

Sea Turtle Stranding Data Dry Tortugas National Park 1996-2001 and 2003

Stranding data:

The location and condition of any stranded turtle found on the beaches or in the waters of Dry Tortugas National Park were recorded on standardized data sheets provided by the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network (STSSN) based in Tequesta, Florida (Appendix F). The curved length and width of each stranded turtle's carapace was measured using a measuring tape, and photographs of the carcasses were taken. The completed forms were then faxed and mailed to the STSSN coordinator with the FDEP in Tequesta, Florida.

Stranding data 1996:

To date, three turtles have been reported as strandings within Dry Tortugas National Park in 1996. On September 8th, an adult loggerhead washed ashore on the north swim beach of Garden Key. The second stranding, a juvenile hawksbill, was found on September 9th near channel marker number '4' in the northwest channel leading from the fort to Loggerhead Key. On November 8th, a leatherback was found floating near channel marker number '2' in the southeast channel off of East Key. One loggerhead turtle was observed to be trapped within *Casuarina* roots on the southwest shore of Loggerhead Key early in the morning of May 21st. The turtle was observed and released by park volunteers before researchers could collect any stranding data (Table 4).

TABLE 4. 1996 Sea Turtle Strandings, Dry Tortugas National Park.

Stranding #	Species	Location	Date	Probable cause of death
1	Loggerhead	Garden Key	9/9/96	Predator
2	Hawksbill	NW Channel	9/8/96	Predator
3	Leatherback	SE Channel	11/8/96	Predator
4	Loggerhead	Loggerhead Key	5/21/96	N/A

Stranding data 1997:

To date, two turtles have been reported as strandings within Dry Tortugas National Park in 1997. On April 18, an adult loggerhead was found floating in the southwest channel leading from Fort Jefferson to Loggerhead Key. The turtle was transported to Garden Key for measurements and documentation. It was later buried on East Key. The second stranding, a juvenile hawksbill, washed up on the southeast shore of Loggerhead Key on August 14.

The carcass was fresh and had no visible wounds or abnormalities. Once documented, the turtle was buried on Loggerhead Key (Table 4).

TABLE 4. 1997 Sea Turtle Strandings, Dry Tortugas National Park.

Stranding No.	Date	Species	Location	Condition Found
1	04/18/97	Loggerhead	SW Channel to Fort	Moderate decomposition
2	08/14/97	Hawksbill	Loggerhead Key	Fresh carcass

Stranding data 1998:

To date, three turtles have been reported as strandings within Dry Tortugas National Park in 1998. On June 14, skeletal remains – excluding the skull – of a large loggerhead turtle were found on the harbor-side of Bush Key, approximately 300 meters from the western tip of the island. The turtle most likely washed ashore several months prior to discovery. Once documented, in order to minimize disturbance of the nesting terns, the remains were left in place on the restricted access beach.

The second stranding, a moderately decomposed loggerhead washed ashore on the south “swim” beach of Garden Key on September 19. The cause of death could not be determined externally and a necropsy was not performed. While handling the carcass, the carapace partially separated from the plastron. Subsequently, the carapace and skull were salvaged for educational displays at the park. The entrails were dumped at sea.

The last stranding was discovered on the south tip of East Key on November 28. The moderately decomposed loggerhead – partially buried in the swash zone – likely washed ashore several days prior to discovery. The cause of death could not be determined externally and a necropsy was not performed. Once documented, the turtle was buried further up the beach (Table 5).

TABLE 5. 1998 Sea Turtle Strandings, Dry Tortugas National Park.

Stranding No.	Date	Species	Location	Condition Found
1	06/14/98	Loggerhead	Bush Key (harbor side)	Skeleton, bones only
2	09/19/98	Loggerhead	Garden Key (south beach)	Moderate decomposition
3	11/28/98	Loggerhead	East Key (south tip)	Moderate decomposition

Stranding data 1999:

To date, two turtles have been reported as DRTO strandings in 1999. A hawksbill turtle washed ashore south of the pier on the eastern shore of Loggerhead Key on January 17, 1999. The carcass, severely decomposed, was documented by Ranger Roy Appugliese and buried in place. The cause of death could not be determined externally, and a necropsy was not performed.

The second stranding, a moderately decomposed juvenile hawksbill, washed ashore on the southern tip of Loggerhead Key on July 25. Documentation of the stranding was completed by Yvette Anderson. The cause of death could not be determined externally, and a necropsy was not performed (Table 5).

