



Transcript

[Sea Turtles: Tour de Turtles](#)

David Godfrey: So back in the day, we were putting little flipper tags on turtles and waiting for people to find those tags either because a turtle's stranded somewhere dead or was harvested somewhere. People could return that tag, and we would learn where those animals had migrated to. Now we can use an incredible technology, satellite transmitters. These are very light. They're essentially glued to the back of a turtle's shell. Every time the turtle surfaces to breathe, it sends a signal to an orbiting satellite. That data is e-mailed to us on a constant basis, and we can plot in real time where these turtles are going.

As a research mechanism, it's incredibly powerful. We're learning great deals about not only their migration, but their behavior when they're at sea, what habitats they're using along coastlines or in intercoastal waterways, what reefs are particularly important to certain species. We learned along the way also that people are just as fascinated as we are to see where these turtles are going, so we built an education program around this ability to monitor the turtles. We call it the Tour de Turtles. People can log on to tourdeturtles.org every summer and watch 15 turtles that are released from different sites around the Atlantic and Caribbean, see where they're going, cheer on your favorite turtle, which one's going to travel the furthest over the course of the race.

In that way, we're raising awareness about these animals, getting people personally involved in individual turtles and caring about them and their well-being. Every one of our turtles we develop a personality for. Each of them is sort of racing to raise awareness about a particular cause.

This is Tinkerbell. Not surprisingly, Tinkerbell was sponsored by Disney, so Disney has the Vero Beach Resort. We went down there and released this turtle nearby the resort so all their guests could come out and see the turtle head out to sea. This particular turtle was released actually here at Melbourne. It started to go north towards Jacksonville, came south again, and then went all the way up the coast relatively close to Jacksonville and then all the way back down into the Bahamas.

It took up residency in this area, and pretty much stopped its migration there. So we're reasonably certain that this particular turtle, which is a loggerhead, lives year round in this little stretch of habitat in the Bahamas and will spend all of its time in that general vicinity until it's ready to migrate back to Florida to nest again. So the information we're learning about their travels is incredibly important to conservation, and the fact that people can go to this site for free and watch along and see where these turtles are going is a powerful educational tool for us in getting people engaged.

Classrooms all over the country and Florida follow the event. They're learning about the animals and becoming engaged in protecting them, so it's a modern twist on an old technique of trying to monitor where they go when they leave the nesting beach.

Lucas Meers: That's really cool.

David Godfrey: We don't know how long they live. That's always a question that kids want to know because it's a big question in "Finding Nemo." Everyone wants to know, "How long can a turtle live, Dude?"