FALL 2023

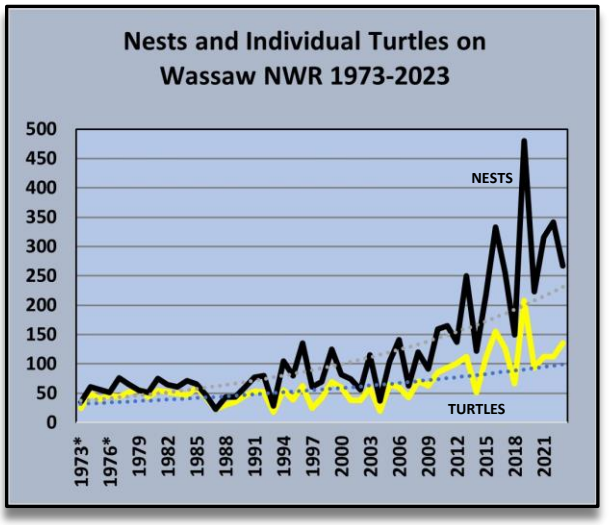
News and Appreciation from

CARETTA RESEARCH PROJECT

Wassaw Celebrates 51 Years of Conservation!

We had a great season on Wassaw this year! We recorded 267 loggerhead nests, which is just under our 10-year average and our fifth highest nesting season. This is not surprising, as 2021 and 2022 were two of our three highest nesting years. At least 112 individual turtles were identified: 54 new turtles, 56 turtles that had been tagged in previous years, and two that were originally tagged on Jekyll. One of the returning turtles was an Adopt-A-Turtle candidate, Constance. She was first tagged on Wassaw in 1999 and this was her 12th nesting season. She has deposited 56 nests, producing 5,000 hatchlings! Many thanks to the 77 volunteers who tirelessly worked the beach this summer, helping staff protect over 27,000 eggs, leading to the release of approximately 18,714 hatchlings.





Participate in 2024!

Early registration to volunteer with the CRP next summer will open from Dec 11th-20th, 2023. Regular registration will open on Tuesday, Jan 2nd, 2024. Please refer to our Facebook page or website for further information.

CALL (912-704-9323) or **EMAIL** (WassawCRP@aol.com) to reserve your spot on Wassaw and help study and protect loggerhead sea turtles!

Caretta Research Project

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BACKGROUND

Our Mission

It is the mission of the Caretta Research Project to ensure the long-term protection and full recovery of the Northwest Atlantic loggerhead population and the ecological roles that it plays through research, conservation and education.

Brief History

Stimulated by a noticeable decline in sea turtle populations, a trilateral collaboration between the Savannah Science Museum (Jerry Williamson), Wassaw Island Trust (Charlie Milmine, also with Museum), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service founded the Caretta Research Project (CRP) in 1972. Starting in 1973, CRP began monitoring the loggerhead sea turtle population nesting on Wassaw Island by marking individuals. Shortly thereafter, rigorous nest protection procedures were implemented to maximize hatchling production and bolster the population into the future.

Education and public participation have been at the heart of CRP from its origin. CRP established one of the nation's first "eco-vacations" available to the public. For 51 years, participants have traveled to Wassaw NWR to help patrol the beach in search of nesting turtles and protect their vulnerable turn, CRP strives to foster unique experiences that empower participants with knowledge and experiences that allow them to become ambassadors for the plight of the world's sea turtles.



Major Accomplishments Since 1973

- Helped produce a significant increase in loggerhead nesting on Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge.
- Marked and studied 2,117 individual turtles throughout their reproductive lives.
- Protected and monitored 6,067 nests, leading to the successful release of 418,725 hatchlings.
- Involved more than 3,700 people from all 50 states and 6 different countries in hands-on sea turtle research and conservation.
- Provided data, support, and infrastructure for conducting collaborative scientific research on sea turtles, leading to the production of 60+ scientific publications and 30+ research presentations.
- Trained 30 interns that have subsequently pursued careers in biology, environmental science, and education.
- Connected more than 450 people with the lives of nesting sea turtles through the Adopt-A-Turtle program.

Caretta Research Project operates as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization under Savannah Science Museum, Inc.

Thank you to our Founders, Past Staff and Board Members, and Current Partners!

