News and Appreciation from

CARETTA RESEARCH PROJECT

Caretta Research Project

Board of Directors

President
Carrie Bazemore

Vice President
Rolfe Glover

Secretary
Lisa Goodman

Treasurer
Barbara Perlis
Ted Dennard
Amanda Groves
Price Mingledorff
Sanders Monsees
John Northup
Susan Palmer
Anita Poole
Christopher Walls
Ruth Weimar

Staff

Executive Director
Kris Williams Carroll

Research Director
Joseph Pfaller

Assistants
Ariadna Arnau
Kegan Kurinij
Don Ott
Darnice Pettigrew
Caitlin Putnam
Jadyn Sethna
Ed Strohsahl

Wassaw Celebrates 50 Years of Conservation with its Second Highest Nesting Season!

2022 marks 50 years of sea turtle conservation on Wassaw NWR and the turtles celebrated with us by depositing 341 loggerhead nests and one green nest, making it the second highest season in the project's history! As we seem to have broken records every three years or so, we expected to break our previous record set in 2019 of 480 nests. However, last year, we had an unexpectedly high number of nests (316) – we like to believe that some of those remigrant turtles couldn't wait to get back to Wassaw and returned earlier than expected! Many thanks to the 69 volunteers who tirelessly worked the beach this summer, helping staff protect 38,145 eggs leading to the release of approximately 26,109 hatchlings.

Georgia had a record number of nests (4,089) along the coast – the highest since statewide monitoring of beaches began in 1989. This is a huge milestone for Georgia's loggerheads, breaking 4,000 for the first time in history! Because loggerheads take approximately 30 years to reach sexual maturity, we believe that this increase in the last 10-15 years is due to the foresight of the early conservationists, on Wassaw and along the Georgia coast, as well as the aggressive implementation and enforcement of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) on shrimp trawlers in early 1990's. We look forward to seeing what the next 50 years brings!



Participate in 2023!

Early registration to volunteer on the CRP next summer will open for one week from Dec 12th-16th, 2022. Regular registration will open on Monday, Jan 2nd, 2023. Registration will depend on Covid-19 concerns. 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!

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 50 years, participants have traveled to Wassaw to help patrol the beach in search of nesting turtles and protect their vulnerable nests. In 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 an 8-fold increase in loggerhead nesting on Wassaw Island National Wildlife Refuge.
- Marked and studied 2,065 individual turtles throughout their reproductive lives.
- Protected and monitored 5,782 nests, leading to the successful release of 400,011 hatchlings.
- Involved 3,661 people from 46 different 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 58 scientific publications and 28 research presentations.
- Trained 29 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

2022 HIGHLIGHTS



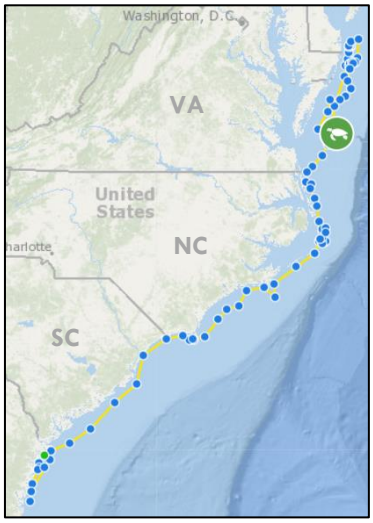
Tagging and Tracking Troona

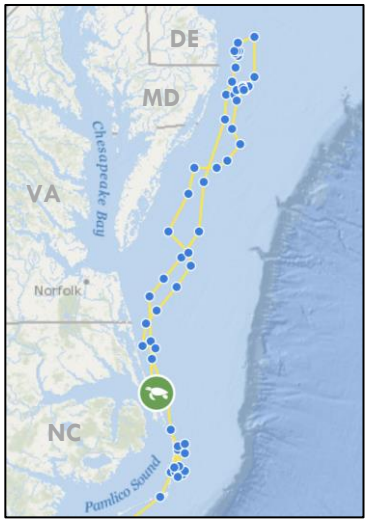
On July 11th, CRP researchers and a collaborator from the Sea Turtle Conservancy attached a satellite transmitter to one of our loggerhead with the goal of tracking her moments after nesting on Wassaw. The lucky turtle was dubbed 'Troona' in honor of Joe's grandmother. After returning to the sea, Troona made a short jaunt to the south before taking a U-turn off Jekyll Island and heading as far north as Delaware. She is now off the coast of the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina, where we expect her to spend the winter.

