

CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE  
2001 SEA TURTLE MONITORING PROGRAM

Jeff Cordes  
Michael Rikard

National Park Service  
Cape Lookout National Seashore  
131 Charles Street  
Harkers Island, NC 28531

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction _ _ _ _ _	1
Cooperating Agencies _ _ _ _ _	1
Site Description _ _ _ _ _	2
Methods _ _ _ _ _	2
Results _ _ _ _ _	4
Nesting Results _ _ _ _ _	4
Hatching results _ _ _ _ _	6
Strandings _ _ _ _ _	13
Management Recommendations _ _ _ _ _	16
Appendix I - 2001 Sea Turtle Program Procedures _ _ _	17
Appendix II - Individual Nest Data _ _ _ _ _	34

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Cape Lookout National Seashore is grateful for the commitment of Student Conservation Association resource assistants Tami Cole and Nathan Holmes. Their dedication and enthusiasm was crucial to the success of an intensive turtle-monitoring program. A special thanks is also given to park volunteers Charles and Kay Lewis, Anna Baldwin and Jerald Weaver. We are also thankful for the continued assistance from Keith Rittmaster and Natalie Woods.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The field rangers of 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 continued to monitor turtle activity, document strandings, protect nest sites, relocate nests in danger of being flooded (1987 being the exception) and protect hatchlings. Cape Lookout continues to be a significant northern nesting beach and supports among the highest number of loggerhead turtle nests in North Carolina. Each year data has been collected and analyzed; then presented to management in hopes of better protecting our declining marine turtle population. The 2001 Sea Turtle Report will summarize the 2001 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) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), concerning the protection of sea turtles. The North Carolina Sea Turtle Project Coordinator receives all original stranding reports and annual nesting activity reports. NCWRC also issues to Cape Lookout National Seashore a Threatened and Endangered Species permit for possession and disposition of 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. In September 1999 Hurricane Dennis reopened Old Drum Inlet creating a 3-mile long island of land formerly connected to NCB. 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 island between Old Drum Inlet and New Drum Inlet was not accessible by vehicle and was not monitored. 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 2001 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 for follow-up data.

## 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).

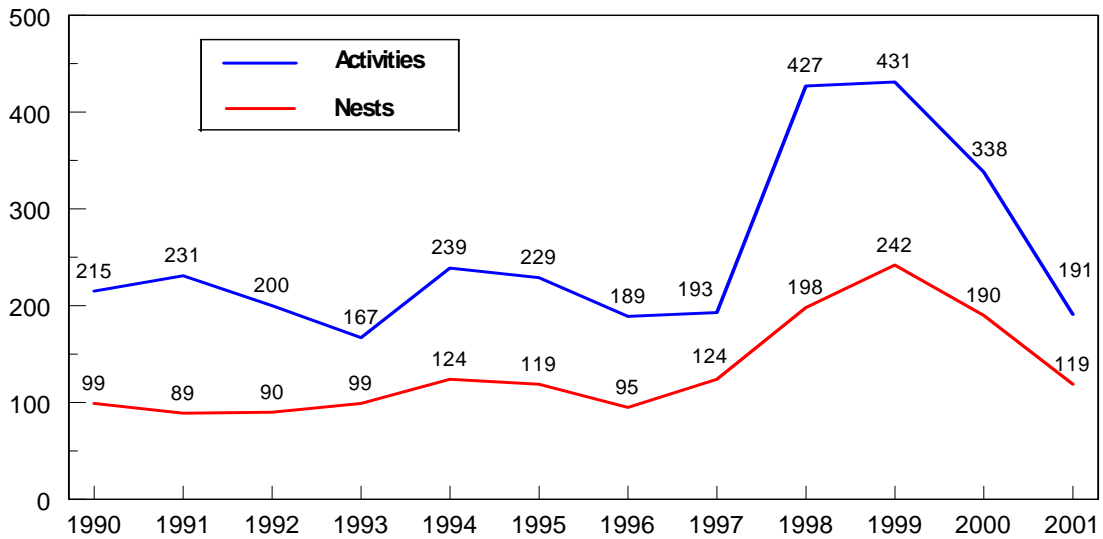
### *NESTING RESULTS*

The first recorded nesting activity in 2001 was on May 11 and the last on August 21, for a 102 day nesting season. A total of 191 activities were documented of which there were 119 nests, 21 digs, and 51 crawls, (Table 1; see Appendix I for activity definitions).