The following organizations currently help Caretta Research Project pursue its mission:

US Fish & Wildlife Service

Georgia DNR & Georgia Sea Turtle Cooperative

The Nature Conservancy

Wassaw Island Trust, LLC

Brewer Marketing Group

Your Wedding Film *by* David Troth Wright

Ms. Mallory Adventures

University of Georgia Marine Extension & Sea Grant

100 Miles

Clean Coast

Sea Turtle Conservancy

Kennesaw State University

2023 RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Tagging and Tracking Caroline and Buffett

On June 29th, CRP researchers and Dan Evans, a collaborator from the Sea Turtle Conservancy, attached satellite transmitters to two adult loggerheads to track their movements after nesting on Wassaw. Dr. Brian Shamblin, collaborator and geneticist with UGA, has helped us locate past and present relatives of our satellite tagged females to learn more about how their lineage plays a role in nesting and conservation. We are excited to share their journeys with you and hope you'll enjoy learning with us. To continue learning about these unique females and their movements please visit our website and social media!

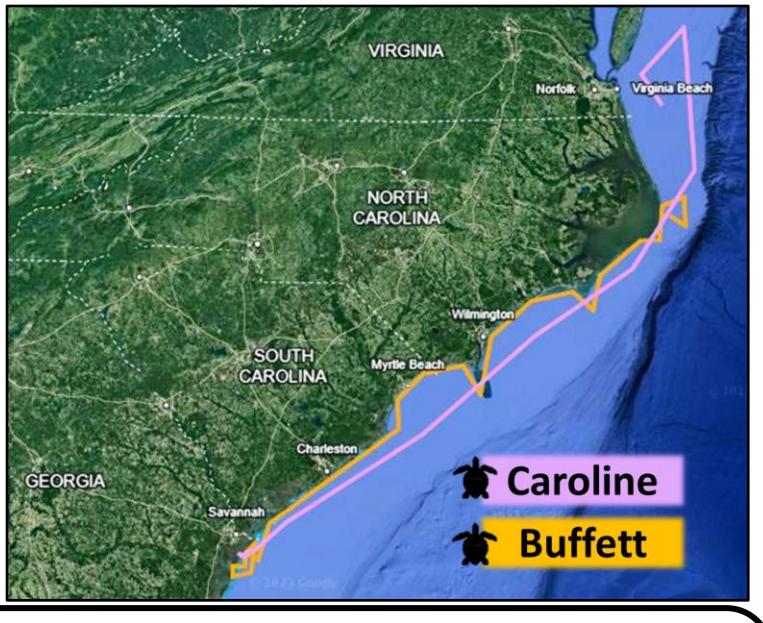


Caroline is named after Caroline Gabel, President and CEO of The Shared Earth Foundation, a long-time supporter of CRP. This satellite tag was sponsored by Barbara & Larry Perlis to honor all that Caroline has done for the loggerhead sea turtle population through our conservation efforts.

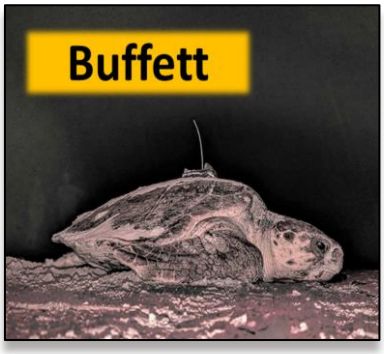


CRP hopes to raise funds to purchase and attach additional satellite transmitters in 2024 and beyond. If you or an organization that you're apart of wants to sponsor a tag or two and name a turtle, please contact CRP at WassawCRP@aol.com. We are excited to learn more about the mysterious lives of our turtles!

Check out Caroline's and Buffett's movements on these live maps!



Buffett was named in honor of the late Jimmy Buffett, American singer and songwriter, and advocate and supporter of conservation efforts for sea life, including manatees and sea turtles. We can't wait to track her "changes in latitude!"



2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome to Kristen Zemaitis!



We are so excited to welcome Kristen Zemaitis to CRP as our Education/PR Coordinator! Kristen was born and raised in western Michigan. In 2012 she traveled to Costa Rica where she participated in a country-wide study evaluating the effects of climate change on sea turtle nesting beaches. Her interests in herpetofauna and conservation education brought her to the Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC) where she became an AmeriCorps member during 2016 and 2017.

Recently, she completed her M.S. with UGA's Odum School of Ecology, where her research was focused on spatial ecology, reproductive habits, ecotoxicology, and diet of American alligators. In addition to research, she has comprehensive experience in conservation outreach and education. She believes that research is most valuable when it is accessible by all audiences.

