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### Some captured turtles need a little TLC

**Byline:** *Suzanne Wentley staff writer*

**Source:**

OFF BARRACUDA KEY -- Sea turtles captured by the scientists with **Inwater Research Group** aren't always healthy. After hours on the water, they saw a small loggerhead sea turtle, which at first seemed to be eating sea grass and unaware of the scientists positioning their boat close enough to capture it.

But once the turtle was out of the water, it was clear something wasn't right.

A fresh wound, possibly caused by a boat strike, sunk deep in the back of its neck. Barnacles and algae were growing on its shell -- proof it wasn't moving around like healthy turtles -- and the turtle was extremely underweight.

Instead of gathering data on the creature, the **research** scientists called fellow biologists at the Turtle Hospital in Marathon.

"He's been through enough already," said Michael Bresette, the **group's** president. "We're all in agreement he's going to rehab."

Each trip the biologists make to count and identify species and habitat in the Key West National Wildlife Refuge, they also discover a handful of sick turtles who benefit from the training and care the turtle experts bring to the day of **research**.

With the loggerhead spending the day under a wet towel in the shade of the boat's Bimini top, the scientists met hospital volunteers back at the dock.

Ryan Butts, an intern at the Turtle Hospital, helped carry the turtle into a baby pool stuffed in the back of a van.

The loggerhead, which was wheezing and lethargic, would have likely fallen victim to a shark or other predator if it remained in the sea, he said.

In Marathon, hospital staff will clean its shell of parasites and barnacles, as well as take X-rays and blood for a veterinarian examine, Butts said.

"We just try to relax them," he said. "I've seen a lot worse than that pull through."

**Illustration:**

**Caption:**Color photo: A sick loggerhead turtle is loaded into the back of a van before being transported to the Turtle Hospital in Marathon.

**Chart:**