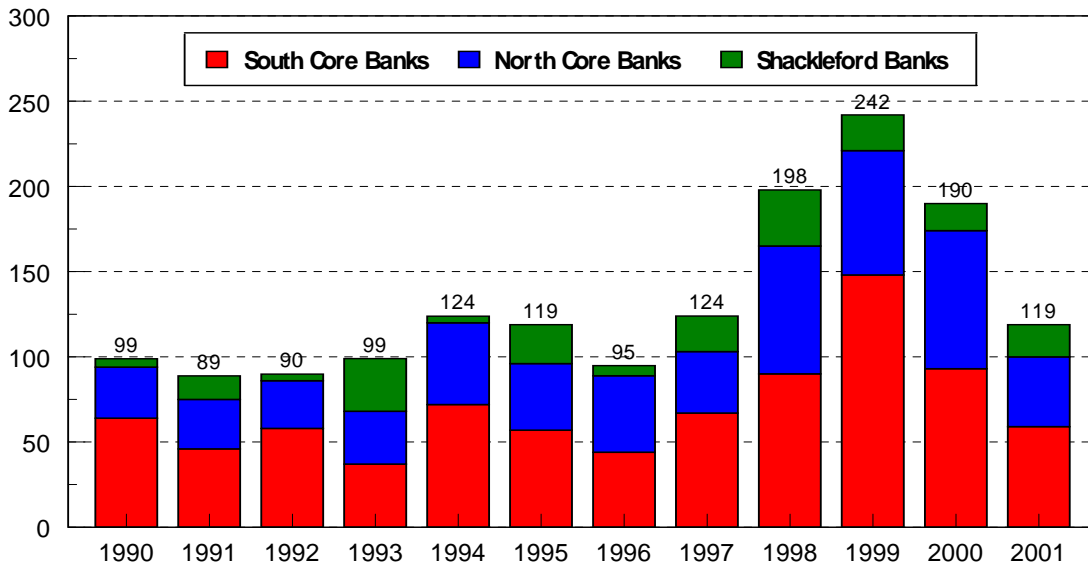
Table 1. 2001 ACTIVITIES BY STUDY AREA

	North Core Banks	South Core Banks	Shackleford Banks	CALO Total
NESTS	41	59	19	119
DIGS	7	9	5	21
CRAWLS	19	29	3	51

**Figure 1. Cape Lookout Turtle Activities 1990-2001**



**Figure 2. Turtle Nests 1990-2001**



The number of nests found in the park in 2001 was below the annual average of 133 nests (Fig. 2). North and South Core Banks each had the fewest nests since 1997. The greatest concentration of nests in the park occurred between Mile 49 and 50 on Shackleford Banks. The five-mile area south of the lighthouse on SCB accounted for 32% of the nests on that island (Fig. 3). Three nests were found on the soundside beach on the south end of SCB. All sea turtle nests at CALO in 2001 were loggerhead turtle nests.

