BOOK REVIEWS

Title: Loggerhead Sea Turtles
Year: 2003
Editors: Alan B. Bolten and Blair E. Witherington
Publisher: Smithsonian Institution Press
Pages: 319pp (hardback)
Price: $55 USD
To order: <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, internesting 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.

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.seaturtlemuseum.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
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
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. The loggerhead sea turtle inhabits the temperate and tropical zones of the world with waters that have temperatures between 13° to 28° C (56-82° F). The Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, are the main places where they dwell. If they are not in the open ocean, they frequent the coastal waters, the mouths of rivers and coral reefs. Oman is the place with more nesting females while Florida is a Common Name: Loggerhead – named for its exceptionally large head. Scientific Name: Caretta caretta. Description: Head is very large with heavy strong jaws. Nesting site locations and classification are based on several sources: Sea Turtles A Complete Guide to Their Biology, Behavior, and Conservation by James Spotila, 2004; The Worldwide Distribution of Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches, Center for Marine Conservation, 1981; and from SWOT.