CRP Presentations Available!

We are always looking for new groups to spread the word about CRP! We would love to come to classrooms or civic group meetings and talk about Georgia's sea turtles and the CRP. Please contact us if you are interested!

Caretta Teen Club in Savannah Schools!

We are launching a new educational program this year! In addition to research and conservation, education and outreach are also top priorities for CRP. The primary goal of this club is to bring together students and educators from local schools to create a sense of community around a common interest and passion – sea turtle conservation! The club aims to give high school students the opportunity to gain valuable life skills in developing and leading presentations for elementary students. Each presentation will focus on an aspect of sea turtle conservation or life history, and give all ages an introduction to CRP.

This year we are thrilled to have both Savannah Country Day and St. Andrew's Schools piloting our Caretta Teen Club. We hope to continue expanding the club by adding 2-3 schools each year.



ST. ANDREW'S
AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

THE SAVANNAH COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Thank you to our generous sponsors!

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Shannon James
Skidaway Audubon

CLUTCH
Terri O'Neil
One Hundred Miles
Royal Restrooms

ANNUAL CELEBRATION & FUNDRAISER

Celebrating 51 years of Sea Turtle Conservation on Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge

The CRP's annual fundraiser, ***A Night on the Bluff***, was held on May 5th under beautiful clear skies on Isle of Hope! Over 350 people joined the staff and Board to help celebrate the project's past success and support future conservation efforts. The party was a huge success, and CRP's staff, Board and Fundraising Committee send our deepest appreciation to everyone that made this event possible, especially after having to reschedule last minute due to torrential downpours on the original date! Thanks so very much to : Holley and Juha Jaakkola for sharing their beautiful home, Issac Smith and Andrew Sovine for the music, Big Bon Savannah and Savannah Distributing for the delicious food and drinks, Royal Restrooms, Stage Front and EventWorks for the atmosphere, and of course all of the sponsors, auction donors, and volunteers that donated their time and effort to support CRP!

The staff and Board of CRP send a HUGE thank you to Holley and Juha Jaakkola for hosting ***A Night on the Bluff*** since 2017 – you have been such generous hosts welcoming us all at your beautiful home to celebrate sea turtle conservation on Wassaw NWR! We appreciate all you do for CRP!!



Alexander Neumann | For Savannah Magazine







Thank you to our generous auction donors!

Lisa Barksdale Photography, Dr. Robert Beard, Cocotay Jewelry, John "Crawfish" Crawford, Jan Curran, Curry and Co., Bill Eswine, LaTrelle Ferrelle, Erica Findlay, Found Jewelry, Ghost Coast Distillery, Kim and Helen Iocovozzi and the Clark and Sullivan Families, IV Savannah, Marcus Kenney, Cynthia Knott, Live By The Tides, Catherine Lovett, Mermaid Cottages, Patti and Henry Monsees, Sanders Monsees, Moss and Vine, Mudskipper Charters, Bellamy Murphy, Bernard Nolan, Jennifer Nolan, Tessa Parker, Plant Riverside District, Dr. and Mrs. Michael Poole, Port Town Collective, Randall's Beverage Center, Renewal MD, Cathy Sakas, Savannah Distributing, Inc., Kristi and Brian Shiels, Kurtis Schumm, Siete Wines, Southern Brothers Farms, Justine Vanderlugt, Winslett Watson, Ruth Weimar, Whip Savannah, Wilderness Southeast

Thanks so much to Half-Moon Outfitters and Bote for donating an awesome stand-up paddle board for our raffle!!

IN-KIND
Celebritees
Curbie Sanitation
Isle of Hope Baptist Church
Isle of Hope Marina
Mosquito Authority
Moss and Vine
Savannah Glass

Please Save-The-Date!
Our next fundraiser will be held on Thursday, April 25, 2024 at Beaulieu!

GET INVOLVED

Here are ways to get involved:

- **Participate in CRP** and get hands on experience protecting sea turtles
- **Make an individual donation**
- **Make a corporate matching gift**
- **Organize an Honorarium or Memorial** to remember a special person in your life
- **Shop the CRP Store**
- **Join *Captains for Caretta* -** Use your boat to help transport people and supplies to and from Wassaw NWR each summer
- **Attend and/or Sponsor CRP's Annual Fundraiser**
- **Adopt-A-Turtle for your classroom, loved one, or yourself**

Caretta Research Project is a public non-profit charity that does not receive funding from the state or federal government.