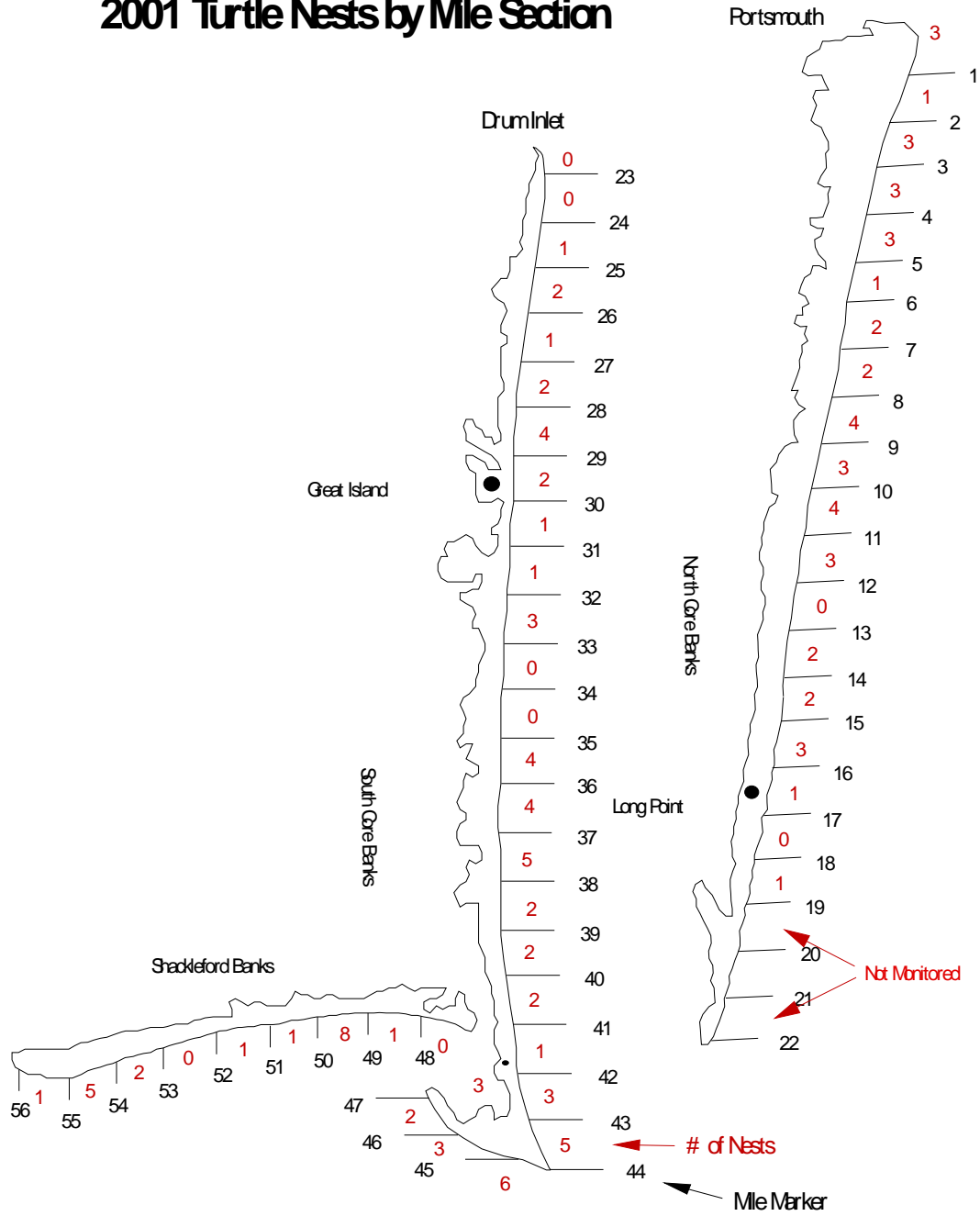
### *HATCHING RESULTS*

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.

Follow-up studies were completed on 89% of the nests. Two nests were washed away with the numbers of eggs unknown. Raccoons dug up four nests and the numbers of eggs were unknown. The last nest was excavated on November 3. The average clutch size was 113 eggs. It took an average of 65 days for nests to incubate. 79% of the eggs produced hatchlings that made it out of the nest (emergence success), the highest for any one nest being 100% and lowest 0%. A total of 12,357 eggs were counted in those nests either excavated or relocated. The number of eggs was unknown in 10 nests. 9,555 of these eggs hatched and hatchlings emerged or were released from the nest (Table 2).

**Figure 3.**

**2001 Turtle Nests by Mile Section**



Hurricanes did not affect the 2001-nesting season. A total of 21 nests were overwashed, four nests were washed away and one nest failed to hatch due to flooding.

Calculating a true emergence success for the year always proves to be difficult. Raccoons may dig into a nest at hatching or after 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).

Table 2. SEA TURTLE HATCH SUMMARY 1990-2001

Year	Nests	Relocated	Excavated	Avg. Clutch	Flooded	Avg. Incu	Eggs	Emerged	EMR %
1990	99	68	89	115	1	57	10376	7369	71%
1991	89	56	74	115	6	62	8393	5197	62%
1992	90	39	84	114	4	63	9419	6791	73%
1993	99	54	89	115	9	59	10365	7544	74%
1994	124	98	119	120	3	62	14459	11296	79%
1995	119	66	103	115	38	57	12357	6157	51%
1996	95	69	85	115	16	65	10091	5602	57%
1997	124	92	120	122	3	63	14824	10740	73%
1998	198	117	169	114	39	62	19672	13315	69%
1999	242	123	191	116	90	62	23224	11751	53% *
2000	190	120	176	111	2	67	19527	13471	69%
2001	119	60	106	113	5	65	12358	9555	79%

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

To provide a more accurate emergence success rate we have calculated an estimated emergence success of 75% in 2001. This figure includes four nests that were dug up by raccoons and two nests that were washed away, but the number of eggs laid was unknown. 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 provides a hatch summary by study area. Each island had emergence success rates well above the average rates for the last 15 years.

