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## Take a longer view on sea turtle progress

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In response to the editorial "Efforts to help turtles pay off in nest numbers," this is indeed good news after 30-plus years of effort, as noted.

But to say this is a "record-breaking year" seems to be a case of shifting baselines, a concept developed by Dr. Daniel Pauly (University of British Columbia) where there is a loss of perception of change that occurs when each generation redefines what is "natural" or "historic."

Take for example, the number of nests on Fripp Island: 59 nests so far this year compared with 25 last year. While staying at Fripp last month, I read a copy of "Fripp Island: A History" by Page Putnam Miller, published in 2006. On page 109, it states, "In 1978, the turtle patrol identified 188 nests on Fripp. The following year, Norine Smoak took over the patrol and reported 150 nests."

The current "generation" sees 59 nests as a bonanza, while the previous "generation" would probably be shocked at the decline.

The beaches of Beaufort County have physically changed with development, erosion and beach renourishment. Some are better for nesting, some not. While nest numbers for 2011 are record-breaking compared with previous years, let's keep shifting baselines in mind when evaluating trends.

Recent nesting seasons appear to portend good things for the loggerhead population, but we should recognize it is just a beginning and full recovery to historic numbers is still a future hope.

Sally R. Murphy

Sheldon

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