

Loggerhead turtles on decline in Florida

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The number of loggerhead sea turtle nests is on the decline throughout Florida, indicating a potential threat to the animals, wildlife experts say.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission official Anne Meylan said 4,692 of the 45,084 loggerhead nests counted last year in Florida are now gone, an alarming development for wildlife officials, The Tampa (Fla.) Tribune said Saturday.

"There is not a simple answer to this," Meylan said. "That green turtles and leatherbacks are doing so well on these same beaches says that something is going wrong specifically for the loggerheads."

Particularly alarming is the fact the rapid decline is taking place in Florida, where nearly 90 percent of all loggerhead nests in the United States have been found.

Meylan said the decrease in loggerhead nests was likely due to the shrimp and fish industry in Florida. Loggerheads are fond of eating shrimp and similar aquatic species, placing them in situations where they could be accidentally killed by industry workers.

The wildlife official told the Tribune it could be decades before a positive change in nest numbers is observable due to the fact loggerheads can take 30 years to reproduce.

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