



Sea turtle nesting season underway

- [By Josh Whitener](#)
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BEACHES —Residents and beach visitors have already begun to see the familiar nesting spots of sea turtles around the Space Coast's shorelines.

Sea turtle nesting season began March 1 and extends into spring and summer depending upon certain species.

The Sea Turtle Preservation Society (STPS) of Brevard is aiding in providing hospitable conditions for the turtles to nest as the season begins.

"Sea turtles nest throughout the coastline of Brevard County, but the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge sees a high density of nesting activity," said Susan Skinner, STPS Board Chair and STPS director of Communications and Marketing. "The refuge's beaches are largely undeveloped and provide ideal nesting habitat."

According to STPS's website, "the loggerhead sea turtles join the nesting activity a few weeks later, typically in mid-April. The green sea turtles are the last to the party and tend to arrive to nest in late May to early June."

Typically, the area sees three different species of sea turtles: loggerheads, greens, and leatherbacks.

"Hosting more than 40 percent of the nests laid globally, Florida is the most important nesting area for loggerheads in the world," said Ms. Skinner. "In 2020, more than 105,000 loggerhead sea turtle nests were recorded on Florida's beaches."

She explains that Florida hosts 90% percent of the sea turtle nests laid in the United States each nesting season. The county's 72 miles of beaches account for a large portion of the loggerheads nesting sites.

According to the organization, 2020 also boasted more than 26,000 green sea turtle nests recorded in the state.

"The state also serves as a minor leatherback nesting area," she said. "In 2020, 1,652 leatherback nests were recorded statewide."

STPS works proactively to educate the public on how they can help share the beach with sea turtles during the coming months.

"Most of our outreach programs are geared to both residents and visitors, but we do offer talks designed for visitors at condos and resorts about sea turtles. STPS provides area resorts and hotels with information about nesting season and lights-out ordinances each year," she said. "In 2020, STPS created a public-service announcement video about sharing the beach with sea turtles. It has been made available to municipalities, resorts and condos, conservation groups, tourism agencies, and the media."

The organization works with volunteers to help keep beaches clean and regulate ordinances on lights and beach activity in the county.

"Residents and visitors can help make Brevard beaches sea-turtle friendly by keeping beaches clean, flat, and dark. In addition to following lights-out ordinances during nesting season, it is important to remove beach chairs and other obstacles at night as well as knocking down sandcastles and filling in any holes," she said.

Brevard County's Lights Out ordinance runs effectively from May 1 – October 31, requiring all lights visible from the beach to be either covered, blocked, moved, or turned off from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

According to STPS, this includes flashlights, cellphones, and red lights.

"Sea turtles are a protected species and may not be disturbed or harassed. A nesting sea turtle should never be approached or touched. Keep lights off, stay back and behind her out of sight, and be quiet," she said. "Hatchlings should be allowed to crawl on their own to the ocean. Following these guidelines helps increase nesting success for this protected species."

The organization works closely with local beachside cities, including Satellite Beach, who this month will work with STPS to co-host a movie night that will both entertain and educate attendees. "A Turtles Tale" will be shown in the Satellite Beach Community Center parking lot Saturday, March 13 at 5:30 p.m. STPS will be offering outreach bags with information and education on sea turtles.

For emergencies regarding sea turtles in Brevard, STPS provides an emergency response line at 321-206-0646.

Residents and visitors can also call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission hotline at 888-404-3922 or on a mobile phone at *FWC or #FWC, depending on the provider.

For more information on how you can help visit <https://seaturtlespacecoast.org/> or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SeaTurtlePreservationSociety.

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