

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

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June 11, 2008, 4:42 pm

Leatherback Turtle in Texas - First Since 1930s

By [Andrew C. Revkin](#)



Biologists at the Padre Island National Seashore confirmed that a leatherback sea turtle has laid eggs on a Texas beach. Last Friday, a park staffer found these tracks, spanning more than six feet, and several exposed eggs of the endangered species. (Credit: NPS Photo)

UPDATED, 8:00 a.m.: For the first time since the 1930's, federal biologists confirmed that a [leatherback sea turtle](#) has nested on a Texas beach, at the [Padre](#)

[Island National Seashore](#) near Corpus Christi.

Last Friday, staff conducting a beach patrol found turtle tracks and a few exposed eggs. They were thought at first to be those of a green turtle. But the eggs and the width of the tracks, more than six feet across, were later determined by a park biologist, Cynthia Rubio, to be from a leatherback. The giant turtles, endangered around the world, have until now only been known to [nest in four spots in the United States](#) – with about three dozen females a year laying eggs on beaches along the east coast of Florida and slightly larger nesting populations in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. There is evidence of [nesting in North Carolina](#) as well.

An e-mail message circulating around the community of sea turtle conservationists came my way today and staff at Padre Island confirmed the details.

Today also saw a champion in the “[Great Turtle Race](#),” in which students and turtle fans tracked the meanderings of 11 radio-tagged leatherbacks in the Pacific Ocean. The first to reach the International Date Line was a turtle named Saphira II, sponsored by the [Bullis Charter School](#) of Los Altos, Calif.

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7 comments so far...

- 1. June 11th, 2008 5:14 pm Elizabeth Tjader comments (trying to recruit more readers as well)
What conditions does the Leatherback Turtle require to lay eggs? If they were laying eggs in the 1930's in Texas, I wonder why they left in the first place and what has motivated them to return? We know the kingdom of all species, except the contemporary human, is incredibly resourceful with what it has available for survival and

procreation. Have the availability of former nesting sites diminished or are they no longer compatible for food once hatched and predatory conditions once launched to sea?

Now, this will make many readers mad, but does a warming world with ocean currents, acidification changes have anything to do with this? I remember reading in here comparisons to the 1930's in climate temperature (not carbon ppm because it couldn't compare, I'm talking weather temperatures only). Not looking to use it as an arguing tool, just looking for information, period.

I don't expect you to answer these questions, Andy. But there are many in here who post who are much more knowledgeable than I'll ever be. Just curious, aside from wondering if this is a good thing or shouldn't be judged on a value level, it seems like it would be valuable and fun information to have.

As far as the Turtle race, I'm happy for the Bullis Charter School, but happier for the turtles themselves that by today's standards, they're simply alive to make the race.

Elizabeth Tjader

— Posted by Elizabeth Tjader

2. June 11th,
2008
5:27 pm

From Wiki:

On December 7, 2007, Klotzbach's team issued its first extended-range forecast for the 2008 season, predicting above-average activity (13 named storms, 7 hurricanes, 3 of Category 3 or higher). [1] On April 9, 2008, the CSU issued a new forecast, anticipating a well above average hurricane season of 15 named storms, 8 hurricanes, and 4 intense hurricanes. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicted an above average season with 12 to 16 storms, 6 to 9 hurricanes, and 2 to 5 major hurricanes on May 22

HYPOTHESIS TEST ZONE

The presence of that Leatherback at Corpus Cristi, if in fact true will severely challenge the above hurricane forecasts. It is not beyond possibility that there will ZERO major hurricanes this year. As the season progresses I will be able to determine a hurricane forecast based on comparative satellite maps 2008 to 2007.

All around the Atlantic Basin: GO you wastewater managers!

— Posted by fred moore

3. June 11th, 2008 7:14 pm Why now? Just a freak occurrence or anecdotal evidence of something else.
— Posted by robert verdi

4. June 11th, 2008 8:34 pm From Wang Suya
Hope people protect Leatherback Turtle not let them extinct like baiji. People do not eat Leatherback Turtle like do not eat baiji, but ecosystem, foodchain have dangerous to make them extinction. What a sad world!! All is because we have too many people. People are other creatures enemy. Control human population!! Please action.
— Posted by Wang Suya

5. June 11th, 2008 10:30 pm I find this encouraging.. and hope that this leatherback mama was not just thrown off track by any recent storms... (were there any??)
I prefer to see it as quite an encouraging sign and hope that a few more will make their way there..
Sue
Oakland, CA
— Posted by Sue Morgan

6. June 11th, 2008 11:21 pm All living things enjoy the paper thin atmosphere on this earth. All living things are interconnected. All life has value beyond its usefulness to human ends. To nurture and sustain the life of this earth is our most sacred work.
The only legitimate purpose of all governments is to protect the people. To protect the people is to protect the earth. This is a dangerous time. The next harvest is in doubt. Nothing is certain. The abundance of the earth has been consumed. Arctic ice melting, New England cod all but gone, Mediterranean shark populations threatened, Pacific Salmon near collapse, coral reefs dying, one lonely leatherback returns to Padre Island 78 years late.
I cannot speak of the sadness of a rock devoid of life; Moon.

7.June 11th, 2008 11:54 pm To CoolPlanet Post No. 6 above, re “paper thin atmosphere on Earth” and the times we are in:

FYI: Somebody over at peak oil forum said this, about that. Read it and weep:

“Imagine a beautiful oil painting left out in the elements.

Baked in 100 degree days, frozen by cold wet nights, drenched in rain, unattended by the loving hands a curator. Everything looks fine for a while — then checking begins to appear in the smooth surface, mold begins to grow in the cracks and they widen, flakes of paint begin to drift from the canvas. So after a decade or two it is unrecognizable as a work of art. It’s just a rotted old piece of wood and canvas.

Creeping dystopia.

That’s the future.”

[NOTE: The creeping dystopia will come upon us so gradually that virutally nobody will even notice, and it won’t happen overnight. But it has already begun. We won’t be here, fortunately, to witness its final creep.... but I think most people on this board can figure out what is going to happen to this Third Rock from the Sun. When? I would say another 150 years..... so enjoy life now while you are here. As Baba Ram Dass said: Be Here Now. Try it.]

Climate Blogger 749

— Posted by Climate Blogger 749

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By 2050 or so, the world population is expected to reach nine billion, essentially adding two Chinas to the number of people alive today. Those billions will be seeking food, water and other resources on a planet where, scientists say, humans are already shaping climate and the web of life. In Dot Earth, reporter Andrew C. Revkin examines



efforts to balance human affairs with the planet's limits. Supported in part by a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, Mr. Revkin tracks relevant news from suburbia to Siberia, and conducts an interactive exploration of trends and ideas with readers and experts.

On the Dot

Slide Show

A Planet in Flux

Andrew C. Revkin began exploring the human impact on the environment nearly 30 years ago. An early stop was Papeete, Tahiti. This narrated slide show describes his extensive travels.



Your Dot

Dot Earth is meant to be a two-way street, incorporating ideas, anecdotes, links and other contributions from readers, as well as exchanges with scientists, officials, tinkerers and thinkers working to smooth the interactions between people and the home planet. Get in touch.

[E-mail Andrew C. Revkin](#)

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