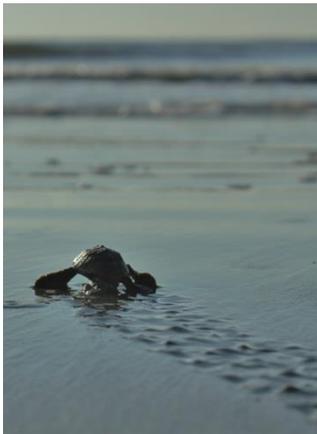




[Friends Website](#) [US F&WS](#) [Kingfisher Pond Discovery Center](#) [Donate to the Friends](#)

Sea Turtle Activity on Wassaw NWR

The Caretta Research Project (CRP), a hands-on research, conservation and education program that has been protecting the threatened Loggerhead sea turtles that nest on Wassaw NWR, is currently gearing up for its 43rd season! The CRP began in 1973 as a cooperative effort between the Savannah Science Museum, the USFWS Savannah Coastal Refuges, the Wassaw Island Trust, and is one of the longest continually running saturation-tagging programs in the world. The primary goals of the CRP are to: (1) conduct research on the population trends and nesting biology of loggerhead turtles, (2) protect and monitor loggerhead turtle eggs and hatchlings, and (3) educate and involve the public in research and conservation efforts of the loggerhead turtle.



The longevity of the CRP is critical to long-term preservation and management of loggerhead turtles in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean. Because loggerhead turtles can take 25-35 years to reach sexual maturity, only long-term projects – like the CRP – are capable of thoroughly assessing the conservation status of this threatened species. For this reason, the long-term dataset amassed by the CRP was recently sought out and utilized by government agencies during the development of the Loggerhead Recovery Plan drafted in 2009. The enduring commitment of CRP staff, volunteers, and supporters has helped managers critically evaluate the status of this population and implement conservation measures to ensure the long-term preservation of these amazing creatures.

The CRP also has a longstanding commitment to education and community involvement. People from all over the world have participated on the project, and our mission to involve volunteers in all research activities is truly unique among other research projects. We encourage full participation of volunteers in nightly beach patrols, nest protection, and data collection, and we train volunteers as potential scientists. Such community involvement is critical for increasing public awareness and

appreciation of the value of scientific research in conservation and management. CRP volunteers are also directly involved with saving sea turtles by protecting eggs and hatchlings that would otherwise have been lost to erosion or predation. Lastly, but mostly importantly, CRP volunteers return to their hometowns all over the world with the knowledge and experience to be ambassadors for the plight of our world's sea turtles.

Last year, after four record-breaking years along the coast, Georgia recorded 1,195 loggerhead sea turtle nests in 2014. This is approximately half of last year's total, and just under the average of 1,200 nests per year. This is not surprising or unexpected, as sea turtles do not nest every year and nest numbers usually go through cycles. Wassaw also had a lower year, with 122 loggerhead nests. However, this is still 40 nests over our average of 82 nests per year, and there has been a significant increase in nesting on Wassaw Island since 1973.

After 42 years, the CRP has tagged 1,386 turtles, protected 3,480 nests containing over 406,000 eggs, involved and educated over 3,000 volunteers, trained 21 interns who have gone on to other environmental/educational careers, and published more than 50 scientific papers in collaboration with innumerable academic institutions.

We still have a few participant spots open in August. If you are interested in participating on the project or in being a boat captain to help transport people and gear to and from Wassaw throughout the summer, please contact Kris Williams at 912-447-8655 or wassawcrp@aol.com.