CRP hopes to raise funds to purchase and attach additional satellite transmitters in 2023 and 2024. If you or an organization that you're apart of wants to sponsor a tag or two and name some turtles, please contact CRP at WassawCRP@aol.com. We are excited to learn more about the mysterious lives of our turtles!

To follow Troona's movements, you can either follow the links in our Instagram Bio or go to conserveturtles.org > Turtle Tracker > Active Turtles and scroll down to Troona







Wishing Goodbye and Good Luck to Joe!

For the last 25 nesting seasons, Joe has spent at least one week doing turtle work on Wassaw. He started as a volunteer at the age of 15 in 1998, then worked as an intern and occasional island leader from 2003-2010. In 2011, Joe was hired as the Research Director, while pursuing his Ph.D. at the Univ. of Florida. As RD, he fostered collaborations all over the globe and authored/co-authored over 30 peer-viewed publications, book chapters, and reports.



This summer Joe accepted a position with NOAA as the Sea Turtle Branch Chief of the newly-established Marine Mammal and Turtle Division at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center in Miami, FL. He will be overseeing NOAA's sea turtle research efforts in the region. NOAA is very lucky to have him, and we wish him the best of luck in his new position. We hope he'll come back to visit us on Wassaw!

Global Epibiont Synthesis

Loggerheads are the Champs!