Table 3. 2001 ACTIVITY SUMMARY BY STUDY AREA

	NCB	SCB	SH	TOTALS
NESTS	41	59	19	119
RELOCATED	27 (66%)	31 (52%)	2 (10%)	60
EXCAVATED	39	50	17	106
AVERAGE CLUTCH	115 eggs	115 eggs	104 eggs	113 eggs
EMERGE SUCCESS	76%	83%	75%	79%
AVERAGE INCUBATION	66 days	64 days	63 days	65 days
# LOST TO FLOODING	1	4	0	5
# LOST TO PREDATORS	0	3	1	4

In 2001 50% of the nests were relocated. Many 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 greater than the rate for untreated nests in 2001 (Table 4).

This does not include 6 non-relocated nests that failed to hatch but the number of eggs were

unknown.

Table 4. EMERGENCE SUCCESS OF RELOCATED VS. NON-RELOCATED NESTS BY STUDY AREA IN 2001

<i>RELOCATED</i>	NCB	SCB	SH	CALO Total
Nests	27	31	2	60
Eggs	3,165	3,665	239	7,069
Hatchlings	2,362	2,937	209	5,508
Emergence Rate	78%	83%	87%	81%
<i>NON-RELOCATED</i>				
Nests	14	28	17	59
Eggs	1,550	2,203	1,536	5,289
Hatchlings	1,090	1,831	1,126	4,047
Emergence Rate	70%	83%	73%	76%

Since 1990 emergence success has been similar for relocated and non-relocated nests (Table 5). The presence of good relocation areas has been the key factor in the success of relocated nests. This is dictated by the effects of storms on the beach and dune profiles.

In 2001, six nests lost eggs to ghost crabs. Ghost crab predation was recorded when eggshells were found on the surface. Raccoon predation was recorded for 9 nests. Raccoons dug into four nests despite wire screens. The raccoons reached through the screen to get at the eggs on the top of the nest. Wire cages were successful in preventing egg losses to raccoons.

Table 5. 1990-2001 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
<i>AVERAGES</i>	<i>60.5</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>88</i>

Root invasion destroyed eggs or trapped hatchlings in two nests. Two nests had significant numbers of hatchlings go inland rather than to the ocean. Both nests were in areas relatively free of artificial light and it is likely that topography rather than lights confused the hatchlings. Cold temperatures stopped development in three nests by early November.

Off-road vehicles that disregarded beach closures threatened the survival of hatchlings. Vehicles drove between posts and the ocean at low tide; drove through posts and rope or pulled up posts and drove through the closures. 45 violations of vehicle closures for turtle nests were documented (a 35% reduction from 2000).

## 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 greater than 75 percent in 2001.

Nests and hatchlings are protected from vehicles and park visitors 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.

60 dead strandings and 4 live strandings occurred at CALO in 2001. All strandings were reported to the Sea Turtle Project Coordinator for North Carolina. Species found were: 38 loggerheads, 15 green turtles, 9 Kemp's Ridleys and 2 leatherbacks. The month of November had the greatest number of reported strandings (Table 6).

Carcass anomalies that may have contributed to the death of the turtle were recorded on each stranding report. Six turtles were missing part or all of a flipper, two were missing heads, six had carapace damage, three had skull damage, four were found with prop scars and one turtle had its head and two flippers cut off. The remaining turtles showed no apparent cause of death. Turtles were scanned for Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags. PIT tags were found in five turtles. Metal tags were found on five loggerhead turtles and one Kemp's Ridley (Table 7). All or parts of 14 turtles were salvaged for the NC State Coordinator or NMFS researchers. Muscle samples also were collected from five green turtles.

Table 6. 2001 SEA TURTLE STRANDINGS AT CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE

	NCB	SCB	SH	OTHER	TOTAL
January	1	0	0		1
February	10	0	0		10
March	0	1	0		1
April	0	0	0		0
May	3	5	1		9
June	1	1	2		4
July	3	4	2		9
August	1	3	1		5
September	0	1	0		1
October	1	3	1		5
November	6	5	0		11
December	4	1	3		8
Total for 2001	30	24	10		64

The peak in strandings occurred in November when 11 dead turtles were found. 31 of the strandings occurred on the soundside of the islands, the remainder on the ocean beach. The average yearly total for 1990-2000 was 60 turtle strandings.

