

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Title:** Loggerhead Sea Turtles

**Year:** 2003

**Editors:** Alan B. Bolten and Blair E. Witherington

**Publisher:** Smithsonian Institution Press

**ISBN:** 1-58834-136-4

**Pages:** 319pp (hardback)

**Price:** \$55 USD

**To order:** <[http://www.sipress.si.edu/books/titles\\_books/1-58834-136-4.html](http://www.sipress.si.edu/books/titles_books/1-58834-136-4.html)>

The stunning photo on the cover of the Loggerhead Sea Turtles book, coupled with its generic title, might lead one to believe that this is a book for popular audiences. But please don't judge this book by its cover. This is a serious technical volume of 18 multi-authored chapters that resulted from the special session on the biology of the loggerhead sea turtle, convened during the 20th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation, in Orlando, Florida, USA in 2000, organized by the editors.

Why, you may ask, do we need yet another technical sea turtle book that follows so closely on the heels of the successful Biology of Sea Turtles volumes I & II? While the B of ST I & II provide thorough, synthetic reviews of major themes in biology, ecology and conservation pertaining to sea turtles, they do not, and indeed could not, delve into lengthy details about any of the species. The Loggerhead Sea Turtles provides such details. It is organized into three sections: (1) biology and ecology, (2) geographic distribution, abundance and population status and (3) syntheses.

The biology and ecology section is comprised of 9 chapters, beginning with two informative chapters on the genetic and morphological definitions of a loggerhead turtle. One of the strengths of this first section is the wealth of information presented and beautifully summarized to describe the advances in our understanding of the early life history of loggerheads, a period of time that for many years was referred to as the "lost years". We now know more about the early life history of loggerheads than we do for any other sea turtle - from the time eggs are oviposited on beaches to the time they hatch and orient towards the oceanic zone and then travel in the open ocean for several years before returning to the neritic zone. The sub-adult and adult life stages are also represented in this section, with information presented about foraging areas, interesting habitats, and reproductive migrations.

The contributing authors to the second section of this book reflect the broad and global distribution of the species: from the western Atlantic to the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. These chapters provide valuable information on the distribution and current status of loggerhead populations in each of the respective regions, as well as details of the current threats and conservation efforts in the region.

The last section consists of 4 synthetic chapters that examine the role of loggerheads in marine ecosystems, their population dynamics, population models and finally conservation challenges and opportunities. These chapters tie together information presented in the first two sections of the book, they are masterfully written, and immensely valuable contributions to the literature.

My one criticism of this book is its organization. I suspect the editors planned their symposium before they planned their book and this likely drove much of its organization. I would have structured the biology and ecology section differently and would have added some more topics, but perhaps these will appear in "Loggerhead Sea Turtles II" ?

Regardless of my one criticism, I believe that this book is one that every one should have on their shelf. Despite the fact that loggerheads are crusty and taste bad (as Witherington so eloquently describes in the last chapter) more is known about this species than any of the other sea turtles and we all can learn from and compare to the results of studies undertaken to learn more about this fantastic animal.

Reviewed by: **Pamela Plotkin**, East Tennessee State University, Box 70565, Johnson City, TN 37614.

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**Title:** Saga of the Sea Turtle

**Author:** Edison Cruz, Sr.

**Publisher:** Turtle Kraals Museum

**Pages:** 307

**Price:** US \$23.00

**To order:** Online at <<http://www.seaturtle museum.org/store.htm>>

If Archie Carr is the grandfather of sea turtle conservation, then who are the great aunts and uncles? A few names immediately come to

mind: Robert Bustard, Tom Harrison, John Hendrickson, Joop Schulz. Another candidate for such a title might be Edison Cruz, aka "Blackie Cruz," whose book *Saga of the Sea Turtle* provides a fascinating look at fisheries and turtles in the Florida Keys during first half of the 20th century. A self-taught naturalist, Blackie Cruz confesses in his book that often while lying awake at night, or any slow moments, he would be thinking about how he could learn more about sea turtles and their eggs. This obsession translated into action, largely through observation and some intervention. During his experiences throughout the Keys from the 1920s through the 1960s, Blackie Cruz uncovered several interesting facts concerning sea turtle reproduction, including: egg incubation takes roughly 50 days, there is a 12-24 hour window after laying in which eggs can be relocated without greatly affecting hatching success, the inter-nesting period for loggerheads is about 14 days, etc. In his later years, Blackie Cruz helped establish a head starting facility on Ramrod Key, where a total of 10,000 head started turtles (largely loggerheads) were eventually released. This facility was also involved with Archie Carr's Operation Green Turtle, although Blackie Cruz was less than impressed with the way that some members of Operation Green Turtle were handling the green turtle eggs that were transported from Costa Rica to Florida. By this time his own personal experience made him one of the experts on how to handle sea turtle eggs.

