

Endangered turtles make a comeback

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Kemp's ridley sea turtles almost became extinct, but 50 nestings have been recorded in Texas and more than 4,000 eggs recovered for incubation this year.

Sea turtle preservationists are growing more and more optimistic that a nearly 30-year project to save the ancient species from extinction is paying off.

"We've already had three nestings on Galveston Island." said Houstonian Carole Allen, who has fought for decades for federal preservation programs for Kemp's ridley turtles.

As recently as 1994, preservationists were pleased to see just one Kemp's nesting annually in Texas.

While animal predators destroyed many nests, humans did much more damage, digging up thousands of eggs not only for food but for widespread sale as supposed aphrodisiacs, Mexican officials reported.

In 1978, the United States and Mexican governments launched a "head-start" program for the ridleys.

Mexican officials sent 2,000 eggs a year to hatch on a Padre Island beach. Those hatchlings were gathered up before they could enter the water and taken to a Galveston National Marine Fisheries Service facility where they will grow until they are released into the Gulf of Mexico.

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