

# Rare Animals of Louisiana



## Loggerhead Sea Turtle

*Caretta caretta*

**Rarity Rank:** S1/G3

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



Delaware Game & Fish Commission

### Identification:

- Reddish—brown carapace and yellowish plastron
- Other diagnostic features include 5 or more costal scutes, with the first one always touching the nuchal
- Large, block like head
- The carapace length of full-grown adults averages about 1.1 m (43.3 in) with a maximum measured length of 1.2 m (47.2 in)
- Adults may weigh more than 227 kg (500 lb)

### Habitat:

- Marine open deep water, marine open shallow water (especially with submerged seagrass beds, salt marshes, bays, tidal passes, and coastal dunes (nesting))
- Loggerheads generally inhabit warm water over the continental shelf and regularly enter marshes, estuaries and coastal rivers

### Food habits:

Omnivorous, feeding on aquatic plants, crustaceans, mollusks, jellyfish, squid, sea urchins and fish

### Range:

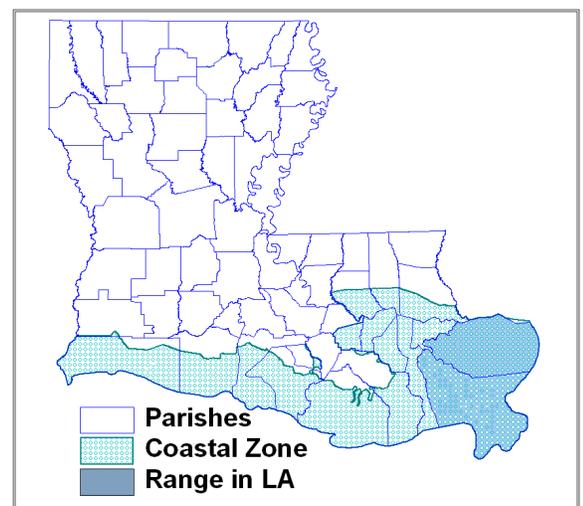
- Primarily found in the warm water of the Atlantic basin but may range as far north as Canada or as far south as Argentina
- In Louisiana, this species has been found throughout the coastal region, but nesting has only been recorded on the Chandeleur Islands

### Reproduction:

- Ideal nesting habitat is provided by well—drained dunes with clean sand and scattered grassy vegetation
- Females lay an average of 2 clutches (range 1-7) of 60-80 eggs per season
- Most females nest on 2 year or 3 year intervals
- Nesting in Louisiana usually occurs between May and August, with a peak in late June

### Threats:

- Erosion of barrier islands on which the species nests
- Take of eggs, young, and adult turtles as food for people
- Incidental take of turtles by fishing and shrimping gear



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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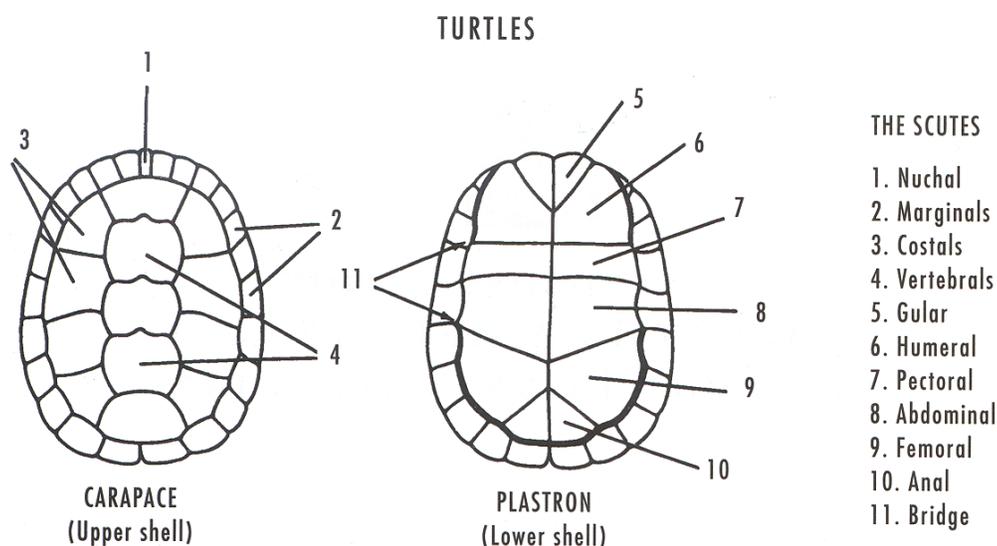
- Coastal land loss

## **Beneficial Management Practices:**

- Protection of females, eggs and hatchlings on breeding beaches
- Use of turtle exclusion devices (TEDS) on shrimp trawls
- Reduced trawling time for shrimping

## **LA River Basins:**

Pontchartrain, Mississippi, Barataria



Drawing from:

*A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America.* Third Edition, Expanded. Figure 23