Table 7. TAGGED SEA TURTLES FOUND AT CALO IN 2001

Stranding #	Date Found	Island	Metal Tag #	PIT tag #
01-18	15 May	SCB	XXE095, XXE096	502E797470
01-28	8 July	NCB	QQV096, QQV097	407A4D7976
01-39	24 August	SB	XXN111, XXN112	4237567423
01-47	13 November	SCB	XXN104, XXN105	4256402243
01-55	28 November	SCB	XXN343, XXN344	4237603E38
01-56	29 November	NCB	QQT933, QQT934	

Table 8. CALO SEA TURTLE STRANDINGS 1990 – 2001

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

Table 9. CALO TURTLE STRANDINGS BY SPECIES 1990-2001

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

## **MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. CALO should continue to use the US Fish and Wildlife's standards for conducting turtle patrols 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 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

2001 SEA TURTLE PROGRAM PROCEDURES

## **2001 SEA TURTLE PROGRAM PROCEDURES**

The basic procedures for the 2001 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.

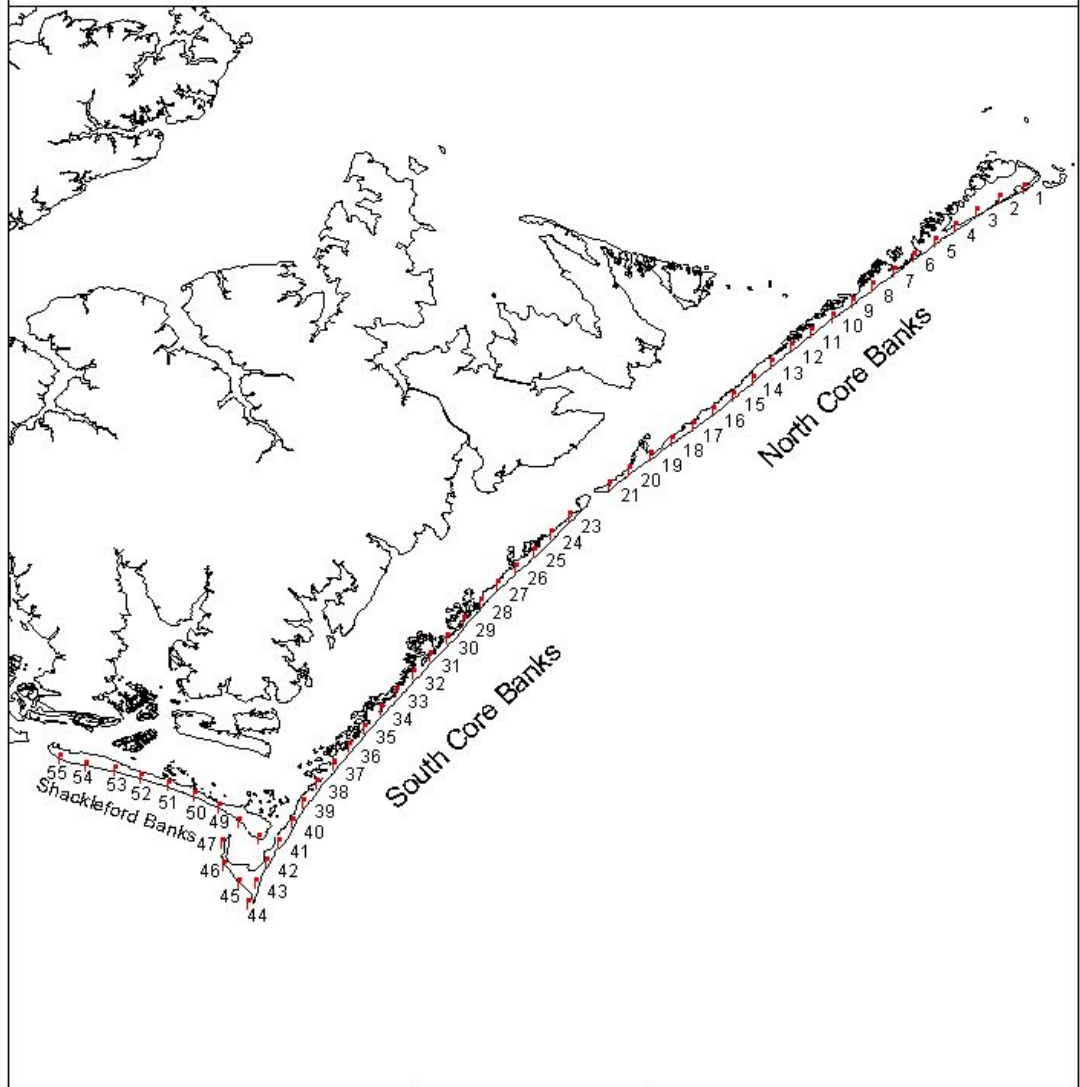
Complete the "Hatching Data" section of the Turtle Nest Data Sheet. Remove the turtle nest stakes.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Relocated Nest