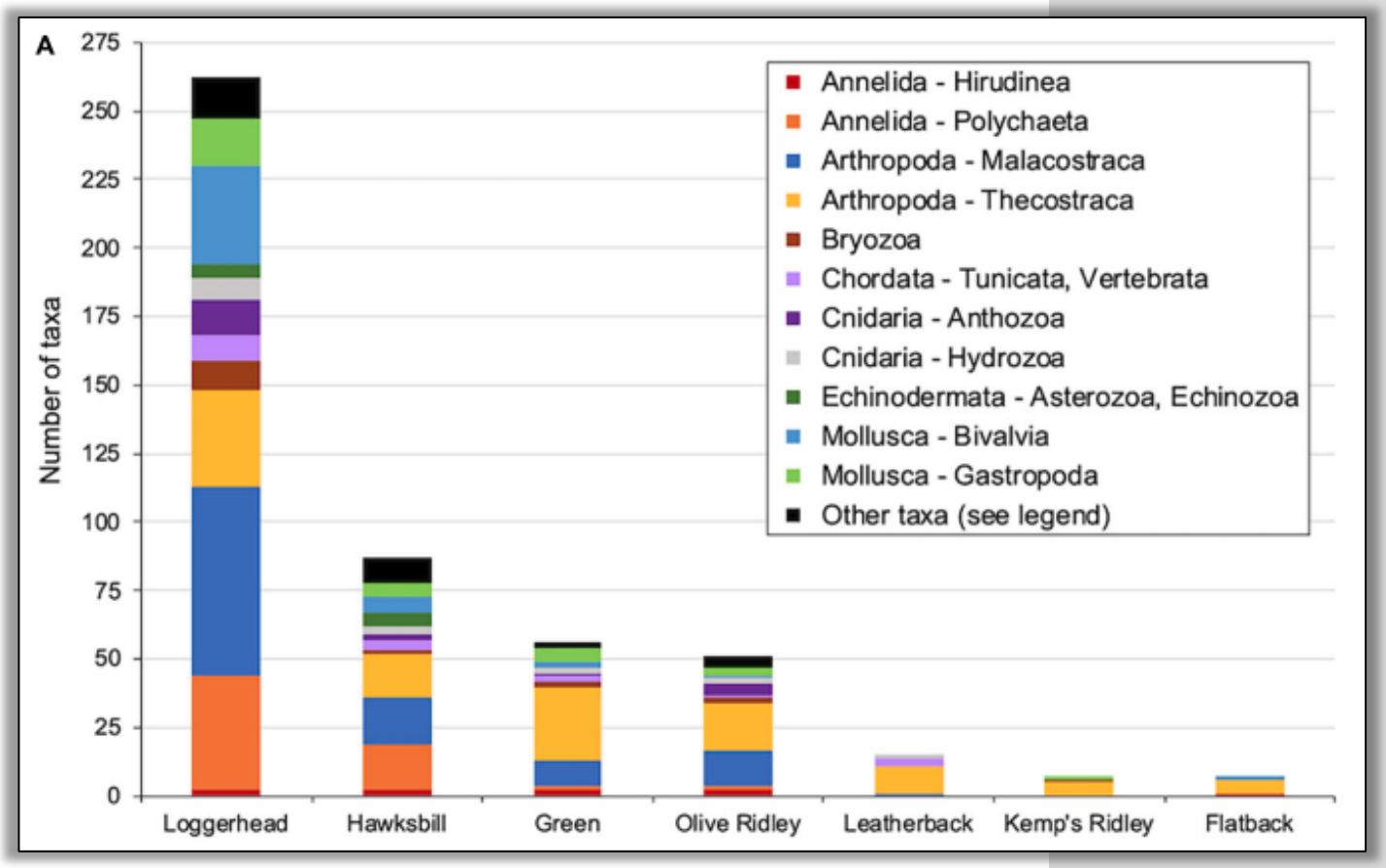


For the last three decades, Wassaw has been a mecca for studies investigating the diversity of critters that take up residence on the bodies of sea turtles. If you've ever had the pleasure of gazing at one of the loggerheads nesting on Wassaw, then you'll know what I'm talking about … their bodies, especially their shells, are often teaming with life! We call those plants and animals 'epibionts.'

This begs the question: Who is the true Champion of epibiont diversity?! Is it our loggerheads or somebody else? In a paper published this year, former CRP Research, Joe Pfaller, and his co-first author, Nathan Robinson, set out to answer this question as well as many others. The authors scoured the scientific literature and compiled epibiont data from 120 years of research, including data from all turtle species and all oceans.

Paper Citation:
Robinson NJ, Pfaller JB (2022) Sea Turtle Epibiosis: Global Patterns and Knowledge Gaps. ***Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*** **10:844021**

The results are incontrovertible! To date, 262 distinct epibiont taxa have been recorded on loggerheads globally, which is far greater diversity than any other sea turtle species (see Figure below). What about our Northwest Atlantic loggerheads? They host 162 of the 262 (62%) epibiont taxa found on loggerheads! Until further research is done, it's safe to say that loggerheads – NW Atlantic loggerheads specifically – are the Champs!



Thank you to our generous sponsors!

LEATHERBACK
Georgia Ports Authority

GREEN
Barbara & Larry Perlis
Weimar Construction Co.

KEMP'S RIDLEY
James F. Olsen Charitable Fund
Dr. & Mrs. Michael Poole
Vaden Automotive

HAWKSBILL
Ameris Bank
Cheryl Chip & Jim Tamarack
John and Holly McCormick
Optimal Hearing
Kelley Parker
Savannah Bee Company
Treylor Park Hitch LLC

FLATBACK
Bouhan Falligant, LLP
Dan Bromstad & Eleanor Rhangos
Critz Automotive Group
Dr. Nick & Margarita Eskandar
Rolfe Glover, IV
Guerry Lumber
Catherine & Joe Gussler
Keaton and Sams Wealth Management
Joe & Price Mingledorff
Page International, Inc.
Erin & Trey Thompson
Dale Thorpe

HATCHLING
Bahama Joe's
Linsey M. Blocker, Remax Savannah
Glen and Connie Darbyshire
Mr. and Mrs. Joel Gerber
Carolyn Jenkins
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Mercer
Capt. Sam Meyer
Dr. Timothy & Mrs. Elyssa Minton
Kurt and Karen Oelschig
One Fish Two Fish
Tom & Susan Palmer
William & Allison Rhangos
Savannah Marine Terminal
Skidaway Audubon
David and Kelly Thomas
Tollison & Company, LLC
Urgent Care of Wilmington Island

