

**CROW Case of the Week: Sea Turtles**  
by Brian Johnson



If you think it is cold walking around Periwinkle Way, try swimming in the Gulf of Mexico.

The cold wave that has frosted citrus trees across Florida and chilled residents has given sea turtles a jolt.

As of press time, CROW had received six sea turtles during a span of a few days from January 6-11. Most had been found floating in the water offshore, unable to paddle, dive or protect themselves.

A hawksbill that arrived on Monday registered a temperature of 51 degrees.

"The sea turtles have been stunned by the cold," said Dr. PJ Deitschel. "This is not a common occurrence this far south."

The northern blast put the heaters in the 900-gallon sea turtle tanks out of commission at some point Saturday night, forcing staff to haul two of their turtles back inside the clinic, where they still remain (as of Tuesday). The heaters are up and working again but staff must monitor each turtle's condition and weather forecasts to determine when they can go outside. "We're taking it one day at a time," she said.



CROW received a Kemp's Ridley on November 8 of last year suffering from toxicosis. The turtle had made a nice recovery and was ready for release when the cold front swept into Southwest Florida.

On January 6 the Sanibel Police brought in a 30-pound Green Sea Turtle discovered floating in the Gulf. The following day Captain Steve Maddux from Tarpon Bay Explorers rescued a seven-pound Kemp's Ridley. A steady stream of phone calls regarding lethargic sea turtles began to pour into the clinic.

Tarpon Bay Explorers pulled a 20-pound Green from the water on January 10th, and the next day SCCF staff and volunteers delivered a 30-pound Hawksbill from Woodring Point, a 60-pound Green from a City dock, and another 30 pound Green from Tarpon Bay.

"You need to warm them up slowly," said Dr. PJ. "There is not a lot of research about how to warm up reptiles, but we use the existing guidelines and attempt to bring their temperature up five degrees per day."



The turtles are stabilized and the outlook is good for all of them. They are currently housed in the Reptile Room and the ICU and spend much of their day in a shallow bathtub or a plastic tub.

Out of danger now, they should be ready for release as Florida becomes Florida again.

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

Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Inc.  
P.O. Box 150. Sanibel, FL 33957  
(239) 395-0050

For additional questions E-mail: [crowdvlpmnt@aol.com](mailto:crowdvlpmnt@aol.com)