All research, conservation, and education efforts depend on generous contributions of resources from people like you.



Volunteer Spotlight!

Our program wouldn't run without the support of our incredible volunteers. We have the pleasure of getting to know each of you during the summer, and we want to create an opportunity for you to connect with other CRP volunteers through our social media. We are hoping to highlight 3-4 volunteers each month on our Instagram and Facebook. We encourage you to share our posts to your personal accounts so your friends and family can appreciate your dedicated work to sea turtle conservation, and interact with other volunteer spotlights. This is completely optional, and we won't post anything that is not added to this form. Thanks again for your support and memories, we hope to see you all again soon!



Please complete this short form to be featured!
https://forms.gle/2aE93ABHEjF21yWU6

SCAN ME

Thank you to our *Captains for Caretta*

Carrie Bazemore
Dan Bromstad & Eleanor Rhangos
Chris Carroll
Jay & Sally Gleeson
Rolfe Glover
Gary & Amy Hart
Steve & June Hernandez
Fernando & Peggy Perez
Larry & Barbara Perlis
Gabe & Lori Pitt
Joe & Chris Powers
Kathleen Ramee
Chris & Tristan Walls
Ben & Stacey Wells
Ruth & Brian Weimar

Island Assistants

Jason Fuller
Kegan Kurinij
Alden Mazo
Don Ott
Darnice Pettigrew
Jadyn Sethna
Ed Strohsahl

Honorariums, Memorials, and Special Thank You's

In memory of Charles A. Ewing: Robert Ewing

In honor of Beth Betbeze and Adam Boudreau: June and Steve Hernandez

In honor of Jim Carr: Linda Cline

In honor of Mark Eberle: Holly Jones

Landings Harbor and Delegal Creek Marina for use of marina facilities

Dave Cahoon, Felix Mueller and Francis Mackie for fixing our Mules

IKEA for donating cabinets for the staff cabin on Wassaw NWR

ADDTL. CONTRIBUTIONS

NOVEMBER 1, 2022 – OCTOBER 31, 2023

ARRIBADA

Lake Pajamas, Barbara and Larry Perlis, Shared Earth Foundation

LEATHERBACK

Anonymous

LOGGERHEAD

Anderson-Rogers Foundation, Inc., The Nature Conservancy

GREEN

Dana and Adam Guild, The Helios Foundation, James F. Olsen Charitable Fund, Dr. and Mrs. Michael Poole, Weimar Construction Co.

KEMP'S RIDLEY

Garnett Bryant, Rolfe Glover IV, Leopold's Ice Cream, J.C. Lewis Foundation, Inc., Janette and David Long Fund, John and Holly McCormick, Savannah Bee Company, Savannah Distributing Co., Inc., Stage Front, Treylor Park Restaurant Group

HAWKSBILL

Ameris Bank, Georgia Power, Gerry Lumber, Gabe and Lori Pitt, St. Andrew's Kindergarten Class, Southeast Paddle Sports Series, Dale Thorpe

FLATBACK

Anonymous, David E. Brainerd, Bouhan Falligant, LLP, Dan Bromstad & Eleanor Rhangos, Priscilla and Charles Chigas, Cheryl Chip and Jim Tamarak, Colonial Foundation, Inc., Current Edge Solutions, Bonnie and Jeff Gentes, Catherine and Joe Gussler, Habersham Dental, JTVS Builders, Inc., Loretta Kane, Keaton and Sams Wealth Management, Kelley and Josh Keller, Jim Marquis, Kennickell Group, Joe & Price Mingledorff, Margaret O'Sullivan, Ms. Kelley Parker, Drs. Michael Pfaller and Beverly Ringenberg, Michael and Donna Price, Savannah Magazine, Almon and Barbara Townsend, Vaden Automotive, Von Trapp Family Lodge

