

## **Sea Turtle Nesting Season Notice – March 1, 2023 – October 31, 2023**

Turtle nesting season in Florida begins on March 1<sup>st</sup> and lasts through October 31<sup>st</sup>. Almost 90% of sea turtle nesting in the United States occurs on Florida's beaches. As such, it is important that residents and visitors do their best to ensure sea turtles have a successful nesting season.

Under the Federal Endangered Species Act and the Florida Marine Protection Act (s. 379.2431, Florida Statutes.)

[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0300-0399/0379/Sections/0379.2431.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0300-0399/0379/Sections/0379.2431.html), it is unlawful to touch or disturb nesting sea turtles and their hatchlings or nests. The Town also regulates matters related to sea turtle nesting under Article IV – Sea Turtles, Code of Ordinances. [https://library.municode.com/fl/indian\\_river\\_shores/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TITIXGERE\\_CH91BE\\_ARTIVSETU](https://library.municode.com/fl/indian_river_shores/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TITIXGERE_CH91BE_ARTIVSETU)

**Use sea turtle-friendly lights or no lights at all!** In order to prevent nesting and hatchling turtles from wandering off track, your beachfront property should use sea turtle friendly lighting. You can also help by closing drapes and blinds, and shield or turn off outdoor lights that are visible on the beach. Sea turtle hatchlings can become easily disoriented by bright lights on the coast from hotels and beachfront properties. By following these steps, you can encourage females to nest and lead hatchlings in the right direction, the ocean! For more information see the link for Sea Turtles and Lights. <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/sea-turtle/lighting/>

**Knock down sandcastles and fill in holes!** Although this is every kid's nightmare, it's important to knock your sandcastle over and flatten out the sand at the end of the day. Additionally, filling in all holes made in the sand can avoid the entrapment of hatchlings while on their way to the water. Even the nesting mothers can become stuck in these holes when crawling up the beach to nest. Furthermore, remove all beach accessories, such as tents, umbrellas, toys, and chairs. These can prevent obstacles for both the mother and the hatchlings.

**Avoid the attraction of unwanted pests.** Raccoon, foxes, coyotes and other types of animals all have one thing in common: they love our leftovers. Raccoons destroy thousands of sea turtle eggs each year and are one of the greatest causes of sea turtle mortality on Florida's beaches. Leaving food outside for neighborhood dogs and cats also attracts raccoons. You can help deter these animals from destroying sea turtle eggs by cleaning up food and additional trash after a day at the beach.

**Program the phone number for your area's wildlife stranding hotline into your phone** so you'll be prepared if you happen to encounter a dead, sick, stranded or injured sea turtle. It is also important to report any harassment of sea turtles or disturbance of nests. In Florida, you can call FWC Wildlife Alert Number at 1-888-404-3922 or visit their website at [www.myfwc.com](http://www.myfwc.com).

**Don't interfere with the nesting or hatching process.** It's important to allow hatchlings to crawl to the water on their own. Many scientists believe the journey from nest to water allows them to imprint on their own beach. Picking up hatchlings may interfere with this process. It is also illegal to touch sea turtles under both federal and state laws.

**Don't place beach furniture too close to a marked nest.** If possible, place furniture at least 5 feet away. Furniture can mislead turtles during the hatching process and also entrap them. Also make sure to put away your beach furniture at the end of the day as they become a dangerous obstacle for a nesting turtles.

**Don't use fireworks on the beach.** Although this can be tempting with 4<sup>th</sup> of July right around the corner, think about how the loud noises and bright lights can disturb nesting females. Instead, many local organizations hold inland fireworks displays for your enjoyment. Bonfires on the beach also pose a danger to sea turtles.

Some other reminders:

- Don't disturb a turtle that is crawling to or from the ocean or laying eggs. Watch from a distance of at least 30 feet.
- Do not disturb markers or protective screening over turtle nests. These nests are being studied and protected.
- Avoid walking on the beach dunes.
- Don't litter. Cigarette butts, fishing line and other trash can harm the animals and birds along the beach.