TABLE 5. 1999 Sea Turtle Strandings, Dry Tortugas National Park.

Stranding No.	Date	Species	Location	Condition Found
1	01/17/99	Hawksbil 1	Pier at Loggerhead Key	Severely decomposed
2	07/25/99	Hawksbil 1	South tip of Loggerhead Key	Moderately decomposed

Stranding data 2000:

To date, five sea turtles – representing four different species – have been reported as strandings in 2000 (Table 5). This surpasses the former record of four strandings recorded in 1996. Each stranding event this season occurred on Loggerhead Key. The first stranding occurred on February 19, 2000. A severely decomposed leatherback turtle carcass – tangled with lobster trap lines and floats – washed ashore on the east side of Loggerhead Key. Once documented, the remains were buried on the beach. This is only the second documented leatherback stranding in Dry Tortugas National Park.

The second stranding of the season, the carapace of a loggerhead turtle, was discovered on the east side of Loggerhead Key on February 22. The skeletal remains were documented and buried on the beach.

The third stranding, a moderately decomposed green turtle, was discovered just south of the Loggerhead Key dock on May 22. The remains were documented and buried on the beach.

The fourth stranding, a severely decomposed juvenile hawksbill turtle, was discovered on the northeast end of Loggerhead Key on June 6. The remains were documented and buried on the beach.

The last stranding occurred on the south end of Loggerhead Key, deep within the island's interior. A live female loggerhead was discovered on the afternoon of July 1, trapped under *Casuarina* debris, having wandered – disoriented – through thick vegetation after abandoning her nesting attempt. With the help of volunteers, the turtle was carried to the shore and released in the water.

Table 5. 2000 Sea Turtle Strandings, Dry Tortugas National Park.

Number	Date	Species*	Location	Condition Found
1	02/19/00	DC	East beach of Loggerhead Key	Severely decomposed
2	02/22/00	CC	East beach of Loggerhead Key	Skeletal remains
3	05/25/00	CM	South of pier at Loggerhead Key	Moderately decomposed
4	06/06/00	EI	Northeast end of Loggerhead Key	Moderately decomposed
5	07/01/00	CC	Interior of south Loggerhead Key	Alive

* DC = *Dermochelys coriacea* (Leatherback Turtle), CC = *Caretta caretta* (Loggerhead Turtle), CM = *Chelonia mydas* (Green Turtle), EI = *Eretmochelys imbricata* (Hawksbill Turtle)

Stranding data 2001:

To date, three sea turtles have been reported as strandings in 2001 (Table 3). The first stranding occurred on February 22, 2001. A severely decomposed carcass of an unidentifiable species, washed ashore on the southeast side of Loggerhead Key. Once documented, the remains were buried on the beach.

The second stranding of the season, on February 25, was also discovered on the southeast side of Loggerhead Key. The skeletal remains of the severely decomposed undetermined species of turtle were documented and buried on the beach.

The last stranding, a moderately decomposed hawksbill, was discovered floating in the water approximately a half mile to the west of Loggerhead Key on June 16. The remains were documented and buried on the beach at Loggerhead Key.

Table 3. 2001 Sea Turtle Strandings, Dry Tortugas National Park.

Number	Date	Species *	Location	Condition Found
1	02/22/01	Undetermined	Southeast beach of Loggerhead Key	Severely decomposed
2	02/25/01	Undetermined	Southeast beach of Loggerhead Key	Severely decomposed
3	06/16/01	EI	0.5 miles west of Loggerhead Key	Moderately Decomposed

* EI = *Eretmochelys imbricata* (Hawksbill Turtle)

Stranding data:

Thus far, seven sea turtles, of three different species have been reported as strandings in 2003 (Table 5). This surpasses the record of five strandings documented in 2000. The first stranding occurred on June 18, 2003. A severely decomposed, large loggerhead carcass washed ashore on the eastern shoreline of Long Key. Curved length of the carapace was 1,024.0 cm. Once documented the remains were left on the beach where found.

The second stranding of the season, on July 9, was discovered floating in the water just east of the Dock on Loggerhead Key. The moderately decomposed, immature hawksbill (curved length of carapace = 32.0 cm) was retrieved and brought to Garden Key where it was documented and then buried on the beach near the land-bridge.