Location (tenths of mile): \_\_\_\_\_

Location (tenths of mile): \_\_\_\_\_

Site Desc. \_\_\_\_\_

Site Desc. \_\_\_\_\_

Dist. above high tide \_\_\_\_\_

Dist. above high tide \_\_\_\_\_

Distance below high tide \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time Relocated \_\_\_\_\_

Dist. dune stake to nest \_\_\_\_\_

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.

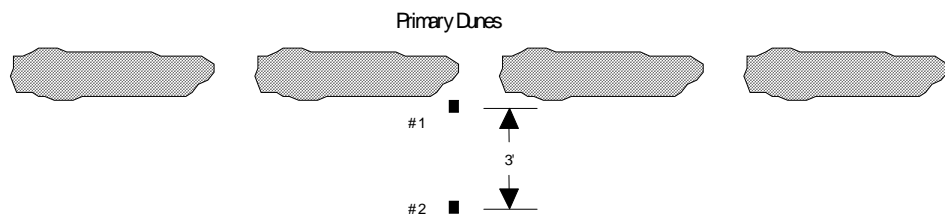
Latitude/ Longitude- If the nest is relocated, record the latitude and longitude of the new nest location using the GPS unit.

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

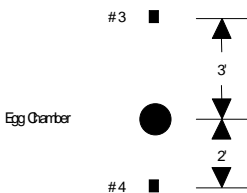


### NOTES

- 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.

