



Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary has been tracking the number of cold-stunned sea turtles on Cape Cod since 1979. This valuable dataset gives us a glimpse into juvenile sea turtle population changes and behavior over several decades. Although much is still unclear about sea turtle behavior, what is clear is that cold-stun stranding numbers are increasing. This increase is likely due to a combination of successful conservation efforts on the nesting beaches in Mexico and Texas and changes in ocean temperatures (particularly the fast-warming Gulf of Maine), and possibly currents, driven by climate change.

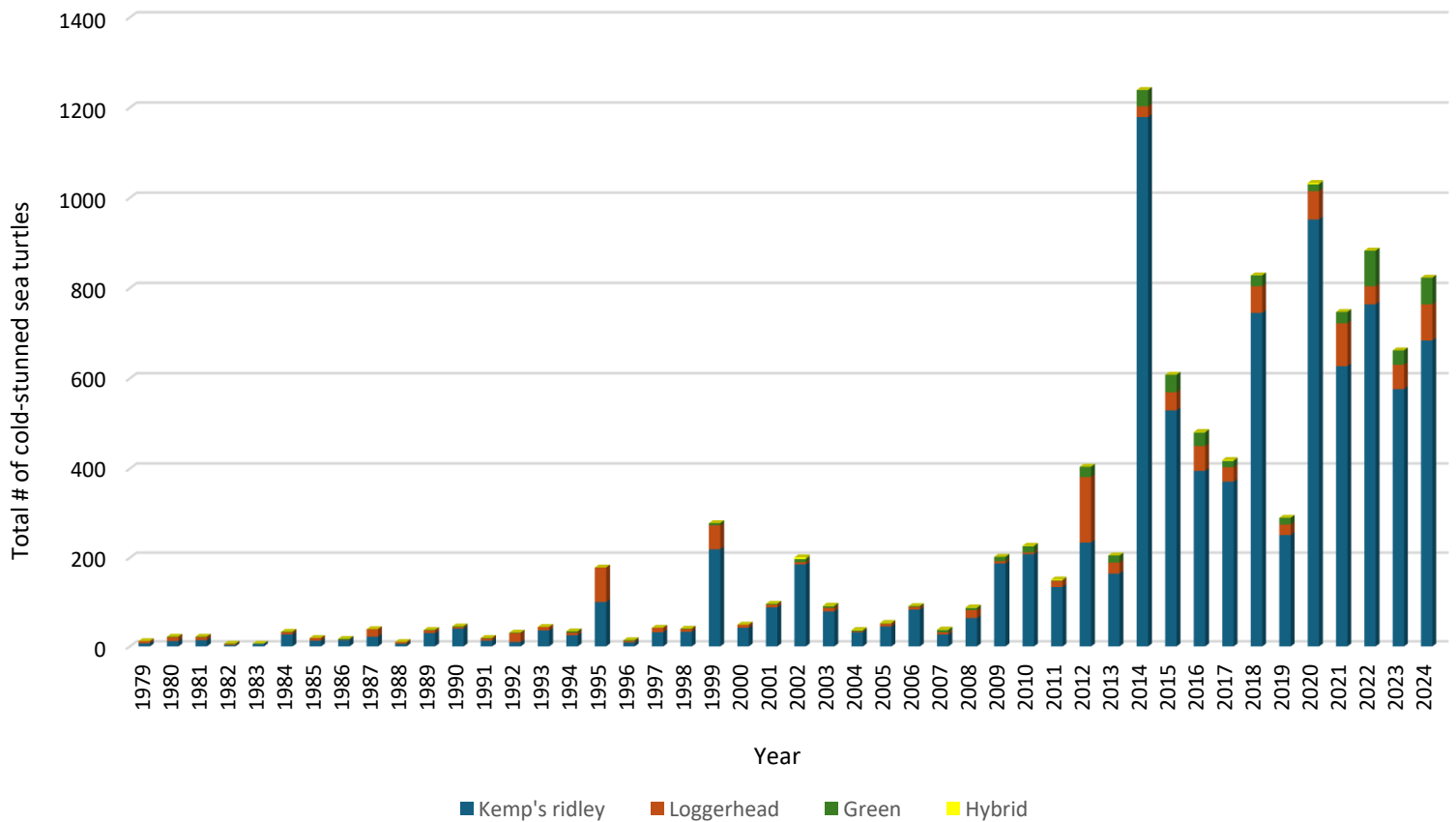


Figure 1. Total count and species breakdown of sea turtle strandings since the start of the cold-stun program in 1979. 2014 still holds the record number of sea turtles, with 1,241 strandings over a period of two months. Since the start of the program, over 10,000 cold-stunned turtles have stranded in Massachusetts.