CLUTCH
Anonymous
Innovative Veterinary Medicine
Kim & Kevin Iocovozzi
Mermaid Cottages
Katy Moretz
Terri O'Neil
One Hundred Miles

ANNUAL CELEBRATION & FUNDRAISER

Celebrating 50 years of Sea Turtle Conservation on Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge

This year's annual fundraiser, A Night on that Bluff, was held on April 20th under clear skies and a nearly full moon on Isle of Hope. Over 300 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: 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 the project!





Thank you to our generous auction donors!

Stacie Jean Albano, Amphibian Air, Eliot Joanna Angell, Carol Austin, Lisa Barksdale Photography, Carrie Bazemore, BEETTAN, Cheryl Chip and Jim Tamarack, Cocotay Jewelry, Dorothea Coy, John "Crawfish" Crawford, Jan Curran, Curry and Co., Paul Downs, Joy Dunigan; Hillary Dunn, Tate Ellington, Bill Eswine, Found Jewelry, Ghost Coast Distillery, Rolfe Glover IV, Glow Spa, Hot Sushi Happy Surf Camp Aloha, Innovative Veterinary Services, Kim and Helen Iocovozzi, Bert John, Just Grace Designs, Jeanne Karmiel Ceramics, Marcus Kenney, Stayce Koegler Photography, David Levy Antiques and Appraisals, Live By The Tides, Love Your Kaos, Catherine Lovett, M. Liz, Tobia Makover, Mamie Ruth, Wendy Martin Art, Cassandra McLeod, Mermaid Cottages, MetalPressions, Price Mingledorff, Henry Monsees, Sanders Monsees, Mudskipper Charters, Bernard Nolan, Jennifer Nolan, One Fish Two Fish, Faran Riley Peterson, Dr. and Mrs. Michael Poole, Renewal MD, Rivers and Glen Trading Co., Peter Roberts, Cathy Sakas, Satchel, Savannah Distributing, Inc., Savannah Marine Terminal , Savannah Power Yoga, Kurtis Schumm, Sea Island Forge, Michelle Stafford, Summer House, Tall Tides Charters, The Cathedral Basilica of St. John the Baptist, Towne Salon, Vinson Arts, Georgia Walters Photography, Winslett Watson, Ruth Weimar, Whip Savannah, Wilderness Southeast, Heather L. Young

IN-KIND
Celebritees
Curbie Sanitation
Isle of Hope Baptist Church
Isle of Hope Marina
Kennickell Group
Mosquito Authority
Peter E. Roberts
Savannah Distributing Co., Inc.
Stage Front

Thank you to our generous donors!

GET INVOLVED

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.

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**

  Check out the COOLDRI long sleeve shirts in navy blue, light blue, and white. Stay tuned for new colors!









- **Join *Captains for Caretta*** and use your boat to help transport people and supplies to and from Wassaw Island in the summer
- **Attend and/or Sponsor CRP's Annual Fundraiser**

- **Adopt-A-Turtle** for your classroom, a loved one, or yourself

  CRP's Adopt-A-Turtle Kit is a wonderful gift idea for birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas, and other special occasions. Pick from a list of turtles that have faithfully nested on Wassaw Island during previous seasons. Once adopted, each turtle's nesting activity can be tracked during ANY season from the Turtle Activity page on our website and on our Facebook page.