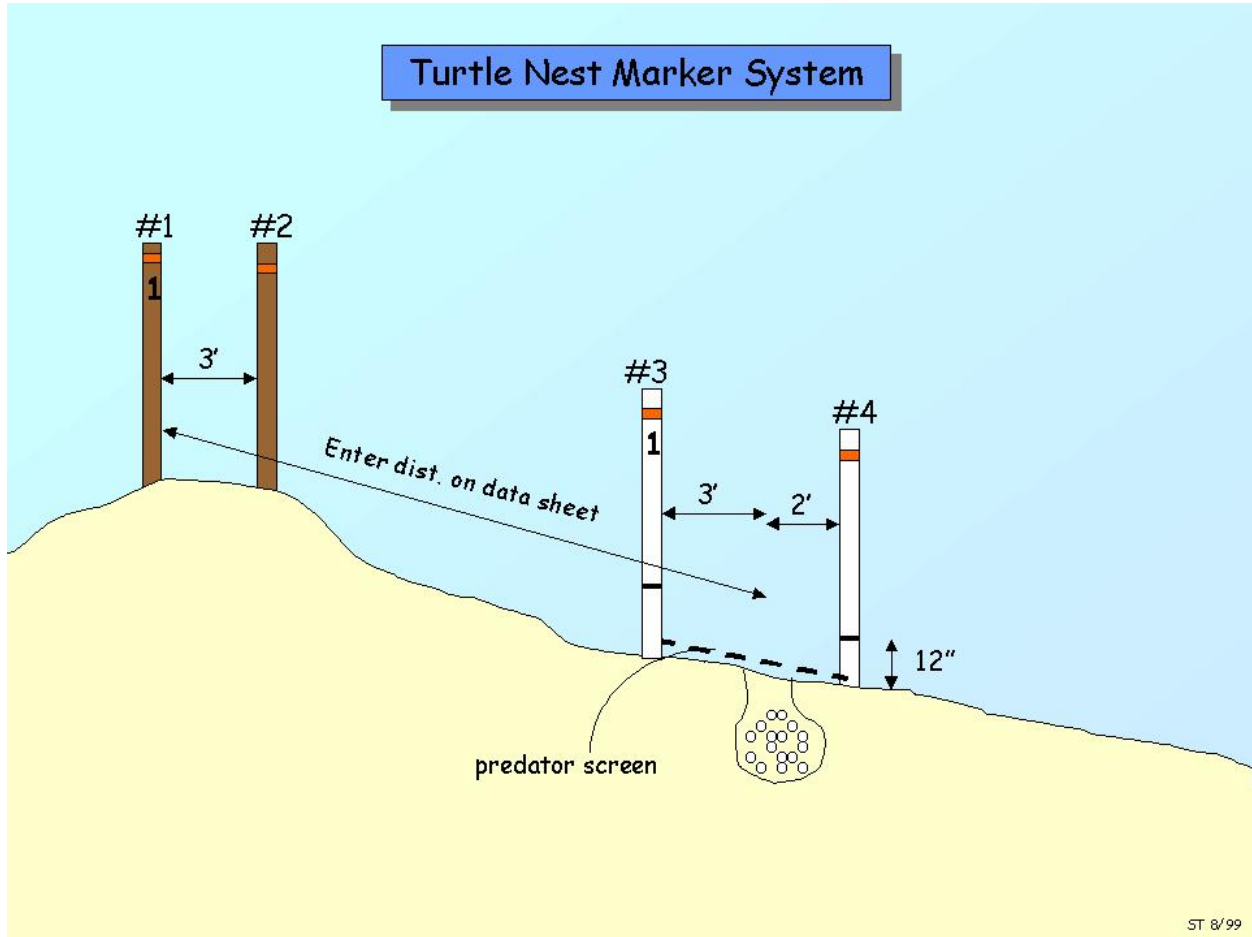
### Legend

■ - Stake



ATTACHMENT 4A

TURTLE NEST MARKER SYSTEM





## ATTACHMENT 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.

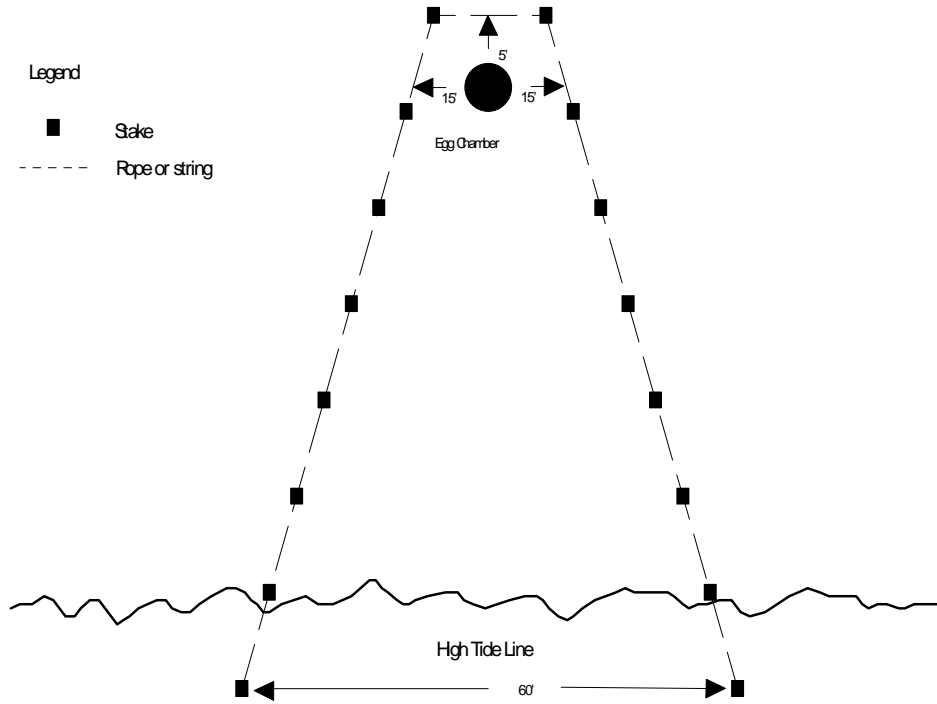
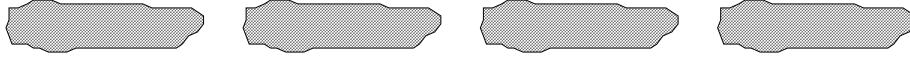
Depression Date. This date is taken by direct observation.

