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SEA TURTLE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Giving Sea Turtles Chance to Survive and Thrive

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When people think of the Space Coast, the main images and landmarks that are commonly seen in the depicting art and that seem to automatically come to mind include the rocket ships at the Kennedy Space Center, the lush and tropical hibiscus flowers and coconut palm trees, and the beautiful sea turtles that inhabit in the waves off its coast and make their nests in the sands of its pristine beaches.



THE UNIQUE LOCATION of Brevard County offers an important natural habitat for marine turtles, namely the loggerhead, leatherback and green sea turtle species as the area is surrounded by Atlantic beaches and the Indian River Lagoon System. The county provides the sea turtles ideal foraging and nesting sites, and back in 1984, a group of volunteers decided they needed to take action to save and protect the turtles and their nests, and help sick sea turtles that come to shore that depend on the Space Coast for survival and continuance of the species.

A SEA OF EDUCATION FOR THE PUBLIC

After the concerned citizens formed their grass-roots organization in Brevard, two years later they incorporated a registered not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 organization, the Sea Turtle Preservation Society (STPS). The simple mission statement: "Helping Sea Turtles Survive." The organization relies completely on volunteers, memberships and donations from the public to continue their research and programs, which educate for the community and general public about sea turtles and the ways they can protect the population in the area. The volunteers of STPS also help rescue and nurture sick and injured sea turtles that arrive on the beaches throughout the year, and especially during the nesting season, which runs from the beginning of March to the end of October.



Throughout the years, the STPS have educated thousands of people on marine turtles through their various projects. These include the Turtle Krawl 5k, public

presentations, exhibits, events, beach cleanups, and turtle watches. Turtle Walks, Stranding and Salvage Network and Nest Surveys held by Primary Permit Holders, all performed under guidelines set by the Bureau of Imperiled Species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

STPS' GOALS

STPS' goal is to prevent decline in the sea turtle population through the following :

- Reducing disturbances and harassment of nesting sea turtles by public education about the hazards of nighttime beach activities, habitat destruction, and beach lighting
- Increasing the hatchling survival rate by educating the public about the impact of lighting, beach debris, habitat destruction, and marine pollution
- Supporting the Archie Carr Wildlife Refuge Fund
- Rehabilitating hatchling sea turtles, and when required, transporting injured sea turtles to rehabilitation facilities for eventual release back into their natural environment
- Contributing data to the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network
- Participating in Keep Brevard Beautiful, Adopt-A-Beach program by performing monthly beach cleanup activities
- Conducting nest survey projects

THE ARCHIE CARR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Before the STPS was developed, the late Dr. Archie Carr, Jr. brought attention to the public about the declining sea turtle population and made extraordinary contributions to sea turtle conservation. In his honor, in 1991 the Archie Carr

National Wildlife Refuge (ACNWR) was established to protect the habitats of the beaches within it, which run 20.5 miles long. It is also located on a barrier island with limited population and traffic-making it a substantial area for nesting. In fact, the number of nests in this area represent 25-35 percent of all loggerhead and green sea turtle nesting in the United States. The Space

Coast also serves as the most significant nesting area for green sea turtle nesting in North America and

loggerhead sea turtles in the Western Hemisphere, and serves as a great nesting region to one of the world's rarest and largest sea turtles – the leatherback- though in smaller numbers.

Both the Sea Turtle Preservation Society and the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge assist in the survival of the 15,000 to 20,000 sea turtle nests found on the Space Coast each year. These nests amount to approximately 1.5 to 2 million hatchlings. With a hatchling survival rate to reproductive age (about 25 years) being only 1 in every 1,000, these organizations are imperative to sea turtle conservation – making sure their population remains, and making sure they not only survive, but thrive.