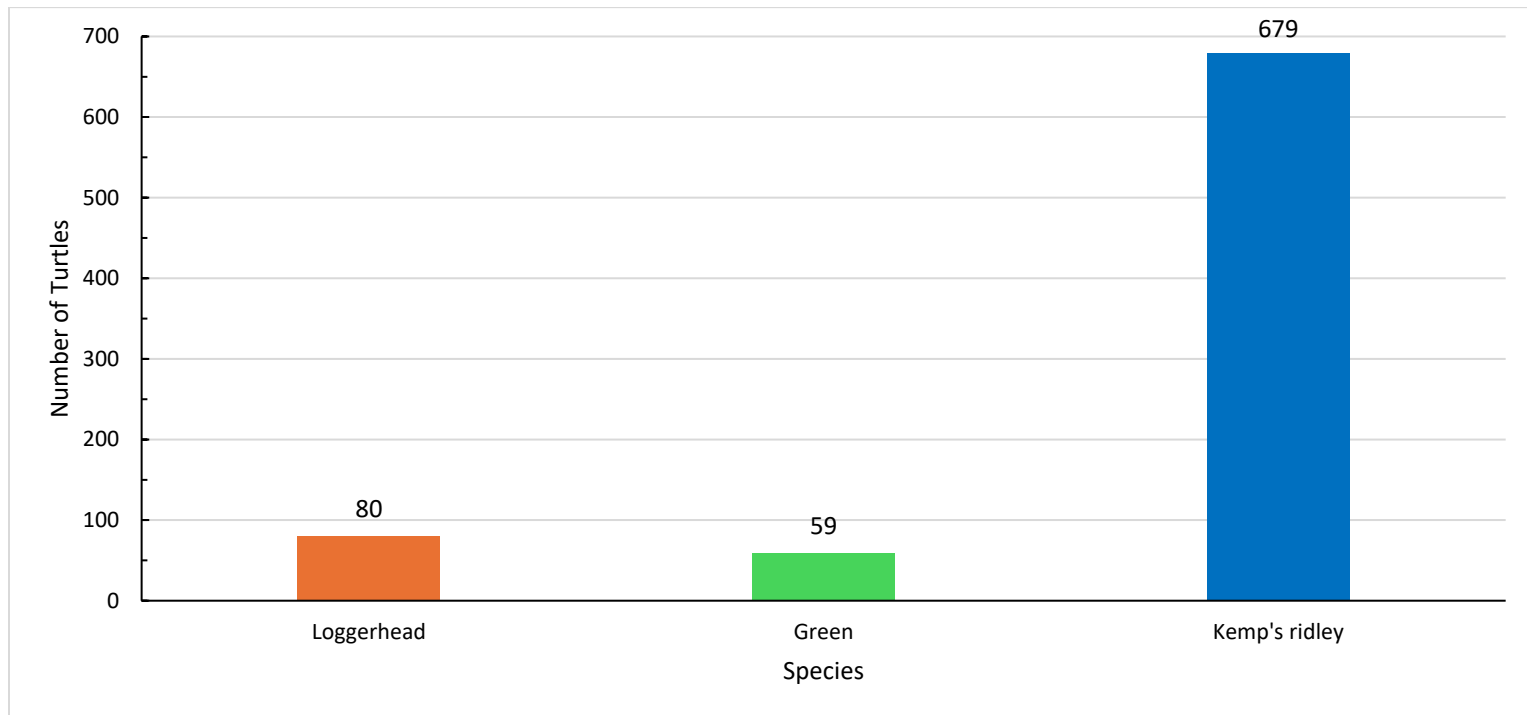


Figure 2. **Species breakdown for the 2024 season.** Kemp's ridleys cold-stun and strand most frequently on Cape Cod beaches, making up 83% of the strandings this season. Loggerhead Sea Turtles made up nearly 10% of the total strandings and Green Sea Turtles made up 7%.