HATCHLING

Linsey M. Blocker, Remax Savannah, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Brody, Meta Carr, Mr. and Mrs. Frank A. Chisholm, Jr., Kerstin Clark, Coastal Construction Group, Elizabeth Pickens Cordia, LCDR and Mrs. Edward J. Derst III, Lawrence Dwight, Rebecca and Larry Evans, FPC of Savannah, Mr. and Mrs. Joel Gerber, Lynne and Don Howe, Innovative Veterinary Medicine, International Monetary Fund, Lisa Isenhour, Shannon James, Johnstone Supply Savannah, Steve Langston, Gina McCullough, Mermaid Cottages, One Fish Two Fish, Page International, Inc., Christine Parsons, Piper Sandler Companies, Savannah's Candy Kitchen, Savannah Dental, E Shaver Bookseller, Skidaway Audubon, The Chatham Foundation, Trash4Turtles, Rebecca Troth and Christopher Wright, Ruth Weimar

CLUTCH

Gail Alling, Anonymous, Alphagraphics, Mary Andrew, Eugenie and Joseph Barrow, The Guerry Beam Fund, Fred and Malinda Bergen, Margaret Bishop, Hannah Bonvechio, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Brody, Jessie Cahoon, Jack Carroll and Sue Bark, Kathryn Clement, Stephanie M. Clement, Linda Cline, Dr. Melissa Cobbs, Jamie Coleman, Shawn Crampes, Elizabeth Croft, Sally Maclay Dayton, Andi DeFelice, Vince and Donna DelMonte, Ted Dennard, Marie Dent, Franklin Doyle, Mark Eberle, Darryl and Eileen Engle, Louise P. Ewing, Mr. Robert Ewing, Alan and Terri Fuller, Bill Goldstrohm, Lisa Goodman, Melinda Grotheer, Roger Hanson and Anna Biermeier, Lynn Harris, Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Harrison, Amy Hart, Mr. Dennis Heath, June and Steve Hernandez, Dr. and Mrs. John Howard, Jr., Denise Jackson, Shannon James, Shirley Jensen, Holly Jones, Jessica and Joachim Kelly, Candace Kovacic-Fleischer and Ilona Fleischer, Kroger, Phyllis Lathrope, Liberty Mutual, Margaret Livingston, Amelia Luke, Naudain Machen, Vincent and Elaine Martin, Gordon K. Matthews, Kimberly McCarthy, Janice McGibbon, Tom and Gwen McKee, Judy McLachlin, Jennifer Melroy, Rev. and Mrs. David Messner, Dr. Julia Mikell, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Milmine, Jyl and Randy Molle, Kristin Mulzer, Network for Good, Terri O'Neil, Jon Olson, Joseph and Rebecca Olson, One Hundred Miles, Tom and Susan Palmer, Carl Parrish, Annie Quaile and Ellie Titus, Bebe and Dan Rose, Royal Restrooms, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Schindel, Freny Sethna, Elizabeth Shepherd, Sarah Stewart, Steven and Susan Stough, Betz Sweeney, Linda Szollosy, Zelda Tenenbaum, The Landings Landlovers Inc., The Schley and Lang Knight Foundation, Inc., The Solomons Fund, Charles and Pam Usher, Barbara Vater and Dale Slusser, Lea Anne Wallace, Polly Webster, Wayne and Janet Witzell, Chris and Amanda Yarbrough, Patti Young

We are so grateful to the following local organizations for coming up with such fun and inventive fundraising events to help fund CRP! MANY thanks go out to the following organizations:

Lake Pajamas for partnering with CRP with adorable (and oh so comfortable!) Ocean Kingdom PJs (for kids and adults)! 100% of the profits went to CRP to help fund conservation efforts on Wassaw NWR.



Leopold's Ice Cream for choosing to support CRP through Ice Cream sales! Their team created *Low Country Turtle Pie* just for us, and during September and October, $1 for every scoop sold was donated to CRP.



Southeast Paddle Sports and Sea Kayak Georgia for hosting the Autumn Marsh Challenge on Tybee Island, and for choosing CRP to receive a portion of the registration fees and proceeds!

SEA KAYAK GEORGIA

SOUTHEAST PADDLE SPORTS

St. Andrew's Kindergarten class for choosing CRP as their designated charity for their Annual Lemonade Sale each Spring! We are thrilled the students are starting to learn about sea turtle conservation so early!

ST. ANDREW'S AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

Hannah Bonvechio for supporting CRP for many years through her Earth Inspired Kids program! This year she created a candle-lighting event asking people for donations as she celebrated her 16th birthday!



Caretta Research Project
Savannah Science Museum, Inc.
PO Box 9841
Savannah, GA 31412
(912) 704 – 9323
WassawCRP@aol.com
www.CarettaResearchProject.org

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