The third stranding, a moderately decomposed, immature green turtle (curved length = 32.0 cm), was found on the northeast beach of Loggerhead Key on August 14. The remains once documented were buried on the beach.

The fourth stranding on September 5 was discovered floating off the western beach of East Key. The fresh dead immature, hawksbill (curved length = 29.0 cm) was recovered and transported to Garden Key. Once documented the carcass was buried on the beach near the land-bridge.

The fifth stranding, a moderately decomposed, large loggerhead turtle, was found on the south swim beach of Garden Key on September 29. The carcass had several hooks with line embedded in its flippers. The carcass once documented was drug out to sea and released.

The sixth stranding of the season, on October 1, was found near the north coaling dock on Garden Key. The severely decomposed, large loggerhead turtle remains were documented and left on the beach where found.

The last stranding occurred off the main dock on Garden Key, on October 6. The moderately decomposed remains of the immature hawksbill turtle (curved length = 28.0 cm) were documented and then the carcass was buried on the beach near the land-bridge.

Table 5. 2003 Sea Turtle Stranding, Dry Tortugas National Park.

Number	Date	Species*	Location	Condition Found
1	06/18/03	CC	Eastern Shore of Long Key	Severely Decomposed
2	07/09/03	EI	East of Dock on Loggerhead Key	Moderately Decomposed
3	08/14/03	CM	Northeast beach on Loggerhead Key	Moderately Decomposed
4	09/05/03	EI	West side of East Key	Fresh Dead
5	09/29/03	CC	South Swim Beach on Garden Key	Moderately Decomposed
6	10/01/03	CC	North Coaling Dock on Garden Key	Severely Decomposed
7	10/06/03	EI	Main Dock on Garden Key	Moderately Decomposed

* CC = *Caretta caretta* (Loggerhead Turtle), CM = *Chelonia mydas* (Green Turtle),
EI = *Eretmochelys imbricata* (Hawksbill Turtle)

Stranding data 2004:

To date, six sea turtles, of three different species have been reported as stranded in 2004 (Table 6). This is one less than the number documented during the 2003 season. The first stranding occurred on February 3, 2004. A fresh dead, loggerhead carcass washed ashore on the southeastern shoreline of Loggerhead Key. Curved length of the carapace was 84.5 cm. Once documented the remains were buried on the beach.

The second stranding of the season, on May 29, was discovered on the eastern beach just north of the dock on Loggerhead Key. The fresh dead, immature hawksbill (curved length of carapace = 24.1 cm) was documented and the remains were left on the beach above the high tide line.

The third stranding, was an alive, immature loggerhead turtle (curved length = 17.6 cm), was found in the surf line near the dock at Loggerhead Key on July 6th. The turtle was entangled in a nylon mesh bag. The turtle was retrieved, the bag removed, documented, and then released.

The fourth stranding on July 21 was discovered floating near marker #3 of the Southwest Channel. The moderately decomposed immature, hawksbill (curved length = 31.0 cm) was recovered and transported to Garden Key. Once documented the carcass was buried on the beach near the land-bridge.

The fifth stranding, a moderately decomposed, hawksbill turtle, was found on the east side of Loggerhead Key on October 11. The curved carapace length was 28.0 cm. The carcass was documented and then buried on the beach.

The sixth stranding of the season, on November 8, was found off the southwest beach on Garden Key. The moderately decomposed, large green turtle had a missing left front flipper, with shredded muscle exposed. The remains were documented and buried on the beach near the land bridge.

Table 6. 2004 Sea Turtle Stranding, Dry Tortugas National Park.

Number	Date	Species*	Location	Condition Found
1	02/03/2004	CC	Southeast Beach of Loggerhead Key	Fresh Dead
2	05/29/2004	EI	Floating East of Loggerhead Key, ~150 yds. North of Dock	Fresh Dead
3	07/06/2004	CC	South of Dock at Loggerhead Key, In the Surf Line	Alive, Released
4	07/21/2004	EI	Floating near Marker 3 Southwest Channel	Moderately Decomposed
5	10/11/2004	EI	East side of Loggerhead Key	Moderately Decomposed
6	11/08/2004	CM	Southwest beach of Garden Key	Moderately Decomposed

* CC = *Caretta caretta* (Loggerhead Turtle), CM = *Chelonia mydas* (Green Turtle), EI = *Eretmochelys imbricata* (Hawksbill Turtle)