

## **CROW Case of the Week: Kemps Ridley Sea Turtle**

by Brian Johnson

The fishing pier at Fort Myers Beach has been the scene of a number of sea turtle accidents in recent weeks.

On July 7 Fort Myers Beach volunteer Kay DeHayes was called to the pier to pick up a Kemps Ridley Sea Turtle who had been caught by a fisherperson and reeled in. CROW staff had explained, over the phone, the art of gently reeling in a turtle, said Veterinarian Dr. Amber McNamara.



DeHayes had no sooner headed off for Sanibel with the turtle in a cooler when another call came in about a hooked sea turtle. So she turned around and went back to the pier. Unfortunately, when she arrived she learned the fisherperson had cut the line and the sea turtle had vanished; CROW urges fisherpersons never to cut the line as it can very easily lead to the turtle's death -- they ask that all sea turtles be taken in to CROW so staff can make sure they have not swallowed a hook.

"The Kemps Ridley was pretty spunky when she arrived," said Dr. Amber. "You could see the hook buried in her tongue. She

was flapping her flippers when we picked her up."

They gave the 2.1-kilogram marine creature pain medication and valium, and planned for surgery later in the afternoon. Because it would be such a short procedure, they decided not to put her under full anesthesia, which always carries the risk of complications.

With the turtle under moderate sedation, and her jaw propped open by a speculum, Dr. Amber reached into her mouth and pressed the hook further in so she could cut off the barb. The hook had completely pierced her tongue and the curved tip was visible below the turtle's tongue.

"It had gone all the way through and was sitting on the floor of her mouth," said Dr. Amber.

Within ten minutes, Dr. Amber managed to clip off the barb and slip the hook back through her tongue, finally ridding it from the Kemps Ridley's body.

"We took a radiograph afterwards to make sure there was not another hook in her stomach, and were happy to find it clear," said Dr. Amber. "We put in her a plastic tub for the night with a little bit of water at the bottom to hydrate and soothe her. She rested and was quiet all the next day."

On Day 3 staff carried her down to the salt water tank, where she put on an impressive aquatic show. "She zipped around in the tank, swimming up and down," said Dr. Amber. "We sent her home that day. Getting her back into her natural environment with the healing salt water of the Gulf was the best thing we could do for her. Her tongue should heal pretty quickly."

**If you would like to contribute to CROW in its extraordinary mission, please send your check to:**

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