

WATCH: Sea Turtle Nesting Season Opens Friday on Florida's Space Coast

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NESTING SEASON RUNS THROUGH OCTOBER

ABOVE VIDEO: *Sea Turtles On The Space Coast Special Report: Sarah Rhodes-Ondi (community stewardship coordinator for the Barrier Island Center in Brevard from the Sea Turtle Conservancy) and Susan Skinner (Sea Turtle Preservation Society Board Chair and Director of Communication) talk with Giles Malone on Space Coast Daily TV.*



BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA – Sea Turtle nesting season is underway in Brevard County as one of the most exciting events officially began on Friday.

To help those hatchling survive, residents are urged to keep light out of sight, and remove unused beach furniture and coastal structures, through the end of the nesting period Oct. 31.

Key Reminders for Nesting Season

- Each night, remove all furniture and recreational items from the beach and store them in an area landward of the beach and dunes.
- Properly dispose of trash. Sea turtles ingest plastic bags and garbage attracts predators that eat turtle eggs.
- While at the beach for essential activities avoid areas identified as nesting sites.
- Reduce use of flashlights on the beach at night.
- Recreate in locations away from marked nesting areas.
- Property owners must either extinguish or shield lights visible from the beach, or replace white incandescent, fluorescent and high-intensity lighting with amber or red light-emitting diodes (LED) or low-pressure sodium vapor (LPS) fixtures.

Unfortunately, only one out of every 1,000 hatchlings will survive to adulthood.

Most die from predators, and both the exhaustion and starvation caused by disorienting bright, artificial lights.

Canaveral National Seashore serves as an important nesting area for sea turtles. During the months of April through October, giant sea turtles lumber ashore to nest on the beach.



Brevard County is home base to the UCF Marine Turtle Research Program, which studies the nesting behavior of sea turtles. The research program concentrates on turtles, which nest and lay eggs (starting this month) along the Archie Carr National Refuge. (UCF image)

Four turtle are known to nest in the park: the loggerhead, green, leatherback and kemp's ridley. Loggerhead's lay 3,000-5,000 nests per year.

Green's lay 200-6,000 nests per year. Leatherbacks deposit up to 34 nests per year within the park boundary.

Sea turtles lay approximately 100 round, white leathery eggs in each nest. Prior to 1984, most of the eggs laid within the seashore were eaten by raccoons, and to a lesser extent by ghost crabs. Some nests are lost when beaches erode from storms.

If the eggs survive, they begin to hatch in approximately sixty days. The first turtles to hatch will wait until their nest-mates have left their eggshells. Because of the depth of the nest, it would be difficult for one three-inch hatchling to emerge from the eighteen-inch deep nest by itself. There is also safety in numbers When the cool signals safety at nighttime, the hatchling gradually dig their way out of the nest in a united effort to make their way to the

sand's surface.



Many hazards await the hatchlings when they reach the surface of the nest. Ghost crabs, birds, raccoons and the drying heat of the early morning sun are waiting for the tiny turtles as they try to make it to the ocean.

Once the turtle makes it past the surf, they swim to a region of the Atlantic Ocean known as the Sargasso Sea, a large area of seaweed which sits in the middle of the North Atlantic Gyre. Here the hatchlings feed on seaweed and tiny animals and seek protection from predators. When they reach adolescence, some turtles return to the inshore waters of Mosquito Lagoon.

The ocean holds more hazards than just the sea turtles' natural predators. Many deaths are attributed to entanglement in fishing lines, collisions with ships and boat propellers,

drowning in commercial fishing nets and ingesting plastic fragments or congealed oil.

2019 SEA TURTLE NESTING

	Apollo Beach	Playalinda Beach
Loggerhead <i>(Caretta caretta)</i>	2304	3291
Green <i>(Chelonia mydas)</i>	2362	4709
Leatherback <i>(Dermochelys coriacea)</i>	12	21
Kemp's Ridley <i>(Lepidochelys kempii)</i>	0	0
		Total Count = 12,389 FINAL TALLY = 13,383