

Jekyll Island

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Terrapin Turtles Get Safe Havens Along the Jekyll Island Causeway

Elevated nesting mounds will hopefully reduce the number of terrapin turtles injured or killed along the Jekyll Island Causeway.

Jekyll Island, GA – May 15, 2009 – Thanks to the Georgia Sea Turtle Center, the University of Georgia, and the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, diamondback terrapins now have safe havens along the Jekyll Island Causeway. Artificial nest mounds with raccoon proof cages have been placed at strategic points to hopefully reduce the number of terrapins crossing the road.

“Every year 200-300 terrapins are hit by cars while trying to cross the causeway,” said Dr. Terry Norton, Director and Veterinarian for the Georgia Sea Turtle Center “The turtles are looking for elevated ground to nest. Since the roadways are elevated above the marshlands around them, terrapins often believe them to be suitable nesting areas.”

The mounds were built to be safe elevated nesting areas approximately 30 ft back from the edge of the causeway to thereby decrease the number of times the terrapins try to cross the road. In addition, cages on top of the mounds will reduce the threat of predation. Terrapins can get in and out of the cages through small spaces at the bottom, but predators such as raccoons can not.

The work, although in its preliminary stages, is backed by similar projects in the Northeast for wood turtles. The concept is still in a research stage, and the Georgia Sea Turtle Center and its collaborators will examine the results at the end of the nesting season to see how much of difference the project made. “We are basically testing it out,” said Norton. “So it is a research project with conservation implications.”

About the Georgia Sea Turtle Center

The Georgia Sea Turtle Center on Jekyll Island is an operating department of the Jekyll Island Authority and receives financial contributions through the Jekyll Island Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Georgia Sea Turtle Center officially opened June 2007 in Jekyll Island, Ga.'s National Historic Landmark District on the site of the original 1903 Power Plant building, much of which has been preserved and incorporated into the new facilities. The ambitious, \$3 million center – offering an outstanding museum-style learning experience and a state-of-the-art rehabilitation center and veterinary clinic, is the first of its kind in Georgia and is the world's leading sea turtle rehabilitation, research and education facility. For more information about the Georgia Sea Turtle Center and its programs, visit www.georgiaseaturtlecenter.org

About Jekyll Island

Jekyll Island is a barrier island on Georgia's coast – midway between Jacksonville, Fla. And Savannah, Ga.

Accessible by car just minutes from I-95, Jekyll Island offers a variety of amenities, including 10 miles of beach, four golf courses, a 250-acre Historic Landmark District, water park, tennis center, an array of lodging options including hotels, cottages and campgrounds. Owned by the State of Georgia, and managed by the Jekyll Island State Park Authority, Jekyll Island has had development limited to just 35 percent of its available land area. This unique aspect of Jekyll Island serves to preserve the critical barrier island ecosystem, and provide guests with a unique escape from the crowds and complications of other beach resort destinations. The Jekyll Island Foundation is a public 501 (c) 3 organization which operates exclusively for charitable and educational purposes to support the work of the Jekyll Island Authority by assisting in the preservation, conservation and appreciation of Jekyll Island. Please visit www.jekyllisland.com for more information or call 1-877-4JEKYLL.