

Does Human Presence Affect the Amount of Time it Takes for Loggerhead Sea Turtles (*Caretta caretta*) to Undergo the Nesting Process?

In order to analyze the effects of human presence on nesting sea turtles, I observed nesting stage duration of loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in Topsail Beach, North Carolina, U.S.A. Five of the seven nesting stages were timed and compared between control and experimental turtles and the data was compared to a previous study. The experimental turtles were watched by a group of <25 people but >10 people; the control turtles were observed by <4 people. No significant changes in behavior were found between experimental and control turtles. However, experimental turtles took more indirect routes back to the ocean than the control turtles; it is thought that anthropogenic impacts were to blame. With no significant effects to turtles behavior, human presence should be allowed under the supervision of sea turtle volunteers or guides according to regulations for the area.

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