

It Is That Time of Year Again – Sea Turtle Nesting Season!

From May through October, during the height of tourist season, an average of 775 sea turtles nests are dug by nesting female sea turtles on the shores of North Carolina. All sea turtles that nest in the U.S. are either listed as threatened or endangered and there are penalties for killing, harassing or harming these turtles.



The most common sea turtle nesting on the shores of North Carolina is the Loggerhead which is listed as threatened. Other sea turtles that have nested in North Carolina are the green (Threatened), leatherback (Endangered), and Kemp's ridley (Endangered). The hawksbill (Endangered) is found offshore in North Carolina, but has never nested here. The olive ridley (Endangered) is the only sea turtle that has not been spotted in water of the North Carolina coast. It prefers the Gulf Coast shores area.

A female sea turtle lays an average of 100 eggs in each nest. If the nest is left undisturbed, the eggs will hatch on an average within 60 days and the hatchlings will race to the sea before they become snacks for hungry predators. Wildlife is not the only threat to the hatchlings. Beach visitors can also disturb nests and nesting sea turtles.

To see sea turtles up close and to learn more about them you can visit one of North Carolina's aquariums at Pine Knoll Shores (252) 247-4003, Roanoke Island (252) 473-3493 and Fort Fisher (910) 458-7468. Also, the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center on Topsail Island has limited hours for visitation. Go to <http://www.seaturtlehospital.org> to learn more about the center.

To help keep sea turtles safe, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission are releasing the following guidelines:

How can you help protect sea turtles?

- ☛ Minimize beachfront lighting. Close blinds and draperies in oceanfront rooms and turnoff outdoor lighting.
- ☛ Remove all recreational equipment from the beach when not in use. This includes: chairs, umbrellas, towels, beach toys, etc.
- ☛ Do not construct beach fires during the nesting season. The hatchlings could become disoriented and crawl toward the fire.
- ☛ Refrain from using flashlights on the beach at night.
- ☛ Do not take flash photography of a nesting sea turtle or hatchling.
- ☛ Remove all of your trash from the beach -This includes cigarette butts.
- ☛ Do not trample beach vegetation.
- ☛ If you dig a hole in the sand fill it in before you leave the beach for the day.
- ☛ When boating stay in the channels and avoid seagrass beds. Do not anchor your boat in a seagrass bed
- ☛ Leave the tracks left by turtles undisturbed.
- ☛ Do not disturb nest markers. Most N.C. beaches have volunteer programs that protect and monitor sea turtle nests.
- ☛ Report unmarked nests, hurt or dead sea turtles to the local police or sea turtle volunteer organization.



For further information visit our websites at:

www.ncwildlife.org , www.nps.gov/cal or <http://nc-es.fws.gov>