  Kits include:

  (1) List of adoptees and an adoption form
  (2) Glass sea turtle ornament
  (3) Picture of a nesting loggerhead
  (4) CRP decal

Thank you to our *Captains for Caretta*

Dan Bromstad & Eleanor Rhangos
Chris Carroll
Al and Felecia Cook
Fitz & Kelly Hiltzheimer
Jay & Sally Gleeson
Rolfe Glover
Gary & Amy Hart
Fernando & Peggy Perez
Larry & Barbara Perlis
Joe & Chris Powers
Kathleen Ramee
Chris & Tristan Walls
Katie and Gram Wohlust

Honorariums, Memorials, and Special Thank You's

In memory of Charles Ewing:
Robert Ewing
In memory of Eugene E. Carlson:
Susanne McMurry
In memory of Jerry Williamson:
Charles Seyle

In honor of Bridget R: Jamie Anderson
In honor of Barbara Perlis: Patricia Elizalde and Scott Neu
In honor of Jaakkola's graduation: Julie Lischer
In honor of Mary McNaughton: Zelda & Sheldon Tenenbaum
In honor of Julie Gourevitch: Deborah Van Buren
In honor of Doris Gladden's 80th birthday: Lynn Wood
In honor of Sally and Willie Stewart: Wassaw Island LLC
Hannah Bonvechio on behalf of Earth Inspired Kids

Landings Harbor and Delegal Creek Marina for use of marina facilities

Realm Connect for phone service

Huge thanks to Dave Cahoon, Felix Mueller, and Dale Love for fixing our Mules this year

Bass Pro Shop and Cabela's Outdoor Fund for Tracker 800SX



ADDTL. CONTRIBUTIONS

NOVEMBER 1, 2021 – OCTOBER 31, 2022

ARRIBADA

Anderson-Rogers Foundation, Inc., Georgia Ports Authority, Barbara and Larry Perlis, Shared Earth Foundation

LOGGERHEAD

The Nature Conservancy

GREEN

Courtney Knight Gaines Foundation, Inc., James F. Olsen Charitable Fund, Weimar Construction Co., Inc., Zoo Atlanta Conservation Endowment Fund

KEMP'S RIDLEY

Loretta Kane, J.C. Lewis Foundation, Inc., Dr. and Mrs. Michael Poole, Vaden Automotive, Savannah Presbytery Ecology Fund

HAWKSBILL

Ameris Bank, Mr. and Mrs. Garnett Bryant, Cheryl Chip and Jim Tamarack, Georgia Power, Janette and David Long Fund, John and Holly McCormick, Optimal Hearing, Kelley Parker, Drs. Michael Pfaller and Beverly Ringenberg, Savannah Bee Company, The Jolly Foundation, Dale Thorpe, Treylor Park Hitch LLC

FLATBACK

Mr. And Mrs. Peter Adolf, Bouhan Falligant, LLP, Dan Bromstad and Eleanor Rhangos, The Burnap Foundation, Meta Carr, The Chatham Foundation, Colonial Foundation, Inc., Critz Automotive Group, Lawrence Dwight, Dr. Nick and Margarita Eskandar, Tess Ewing and Ms. Louise Rice, John Garber, Rolfe Glover IV, Guerry Lumber, Catherine and Joe Gussler, Keaton and Sams Wealth Management, Steve Langston, McMullin Family Fund, Joe and Price Mingledorff, Scott Neu, Page International, Inc., Tom and Susan Palmer, Mr. Barry Ploog, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Price, Erin and Trey Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. Almon Townsend, Dr. Christopher Walls, International Monetary Fund, St. Andrew's Kindergarden Class, Christopher Wright and Becky Troth

HATCHLING

Anonymous, Bahama Joe's, Linsey McDougal Blocker - Remax Savannah, Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Crawford, Connie and Glen Darbyshire, Sally Maclay Dayton, LCDR and Mrs. Edward J. Derst III, Bonnie and Jeff Gentes, Mr. and Mrs. Joel Gerber, Roger Hanson and Anna Biermeier, Lynn Harris, Carolyn Jenkins, Mary Swan Lamar, Katherine McNaughton, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Mercer, Capt. Sam Meyer, Dr. Timothy and Mrs. Elyssa Minton, Mr. and Mrs. Sanders Monsees, Kurt and Karen Oelschig, One Fish Two Fish, Kim Pfaller, Piper Sandler Companies, William and Allison Rhangos, Savannah Marine Terminal, Charles Seyle, Skidaway Audubon, Swanson Family Giving Fund, David and Kelly Thomas, Tollison and Company, LLC Urgent Care of Wilmington Island and Ruth Weimar