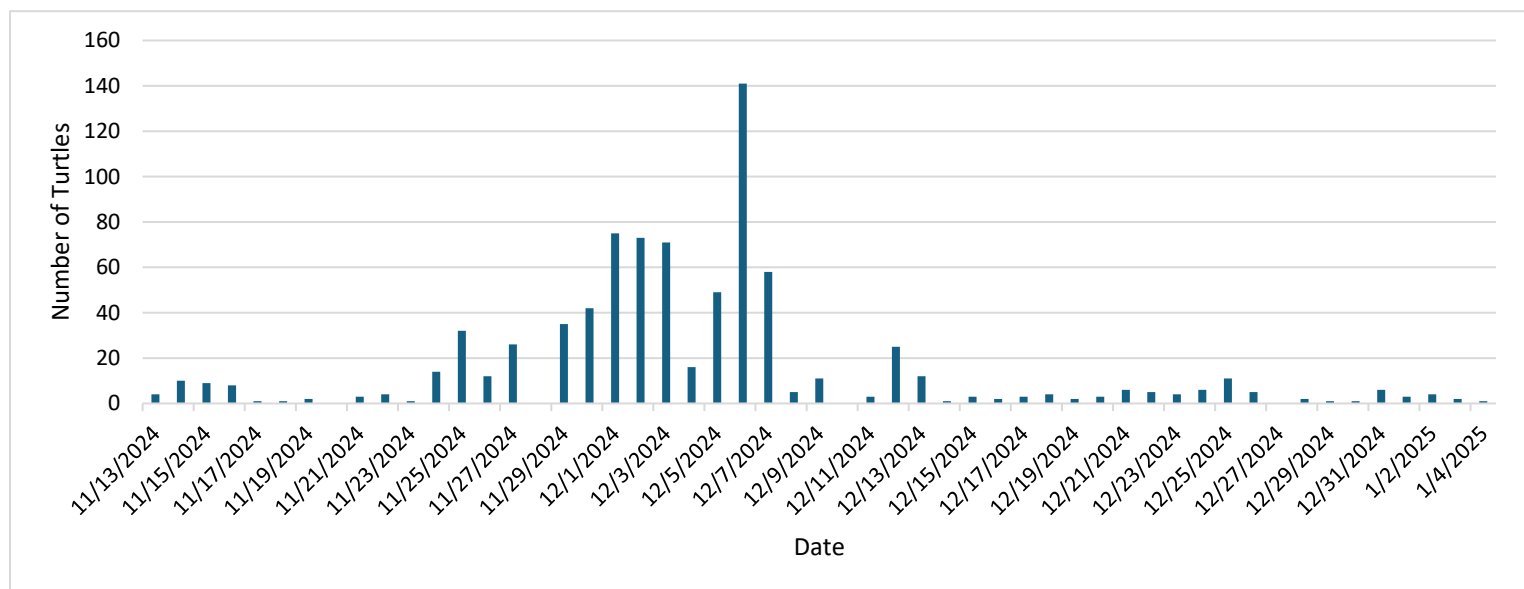


Figure 3. **Number of cold-stunned sea turtles stranded per day during the 2024 season.** The busiest stranding day was on December 6 when 141 turtles washed in (compared to last season's busiest stranding day of 88 turtles). This stranding day was the largest since 2014!

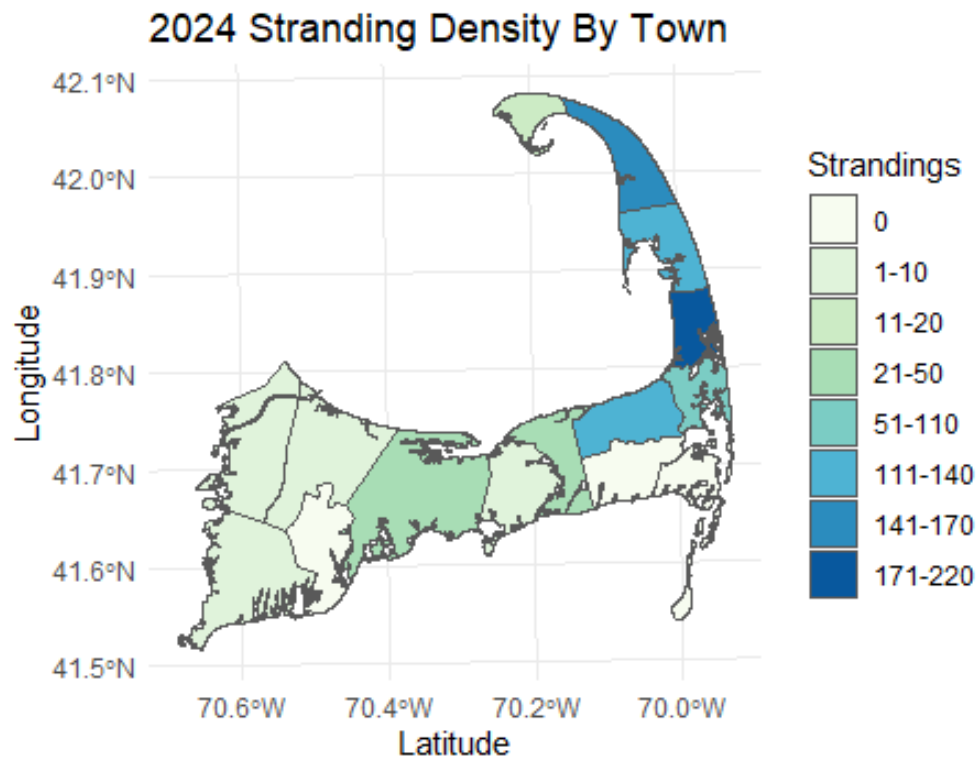


Figure 4. **Density of cold-stunned sea turtles on Cape Cod by town during the 2024 season.** This map shows the distribution of cold-stunned turtles recovered. Darker colors indicate a higher number of turtles. Strandings occur on Cape Cod Bay beaches. This map does not include off-Cape strandings.