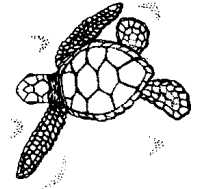


Turtle Tracker



Volume 8 – Issue 3

Volusia & Flagler Sea Turtle Volunteer News

Fall/Winter 2002

2002 Nesting Season Review

By Jo Ellen Basile

Every nesting season is special because marine turtles return to our shores to lay their nests, but the 2002 nesting season can best be described as uneventful. Our two-county area saw an above average number of nests laid, while few storms or other disasters affected them. This year, 2,255 nests were laid in Volusia County, which is much higher than last year's 1,694 nests but below our record of 2,503 in 2000. In Flagler County, 385 nests were laid, matching the record high in 2000.

One highlight of the 2002 season was a new record for green turtle nests. A total of 392 green nests were laid in Volusia County this year and 47 in Flagler. Last year saw a record for leatherback nests, with 14 nests in Volusia and eight in Flagler. A table of nest numbers for 2002 is on the back page.

Only one of the 14 storms this hurricane season, Tropical Storm Edouard, affected our area. Edouard came ashore on September 4, the fourth storm ever to make direct landfall in Volusia and Flagler Counties, but caused little coastal erosion as it passed by. But unusually heavy rains during the season washed out about 20 nests and damaged or destroyed around 150 more in the two counties.

Volusia and Flagler Counties account for about three percent of the sea turtle nests laid in Florida each year. The most common sea turtle species in Florida, loggerhead and green turtles, have similar nest distribution around the state, with the highest nesting density in Brevard and Palm Beach Counties. Greens nest in 2-year intervals, while loggerheads nest in 3- or 4-year cycles. This nesting interval contributes to the variable numbers of nests documented per year. Leatherbacks, the largest species, nest mostly on the east coast with some nesting in the panhandle. Hawksbill and Kemp's ridley turtles are rare nesters, with 0-4 hawksbill nests per year, mostly in the Keys, and only a few incidents of ridley nests (two on each coast) since monitoring began in the state.

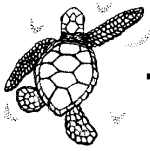
Declining Loggerhead Nests and Strandings

Although local nest numbers appear healthy, statewide there is some concern about the loggerhead population. State biologists note that loggerhead nesting has been declining for the past four years, with the fewest nests since 1989 laid in 2002. This decline corresponds with drastic increases in strandings. About 1,265 dead or injured turtles washed up on Florida's beaches in 2002, second only to the record 1,338 strandings documented in 2001. The majority of the strandings are loggerhead turtles. About 25% of the strandings each year are caused by boat hits, 23% are attributed to fibropapillomatosis, a disease causing tumor growths in mostly green turtles, and over 8% are caused by fishing gear. Volusia County, second only to Brevard County in strandings, had 108 strandings in 2002. Flagler had 21 strandings.

Many turtles drown in shrimp nets because the Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) required in the nets are not big enough for larger turtles to escape, or the devices are disabled illegally by some fishermen. In August, a coalition of environmental groups announced a lawsuit to force the National Marine Fisheries Service to require shrimp fishing vessels to install TEDs that allow larger sea turtles to escape. To report violations of the TED rules, contact the Florida Marine Patrol at 1-888-404-FWCC.



net



Beachfront Lighting

Beachfront lights lure hatchlings away from their normal trek to the ocean, leaving them weakened and vulnerable to predators, vehicles, and dehydration. These hatchlings crawl aimlessly searching for the ocean and often end up in dense vegetation, or worse, on Atlantic Avenue where they either get run over or end up in storm drains.

Monitoring groups have worked diligently for over a decade to improve local lighting ordinances and enforcement. In spite of these efforts, lighting disorientation of hatchlings continues to be one of the major threats to sea turtles on our shores. In 2001, we reported 30 lighting disorientations affecting 12% of the nests laid in our Volusia County monitoring area. This was equal to the average disorientations per year reported since 1994. This year, mainly due to many rainy days obscuring tracks of hatchling emergences, only four disorientations were recorded. This is by no means an indication that the lighting problems on Volusia County beaches have been solved.



Loggerhead hatchling trapped in storm drain

Volusia County improved the existing lighting ordinance in June 1999, and two code enforcement officers devoted to beach lighting were hired. Unfortunately, laws on paper are not always effectively implemented. Although some areas have become darker, many have continual violators of the ordinance. On September 25, 2002, volunteers surveyed about 16 miles of beach and reported 90 violations to county code enforcement. The beach was still brightly illuminated by many hotels and

condos and by the Daytona Beach Pier and Boardwalk. This was very discouraging for those of us who have reported many of the same violations year after year.

