

Eta washes post-hatchling sea turtles onto beaches

- for Hometown News
- Nov 12, 2020

BREVARD COUNTY— With the widespread effects of Tropical Storm Eta, posthatchling sea turtles are being washed in along with the sargassum seaweed on Brevard County beaches. The Sea Turtle Preservation Society asks the public to call its hotline at 321-206-0646 for guidance if a post-hatchling is found on the beach.

“STPS is seeing an influx of post-hatchling, or washback, sea turtles on our beaches. While we appreciate everyone’s concern for these tiny turtles, please remember that sea turtles are protected by law, and it is illegal to touch one of any size,” said Susan Skinner, STPS board of directors chairperson. “Trained STPS volunteers are responding to the situation as conditions allow, so please call STPS for instructions if you do find a post-hatchling on the beach.”

These young sea turtles, commonly called washbacks, hatched earlier in the summer and swam 20-25 miles offshore to the Sargasso Sea, where they have been living in the floating beds of seaweed. Storms, waves, and wind can disrupt these beds and bring the young sea turtles to shore along with the seaweed.

STPS discourages the public from looking for these post-hatchling sea turtles. STPS operates a Sea Turtle Emergency Response Program with volunteers who will survey the beaches as needed when conditions allow. These volunteers have received training and have been authorized by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Please remember that sea turtles are protected by law, and it is illegal to touch one of any size.

If you do happen to find a post-hatchling on the beach, please follow these guidelines:

- CALL the STPS emergency hotline at 321-206-0646 or FWC at 888-404-3922 for guidance.
- DO NOT put the post-hatchling into the ocean. It likely will not have enough energy to survive.
- DO NOT place the post-hatchling in water or air conditioning. This could further injure or kill the sea turtle.

For more than 30 years, the Sea Turtle Preservation Society has worked to protect sea turtles and their habitat in Brevard County. Through both public education and conservation programs, the all-volunteer, not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization strives to fulfill its mission statement, which is helping sea turtles survive.

To learn more about STPS and its programs, please visit the Sea Turtle Preservation website at seaturtlespacecoast.org or Facebook, or on our Instagram account, *seaturtleps*.