CLUTCH

Gail Alling, Amazon Smile, Jamie Anderson, Mary Andrew, Anonymous, Timothy Arnold, Ray Aument and Lori Buch, Kenneth Banks, The Guerry Beam Fund, Mr. and Mrs. Fred S. Bergen, Patricia Blanks, Hannah Bonvechio, Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Butler, Paula Campbell, Jack Carroll and Sue Bark, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Chisholm, Megan Chung, Kathryn Clement, Stephanie M. Clement, Linda Cline and James Carr, Children's Climate Championship, Dorothea Coy, Matthew Cremeans, Elizabeth Croft, Dr. and Mrs. Luke Curtsinger, Andrea DeFelice, Marie Dent, Kate Doran, Franklin Doyle, Kobe Drake, Elizabeth DuBose, Mark Eberle and Heather Jones, Patricia Elizalde, Mr. and Mrs. Darryl Engle, Josephine Ewing, Louise Ewing, Robert Ewing, Laura Farris, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Finkel, Candace and Ilona Fleischer, Jerome Fritts, Mr. and Mrs. Alan Fuller, Donna Garcia, Sally and Jay Gleeson, Manning Goldsmith, Bill Goldstrohm, Nina Gompels, Lisa Goodman, Amanda Groves, Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Hall, Lauren Hallen, Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Harrison, Val Havill and Maureen Cahill, Mr. and Mrs. L. Inman Hodges, Jr., Beverly Hollingsworth, Boyd Holtan, James and Sherry Holtzclaw, Dr. and Mrs. John Howard, Jr., Natalie Hummel, Dr. Jeanne Hungerpiller, Lilly Ibsen, Innovative Veterinary Medicine, Kim and Kevin Iocovozzi, Helen and Kim Iocovozzi, Mr. and Mrs. Terry G. Jackson, Terry and Denise Jackson, Joachim and Jessica Kelly, Joan Khan, Mr. and Mrs. Chris Klein, Klein Law Group, LLC, Marsha Krantz, Doreen Lafferty, Phyllis Lathrope, Carl Lewis, Lynn and Wistar Lewis, Stephanie and James Lindley, Julie Lischer, Margaret G. Livingston, Sally Lockwood, Mr. and Mrs. William Lynch, Dan Martens, Mr. and Mrs. Robert V. Martin, Teresa Maugeri, Janice McGibbon, Mr. and Mrs. James McInerney, Ginger McIntosh, Gwen and Tom McKee, MD, Judy McLachlin, Susanne McMurry, Mermaid Cottages, Rukaan Merritt, Dr. Julia Mikell, Dr. Katy Moretz, Elza Mylona, Network for Good, Jon Newmire, Jacqueline Nielsen, Mr. and Mrs. John Northup, Gwynne Nutter, Melissa Olson, Terri O'Neil, One Hundred Miles, Betsy and Niko Ormond, Lisa Perry, Dr. Darnice Pettigrew, Courtney Reece, Katherine Reed, Mr. and Mrs. Allan Reynolds, Jr., Scott Ringenberg, River Street Candy Kitchen, LLC, Cathy and Larry Schmitz, Ryan Taylor Schneider, Mr. and Mrs. Greg Sewell, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Sheils, JoBeth Shelton, Nancy Albers Shore and Tobin Shore, Mr. And Mrs. Claude Shore, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Philip Solomons, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Southworth, Wendi Sparks, Kelley Sparks, Mr. and Mrs. Steven Stough, Linda Szollosy, Theresa Tattan, Zelda and Sheldon Tenenbaum, Meagan Tsistinas, Barbara Vater and Dale Slosser, Deborah Van Buren, Dr. Hannah Vander Zanden, Mr. and Mrs. Wiley Wasden III, Wassaw Island, LLC, Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Williams, Suzanne Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Witzell, Lynn Wood, Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Yarbrough, Mr. and Mrs. James Youel, Patti and Lee Young, Christina Zarate-Byers

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

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Savannah, GA
Permit #304