The cumbersome code enforcement system is partly to blame, but also a reduction of staff to one code enforcement officer and a Code Enforcement Board that allows exceptions to the rule have contributed. The ordinance itself also allows looser standards in the core area of Daytona Beach. Volusia County has implemented a ticketing system for code violations, but chose not to use the system to ticket property owners with lighting violations. We believe the ticketing system would improve immediate enforcement and therefore improve sea turtle protection in our county.

Coastal Cleanup Results

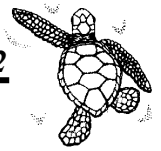
The turtle patrol sponsored and coordinated the International Coastal Cleanup on September 21. Forty-nine volunteers picked up 462 pounds of trash this year, a very low turnout compared to previous years. One very sad item found was a dead loggerhead turtle with fishing line wrapped around its head and flippers. This is an all too common cause of death for marine life and shorebirds.

The annual beach cleanup is held the third Saturday in September and a river cleanup is held the last Saturday in April each year. We thank all of you who participated and hope more of you will take the time to help make our beaches and waterways cleaner and safer in the future.

Coastal and Native Plant Courses

An Environmental Landscaping in Florida class, taught by Don Spence, will be held at Atlantic High School beginning January 21. The 8-week class will be held Tuesdays, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., for \$40. To register, call Volusia County Community Schools at 386-322-6101.

A Florida Coastal Systems class is offered by the University of Florida Extension office at the Volusia County Agricultural Center in DeLand. Completion of the 40-hour program results in registration in the UF-IFAS Master Naturalist Program database as a FMNP Coastal Systems Naturalist. The class is Fridays, February 21 to March 28, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and costs \$200. For more info, go to www.MasterNaturalist.org or call David Griffis at



ADOPT A SEA TURTLE NEST



Help Save a Threatened Species!

Sea turtles have been nesting on our beaches for over 100 million years. The population of these ancient mariners has been greatly depleted by loss of nesting habitat, incidental catch by fisheries and exploitation for sea turtle products. Without the help of people like you, they could face extinction in the near future.

By adopting a sea turtle nest, you will provide funding to the nonprofit Turtle Patrol and show your support for the protection of an endangered species.

Sponsorship Fee \$25.00

Adopter Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip _____ Phone # _____

Please make check payable to:

Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol

4738 S. Peninsula Drive

Ponce Inlet, FL 32127

Here's what you will receive when you adopt a sea turtle nest:

- * official adoption certificate
- * one year subscription to the Turtle Tracker
- * sea turtle educational packet
- * nest watching guidelines (**hands on adoptions**)
- * nest success evaluation report
- * 1 bumper sticker

If you really want to get involved, you can do a "Hands On" adoption!

This actually involves babysitting a sea turtle nest. You will go to the beach in the evening to check "your" nest and report back to the Turtle Patrol if there are any problems. You will provide valuable protection for the nest, and you may even be lucky enough to see the hatchlings emerge from their nest and crawl to the sea!



Regular Adoption _____

Hands On Adoption _____

Yes, I would like to help sea turtles!

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip _____

Telephone _____

Annual membership \$15.00 _____

T-shirt total (add \$2 shipping) _____

Other donation (greatly appreciated) _____

Total enclosed _____



Shirt Style	Size	Color	Quantity	Total

Please make checks payable to Volusia Turtle Patrol and mail to the return address below.

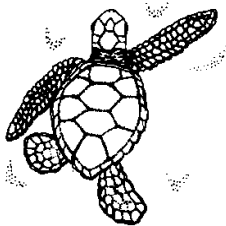
All T-shirts are sturdy, 100% cotton with beautiful original design.

Short sleeve: White or ash with front pocket and design on back. Tan with design on front or back. Back prints have logo on front.

Selection is very limited, a new design is coming soon!

Sizes M, L, XL closeout sale price \$10.00

Please add \$2.00 for shipping and allow 1-2 weeks for delivery.



Turtle Tracker

Volusia Turtle Patrol, Inc.
4738 S. Peninsula Drive
Ponce Inlet, FL 32127
(386) 763-0977

New web site address: turtlepatrol.com

New email: VFturtlepatrol@aol.com

2002 Nest Numbers for Flagler & Volusia Counties

Sea Turtle Species	Washington Oaks State Park (.6 miles)	Flagler County Beaches (15 miles)	Flagler Beach (3.5 miles)	Gamble Rogers SRA (1.1 miles)	North Peninsula SRA (2.7 miles)	Volusia Turtle Patrol (25 miles)	Volusia Sea Turtle Society (11 miles)	Canaveral Nat'l Seashore (11.2 miles)
Loggerhead	15	217	76	30	84	212	223	1340
Green	3	33	8	3	19	13	8	352
Leatherback	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Total Nests	18	250	84	33	103	226	231	1695

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