

From: [Mike Murray](#)  
To: [pete\\_benjamin@fws.gov](mailto:pete_benjamin@fws.gov)  
Cc: [Darrell Echols](#); [Cyndy Holda](#); [Thayer Broili](#); [david\\_rabon@fws.gov](mailto:david_rabon@fws.gov)  
Subject: Fw: turtle question  
Date: 06/29/2009 08:09 AM

Pete,

See message below from Michelle Baker Bogardus regarding turtle strandings (in response to your question about whether there is an increase in strandings this year).

Mike Murray  
Superintendent  
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----- Forwarded by Mike Murray/CAHA/NPS on 06/29/2009 07:07 AM -----

**Michelle Baker/CAHA/NPS**

06/28/2009 09:39 AM

To: Mike Murray/CAHA/NPS@NPS  
cc: Britta Muiznieks/CAHA/NPS@NPS  
Subject: RE: turtle question

Mike,

In answer to your question about turtle strandings, I have pulled together some data. Ultimately, we have not been receiving a statistically higher amount of strandings on the Seashore during the summer months. Where we do see a dramatic difference is the number of strandings we are seeing in the winter. In North Carolina there is typically a state-wide peak in May/June (when the turtles are arriving back into the area), and then again in the fall as the turtles are leaving the area. While we did have a lot of strandings this May and June, when you look at Dare and Hyde Counties (not just the Seashore), the numbers are still average.

The winter months are when cold-stunning occurs. This is when turtles that have been trapped in the sound due to colder ocean-water finally succumb to declining sound-side water temps. Over the last two years these months have resulted in almost 200 strandings (which IS highly unusual for this area as well as the state). NCWRC sea turtle biologists Matthew Godfrey and Wendy Cluse are looking into this unusual stranding event.

It is possible that the numbers of stranding have increased in comparison to past years due to effort related factors. Prior to 2007, there was not a sea turtle bio-tech on during the winter months, and areas were not surveyed for sea turtle strandings. In previous years, strandings were documented, but rarely sampled or necropsied. There were also very few reported sound-side strandings, whereas now almost half of our yearly strandings occur on the sound-side (previously we simply weren't looking for them there).

Now our sea turtle stranding program is one of the best in the state. We document, sample, and necropsy every stranding we find. This helps in determining sex ratios, health and disease, human interaction, causes of death, etc. In the winter, we have also succeeded in finding a large portion of our cold-stunned stranding alive, which resulted in them being rehabilitated and released.

Strandings have been noted on the weekly reports in only 2009 and part of 2008. Here are the stranding numbers from 2009 so far:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2006	6	0	0	2	8	15	4	6	10	8	11	5
2007	3	1	2	0	4	10	8	11	2	8	22	19
2008	36	10	6	2	9	8	7	6	6	7	47	21
2009	23	4	8	5	17	13						

I hope this helps! Let me know if I can provide you with any other information. For a state-wide look at stranding numbers and comparisons, it is best to talk to Wendy Cluse, Assistant NCWRC Sea Turtle Biologist, or to look at the [seaturtle.org](http://www.seaturtle.org) website (where we report all of our stranding to the state online):

<http://www.seaturtle.org/strand/summary/index.shtml?program=1>

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Michelle