There are some factual errors in the book. For instance, he suggests that the age of maturity for green turtles is about 10 years (p.255), also that loggerheads can neither hear nor see (p. 241-242). However, he freely admits on several occasions that he hasn't had enough time to fully observe or conduct research, and that some of his ideas may be at odds with those of zoologists or biologists. But one should not approach this book as a biological review of sea turtles. Rather, it is a historical account of fisheries, fishermen, and turtles in the Florida Keys from the pre- to post-World War II years by an eyewitness and participant. As such, there is much to be gleaned from these pages, such as how different fisheries were run and what the prices were 70 years ago, and also how turtles were captured, maintained on-board and eventually sold in the active turtle fishery in Florida. I was personally fascinated with the accounts of the "warts" on green turtles, otherwise known as fibropapillomatosis: it was seen by Blackie Cruz as early as 1913 in the Keys, and he reported that older fishermen had seen these tumors on turtles in the late 1800s. He also noted that it could be transmitted from wild-caught turtles with the tumors to captive-reared turtles if they shared the same tank and/or tankwater in captivity. All in all, Blackie Cruz's book is enchanting and engaging, and I recommend it to anyone interested in historical accounts of fishing and sea turtle conservation.

Reviewed by **Matthew H. Godfrey**, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, 307 Live Oak Street, Beaufort, NC 28516 USA

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**Title:** Celebrate the Sea

**Author:** Various young poets

**Publisher:** Marine Conservation Society and Cheltenham & Gloucester

**Pages:** 70

**Price:** US\$9.00 including packing and postage

**To order:** Contact Pam Bridgewater, MCS Company Secretary with order and credit card details at [pam@mcsuk.org](mailto:pam@mcsuk.org)

Poetry is something that most people have specific opinions about. I have two strongly held beliefs on the subject. First, poems are best understood and appreciated when they are read aloud. This was made abundantly clear once when I heard Al Purdy reading his poems. Second, poems involving turtles are usually not very good. In fact, I had practically given up the search for a turtle poem that appealed to me when a friend recently showed me *Celebrate the Sea*, a collection of poems written by 4-11 year olds from Great Britain. The book contains works selected from a larger group submitted to a national poetry competition held in 2002, under the theme of conservation of sea turtles and other marine creatures. I opened up the book to a random page and read (aloud) the following poem by 9 year old Georgina Brooks, entitled "Turtles":

Turtles walk,  
Turtles talk,  
Turtles fight,  
Even in the night

Turtles swim,  
Some turtles are very slim,  
They glide through the water  
Sometimes with their daughter.

Turtles are cool,  
Turtles are never a fool,  
Turtles are very clever,  
Turtles are never called Trevor.

Here at last was a wonderful poem about turtles. I turned to another poem, by Chloe Adcock called "In the Ocean" (page 59). Then I read another poem, also called "Turtles" but written by Samantha Humphries (page 52). Two more gems!

All the poems in this little book are great (my personal favorite is the one printed above). The book itself is small and sturdy, and its pages are interspersed with magnificent drawings made by the poets. It is perfect for reading aloud with young and old alike, and would be easy to take with you on field trips: a good short poem does wonders for morale and mood. The proceeds go to the Marine Conservation Society, an organization committed to the protection of marine environment and its wildlife. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by **Matthew H. Godfrey**, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, 307 Live Oak Street, Beaufort, NC 28516 USA

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The Loggerhead sea turtle is the largest hard shelled sea turtle in the world. Its shell is divided into two sections: carapace (upper shell) and plastron (underside). Males typically have longer tails and claws than the females. Scientists believe that Loggerheads are long lived and could live, over 50 years. Because of coastal lighting and housing developments, human disturbances, the turtles have suffered severe habitat loss. The Loggerhead Sea Turtles were also killed for their shells, which are used to make items such as combs. As a result both subspecies are now internationally protected. Conservation. Today the main threat to the adult loggerheads lies in shrimp trawls and crab fishing nets, to which many loggerheads annually fall victim. Furthermore, adults are often injured by speedboat propellers and by swallowing fishing hooks or getting caught in nets. The Loggerhead Sea Turtle is the largest hard-shelled turtle in the world and is the largest of all turtles. The Loggerhead is named for its exceptionally large head. Loggerhead Sea Turtles are found in coastal tropical & subtropical waters often extending to temperate waters in search of food. Found in the Atlantic Ocean from Argentina to Nova Scotia. The highest populations in North America are found on barrier islands from North Carolina to the Florida Keys. The Loggerheads migrate to the Bahamas in the winter.

Please help protect the Loggerhead sea turtles by spreading the word that sea turtles are important to the marine ecosystem. You can help by: 1.Minimizing beach lighting. 2.Avoiding beach fires during the nesting season. 3.Keeping beaches and waterway...s free of trash! 4.Don't disturb nesting females. 5.Staying alert when boating. See More. Loggerhead Sea Turtle updated their cover photo.