

State wildlife officials say not to gather exposed sea turtle eggs after Tropical Storm Isaias

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When the surf settles, Tropical Storm Isaias could unearth untold numbers of endangered sea turtle eggs and hatchlings during a peak time for turtle nesting.

But Florida wildlife officials urge those who come across exposed turtle eggs or stranded baby turtles to not collect them. It's better, they say, to call those trained and permitted in how to deal with sea turtle eggs and hatchlings, or in most cases to just let nature take its course.

Federal and state laws protect sea turtles and forbid taking, possessing, disturbing, mutilating, destroying, selling and harassing all types of sea turtles, their nests and their eggs.



Some researchers and turtle advocacy groups obtain special permits to handle turtle eggs and to rehabilitate stranded turtles.

Beachgoers aren't supposed to touch sea turtles, including recent hatchlings trying to reach the ocean in after storms.

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The five species of sea turtle that nest in Florida have evolved to live with storms, biologists say, and is the reason they lay multiple nests per year.

Instead of gathering baby turtles or their eggs, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-888-404-3922 or *FWC from your cell phone.



Even better in Brevard County, call the local nonprofit Sea Turtle Preservation Society's emergency hotline at 321-206-0646 if you find a sea turtle in need.

"This year's sea turtle nesting season is already a success, and the storm season will not change that fact," STPS posted on [its website](#). "Thousands of nests already have successfully emerged and those hatchlings are now in the ocean; after the storm, mama turtles will continue to nest on our beaches as they complete their nesting season."

The STPS urges people to stay off the beaches when conditions are dangerous and to comply with all mandatory beach closures.

The group also urges people to leave any exposed eggs and nests on the beach.

"You may cover an exposed nest with sand, but do not attempt to salvage eggs or move them to another site," the STPS website says. "Again, please do not collect eggs. Call the STPS hotline at 321-206-0646 for any concerns."

Beachgoers also should not search the seaweed wrack line for hatchling and posthatchling or washed-back turtles," the group says. STPS and other groups have authorized and trained individuals who will survey the beaches as needed.



Sea turtles have been on earth for more than 110 million years and were swimming in the oceans when dinosaurs were still around, STPS notes. "To have survived this long, sea turtles and their nesting strategies must be well adapted to hurricanes and their effects."

A nesting loggerhead turtle will typically nest three to six times each nesting season, with each effort a few weeks apart, biologists say, choosing different spans of beach and different placements on the beach.

"Wildlife has specific mechanisms to defend themselves against different types of weather, generally without the assistance of people," the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said in a prepared statement. "The best

way that people can stay safe and help wildlife is to be alert and give wildlife their space."

Along the Florida coast, sea turtles annually make between 40,000 and 84,000 nests, according to FWC.

What to do if you find baby sea turtles or eggs: If you encounter sea turtles or other wildlife that appears to be injured, call the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (#FWC or *FWC on a cell phone) or send a text or email to Tip@MyFWC.com.

Additionally, you can report injured wildlife to local licensed wildlife rehabilitators. They are listed at <http://myfwc.com/conservation/you-protect/assist-nuisance-wildlife/wildlife-rehabbers/>

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