



Want to help your favorite causes?  
**GET STARTED NOW!**

SEARCH

Switch Follow Tuesday, September 25, 2012

- EARTH MATTERS** ▾
- HEALTH ▾
- LIFESTYLE ▾
- GREEN TECH ▾
- ECO-BIZ & MONEY ▾
- FOOD & DRINK ▾
- YOUR HOME ▾
- FAMILY ▾

MNN.COM > EARTH MATTERS > ANIMALS

## Blood tests show loggerhead turtles' migration patterns

Group of scientists have developed a way to analyze particles in loggerhead turtles' blood to discover where they migrate.

By **OurAmazingPlanet**  
Fri, Sep 21 2012 at 2:11 PM EST

0

Switch



Photo: Shutterstock

Every year, thousands of endangered loggerhead sea turtles crawl ashore at Florida's Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge to lay eggs before dragging their leathery bodies back into the sea. But where they go after their trek isn't well-known.

Scientists can use [GPS devices to record turtles' travels](#), but these geolocator tags are expensive, and may be lost if turtles die. A group of researchers has come up with a less expensive, easier way to [find out where loggerheads voyage](#): testing their blood. A new study, published Sept. 20 in the journal PLoS ONE, found that this technique is just as accurate as using GPS tags.

The technique examines carbon isotopes in the turtles' blood, which come from the food the animals eat. Carbon has different isotopes, or variants, present in all living things, and the exact mix of isotopes varies by region; for example, the mixture in the mid-Atlantic is different from that of the Caribbean. By examining the mixture of carbon isotopes in the turtles' blood, scientists could determine the region to which the turtles migrated.

The study found that some turtles head for the water off the shores of Virginia and Delaware while others go to the Bahamas and the Gulf of Mexico. Some also stay nearby, off Florida's coasts. Previously, scientists thought that the majority of the loggerheads headed south, according to a release from the University of Central Florida.

"Think of these turtles as Florida tourists and snowbirds," Simona Ceriani, a University of Central Florida graduate student and study co-author, said in a statement. "They come and nest and then go back to lots of different places. And while we knew some went back north, we had no idea that this was a popular destination."

### TODAY'S MOST POPULAR

1. [Bicycle commuting: How does your state \(and gender\) compare?](#)
2. [5 life lessons learned by working at McDonald's](#)
3. [10 of the world's biggest unsolved mysteries: Go figure](#)
4. [The 9 nastiest things in your supermarket](#)
5. [9 habits that may do more harm than good](#)
6. [8 alarmingly unhealthy snacks to avoid](#)
7. [7 inventors killed by their inventions: Tragic irony](#)
8. [Why women lose interest in sex](#)
9. [DIY recycled crayons](#)
10. [Just how good is the iPhone 5's battery?](#)

[+ Add this to my site](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

### EDITORS' PICKS

Natural help for dry hair

Looming funding cuts at national parks

A gallery of rainbows

While there are efforts to protect the turtle nests on the beaches, protecting the foraging grounds of this [endangered species](#) is also important, the release noted. Many turtles die because they get tangled in fishing nets or encounter other dangers while out at sea.

"This research helps scientists and conservation managers identify key feeding areas for loggerhead turtles and helps direct policy and regulations that protect sea turtles in these specific areas," said Daniel R. Evans, a researcher at the Sea Turtle Conservancy and study co-author, in a statement.

The Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge is home to the second-largest population of loggerheads in the world and to about one of every four nests those turtles lay in the United States. While populations of other turtles have increased in the refuge, loggerhead numbers there have declined for unknown reasons.

Follow [OurAmazingPlanet](#) on [Twitter @OAPlanet](#). We're also on [Facebook](#) and [Google+](#).

**Related on OurAmazingPlanet:**

- [Tagging and Tracking Sea Turtles](#)
- [Video: Humans Hit the Oceans Hard](#)
- [Quest for Survival: Incredible Animal Migrations](#)

*This story was originally written for OurAmazingPlanet and is reprinted with permission here. Copyright 2012 OurAmazingPlanet, a TechMediaNetwork company.*

**You might also like:**



5 mind-bending facts about dreams



Man looks for missing cat, finds 'UFO' instead



NASA video crushes 2012 Mayan apocalypse myth



9 habits that may do more harm than good



Jaw-dropping video: iPad survives fall from outer space



Tips for greening your skin and hair care regimen



Why do we fear the dentist?



Fossil forest may find second life in warming Arctic

**Related Topics:** [Marine Life](#)



**Join the conversation**

View: **All (0)**

[Follow this conversation](#)

[Add your comment](#)

**ADD YOUR COMMENT**

Sign in with one of these accounts or just add your comment below.



Log in or create an account

Enter your name

Enter your comments



**NEWSLETTER**

**Mother Nature. Delivered**

Enter email address

**GO**

Daily

Weekly

WHAT'S THIS?

**HAPPENING NOW**

**TOP MEMBERS**

[parks photography](#)  
40 minutes ago



**sarahbeth46** is now a Parakeet. 40 minutes ago



**7LeagueBoots** read Why you should not plant bamboo in your yard | MNN - Mother Nature Network. 43 minutes ago



**Tarrant** read U.S. death row inmate -- too obese for execution?. 1 hour ago



**bcohen** viewed At the end of the rainbow. 1 hour ago



[bcohen](#) read Welcome to MNN!

[How do I earn points?](#)

ADVERTISEMENT