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

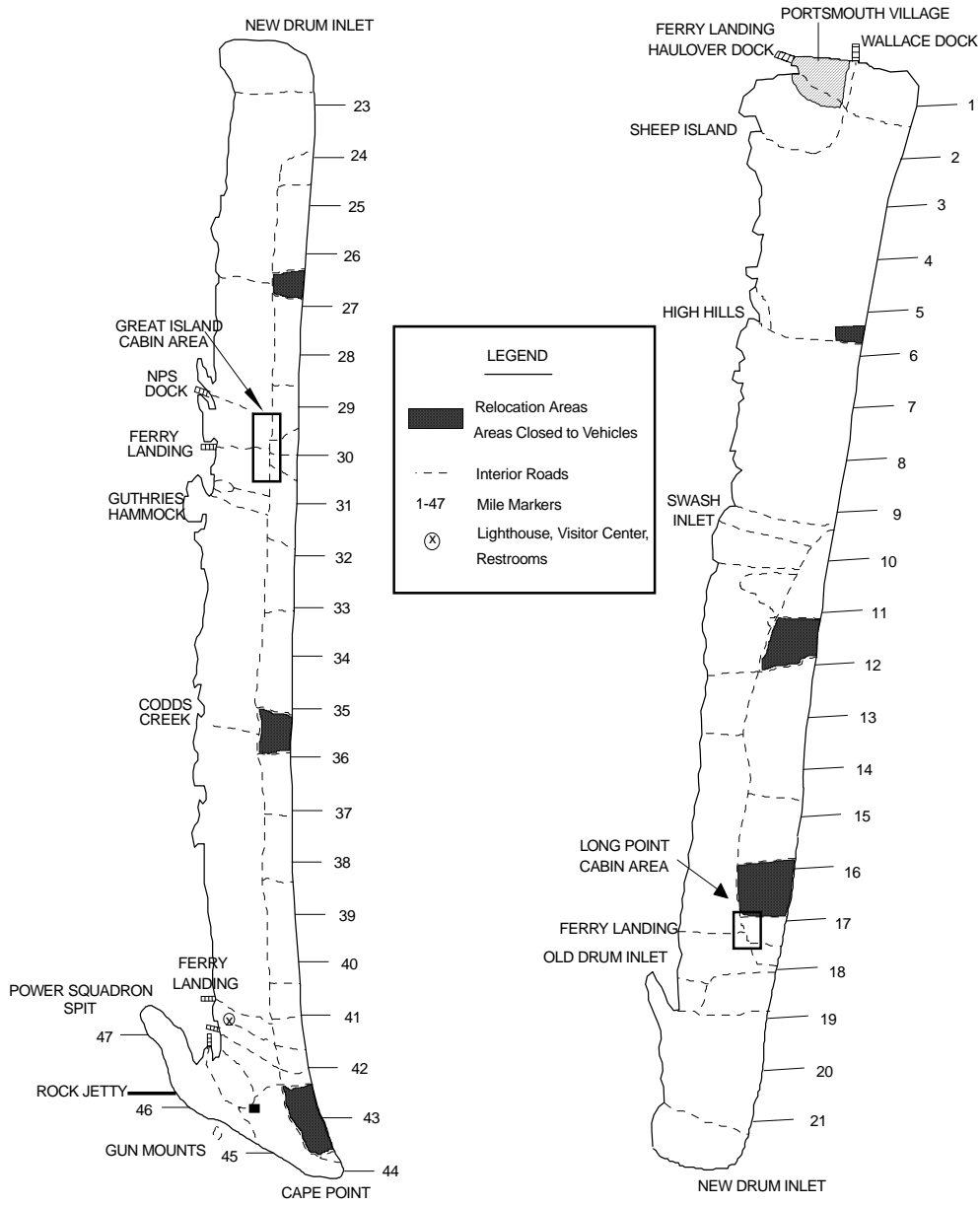
1. **Survey Consistency:** Standardization of data collection methodology and year to year consistency of data collection efforts are crucial to the long term success of the project. Adherence to the protocol outlined herein is necessary to eliminate survey bias. Deviations from this protocol must be 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 Coordinator, 217 Sleepy Pont Road, Gloucester, NC 28528.

Attachment 8

Relocation Areas for Sea Turtle Nests



APPENDIX II  
2001 NEST DATA