

## Did you know?

Sarasota County beaches have the highest density of loggerhead nests on Florida's West Coast.

Loggerhead sea turtles are named for their large head, weigh between 200-350 lbs, and return to the beach from where they hatched to nest approximately every two years.

Six species of sea turtles are found in U.S. waters - loggerhead, green, hawksbill, leatherback, Kemp's ridley and olive ridley. All are listed as threatened or endangered and are protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Adult ridley sea turtles are the smallest weighing 80-100 lbs and leatherback turtles can grow to 1,500 lbs.

Sea turtle eggs are the size of ping-pong balls and hatchlings are about 2 inches in length.

Nests contain an average of 100 eggs. Cooler nest temperatures produce male turtles and warmer temperatures produce females.

Only 1 out of every 1,000 hatchlings survives to reach adulthood.

Food sources include jellyfish, sponges, crabs, seagrass and seaweed.

Sea turtles breathe air, but can hold their breath for 2 hours when at rest underwater.

**May 1 - October 31**  
**Sea Turtle Nesting Season**

## Word find

M	F	Y	W	O	C	T
B	S	A	Q	V	S	J
L	E	D	U	E	I	H
C	A	R	N	C	V	A
U	T	H	P	R	M	T
K	U	H	R	J	H	C
W	R	A	O	F	U	H
P	T	B	H	Y	I	L
H	L	I	G	H	T	I
Y	E	T	X	C	E	N
C	I	A	V	A	P	G
E	R	T	M	E	A	R
N	P	O	S	B	R	E
I	F	Q	T	A	E	L
S	X	L	G	C	D	R
P	R	O	T	E	C	T

Amber	Light
Beach	Nest
Habitat	Protect
Hatchling	Red
LED	Sea Turtle



Cover photos:  
1) A sea turtle nest on a busy beach is protected by post and rope. 2) A green sea turtle eating sea grass. 3) A loggerhead sea turtle returning to the water. 4) A loggerhead hatchling.

# A Coastal Living Guide to Sea Turtles



**Sarasota County**  
**Sea Turtle Protection Program**  
**(941) 861-5000**

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## Keep beaches dark and obstacle free

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Every May through October, Sarasota County beaches become crucial habitat for the largest congregation of sea turtle nesting on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Hundreds of sea turtles swim to our shore and seek out the best possible environment to lay their eggs.

As the female turtle crawls onto the land, she evaluates the beach through touch, temperature, and gradient changes. If she encounters an object that is foreign to the natural beach such as furniture, tents, or watercraft, instinct tells her to abandon her nesting attempt in search of a more favorable environment. If suitable habitat is not found, she will have no choice but to release her eggs in the Gulf of Mexico where they will never hatch. Items left on the beach overnight have resulted in an increase of non-nesting emergences.



Sea turtle tracks

Light pollution also has a negative effect on sea turtles. Once hatchlings emerge from the nest, they orient themselves in the direction of the brightest horizon. Reflected celestial light from the Gulf attracts hatchlings seaward. Bright lights landward of a nest will draw hatchlings away from the water. Every year tens of thousands of hatchlings die from predation, exhaustion, and starvation due to the disorientations. Adult nesting females also become disoriented when light from homes, roadways, and commercial establishments guides them away from the Gulf.

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An estimated 1 out of every 1,000 hatchlings lives to reach reproductive age. Due to worldwide population declines, all species of sea turtles are threatened or endangered. Federal, State, and local regulations provide protection for these unique animals but laws alone will not ensure their survival. Turtles need your help.

### What I can do to help

Follow these simple steps to do your part to protect sea turtles and their habitat and be in compliance with local protection rules:

- Each night remove all furniture and recreational items from the beach and store them in an area free of sand and dune vegetation.
- Properly dispose of trash and discarded fishing gear. Sea turtles ingest plastic bags and wrappers, mistaking them for jellyfish and can become entangled in old nets and line.
- Knock down sand sculptures and fill in holes before you leave the beach so turtles have direct access into and out of the water.
- Only use flashlights to safely enter and exit the beach. Fishing lanterns should be used only as necessary to set, bait, and remove hooks from fish, and not be illuminated the entire time you are fishing.
- Conduct a lighting inspection of your property.



A rare site of a loggerhead nesting in the evening. Typically sea turtles nest in the dark at night.

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## How to perform a lighting inspection

Turn on all indoor and outdoor lights that are regularly used at night. Examine your property from multiple angles on the beach and take note of all visible light. One or more of the following adjustments may be necessary to reduce light pollution from your home:

- Reposition fixtures so that the point source of light (bulb) is no longer visible from the beach.
- Cover the top and sides of exterior fixtures with opaque shields so light is directed downward onto your property and away from the beach.
- Close blinds and curtains when interior lights are on at night. Turn off unnecessary lights.
- Replace incandescent, fluorescent, and high intensity lighting with amber or red light emitting diodes (LED) or low-pressure sodium vapor (LPS) fixtures.
- Plant or improve native vegetation buffers between the light source and the open beach.

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## More information

Have questions or need assistance with adjusting the lighting on your property? Contact the Sea Turtle Protection Program at (941) 861-5000 or on the web [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net), key word: sea turtle.

To report an injured or dead sea turtle contact the Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission 1-888-404-FWCC (3922)

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