



Wired turtle sound idea but was carried too far

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Aw, c'mon, a 212-pound sea turtle in Kansas?

Well, that's the way it looked to scientists who attached a radio transmitter to the shell of a loggerhead turtle named Dianne last fall in the Gulf of Mexico. They were mystified by signals that indicated she had moved inland to set up residence.

So the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration researchers investigated. They followed the satellite-relayed signals and found their \$5,000 radio holding open the door of a fisherman's house in Galena, Kan.

It seems the turtle shed the floating transmitter somewhere off Texas.

Two fishermen, Gary Huffman and Fred Vaughn, said they found the 7-pound cylinder on a beach 30 miles west of Port Arthur, Texas. And Huffman took it home, where he used it for a doorstop.

Signals from the transmitter were beamed at four-day inter-

vals to NASA's nimbus weather satellite and relayed to the Goddard Spaceflight Center outside Washington. The information then went to the National Marine Fisheries Service laboratory in Galveston.

The NOAA scientists followed Dianne as she moved south around the mouth of the Mississippi River, west offshore from Louisiana into Texas and south to an area in the gulf off Brownsville, Texas.

The researchers chose a loggerhead, a threatened species, for the experiment because of its size and availability. The success of the project prompted the bugging of a smaller Kemp Ridley turtle off a Mexican beach with a similar transmitter in June. Its signals indicate it has not moved much.

Scientists are following the movements of the turtles to identify their feeding, nesting and mating areas.