

## Tropical Storm Hurls Baby Turtles Back Onto Brevard County Beach

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A few short weeks ago, they scrambled off the beach toward the sea. Over the past two days, the ocean - whipped up by Tropical Storm Gordon - has thrown young sea turtles back onto Brevard County beaches.

"This is happening all up and down the coast," Rita Karpie, of the Sea Turtle Preservation Society in Melbourne, said Tuesday. "We've got a big, sloppy storm out there."

Turtle nesting season ended in October, so most juveniles are barely more than hatchlings, about 2 inches in length. They generally float near the top of the water 3 to 15 miles offshore, where the sargassum raft, a mass of floating algae, provides their home.

Gordon's winds have tossed the turtles and their homes onto the shore. Karpie's group had pulled six green turtles, an endangered species, and three loggerhead turtles, a threatened species, from the south Brevard County beach. One died, and two were missing flippers from their ordeal.

The rescued turtles will be handed over to the Department of Environmental Protection, which will return the animals to their homes once the winds die down and the algae has reformed.

Lew Ehrhart, a University of Central Florida turtle expert, worried about the storm's effect on the handful of remaining nests on the beach, which were laid in September and not due to hatch until later this month.

Anyone finding a turtle in distress should call the Florida Marine Patrol at (800) DIAL-FMP.