28-Jul	42.9	42.9			98	69	70	BURIED
109	5-Aug	30.2		15-Oct	71	80	74	93	
118	8-Aug	39.6	42.8			93	85	91	
121	8-Aug	46.8	42.9	18-Oct	71	100	89	89	
123	9-Aug	46.0	42.8			104	97	93	
124	17-Aug	29.0				93	0	0	COLD TEMPS STOPPED DEVELOPMENT
125	22-Aug	43.9					0	0	WASHED AWAY 9/20

Table 12. Shackleford Banks Sea Turtle Nesting Data-2004

#	Date	Mile	Reloc. Mile	Hatch Date	Incubation	#Eggs	#Emerge	%Emerge	Comments
1	30-May	54.4		26-Jul	57	146	127	87	
3	7-Jun	50.5		5-Aug	59	97	90	93	
4	21-Jun	50.3		15-Aug	55	85	81	95	
8	28-Jun	51.0	51.0			58	51	88	
10	5-Jul	48.8				120	116	97	
11	9-Jul	50.0				94	0	0	FLOODED
12	12-Jul	50.0				98	90	92	
14	26-Jul	51.5				79	0	0	FLOODED
15	28-Jul	52.1		8-Oct	72	96	62	64	
17	12-Aug	53.0				94	0	0	FLOODED