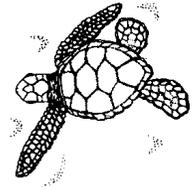


Turtle Tracker



Volume 8 – Issue 1

Volusia & Flagler Sea Turtle Volunteer News

Spring 2002

Volunteer Opportunities *by Jo Ellen Basile*

Volunteering for Volusia and Flagler's nonprofit sea turtle organization is like joining a family. The group combines a surprising variety of work and skills. Although volunteers work hard, we have a lot of fun as well.

The most notable task for the two patrols is field monitoring. A want ad for this position would say, "Hours 6:00 a.m. until ?, keen observation required, digging experience helpful, will train." Volunteers patrol the beach each morning during nesting season to locate and mark new nests and check all other nests. Many evenings, volunteers go out again to check nests due to hatch or evaluate hatched nest contents. Monitoring is very demanding and requires at least one year of training with a state-permitted member. Only very serious volunteers should consider this type of service. The rewards include seeing beautiful sunrise scenes, watching an occasional turtle still laying her eggs in the morning hours, and witnessing one of Mother Nature's miracles as 100+ hatchlings stream out of a nest toward their ocean journey.



Debbie relocating a nest laid too low

A less demanding alternative for those who want to help is nest watching. "The more the merrier" is the battle cry for this endeavor because there are never enough volunteers to check every nest. Nests hatch about 50-60 days after they are laid, usually around dusk or later. Nest-watching volunteers may pick an area of the beach and routinely check "their" nests for

problems, such as lighting and vehicle ruts. If a nest emerges, nest watchers make sure the hatchlings make it safely to the water. This is an activity the whole family can enjoy.



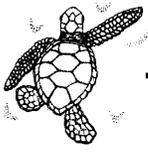
Lori finds a live hatchling during nest evaluation

Another part of our "business" is documentation and reporting. Each nest is documented from the time it is laid to the time it is evaluated. At the end of each season, reports must be prepared and submitted to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Recent years' data have been entered in a computer database. Anyone with expertise in data entry and analysis and graphic presentation would be welcome.

Perhaps our greatest need for assistance is with fund-raising and grant writing. Current funding efforts include T-shirt sales and newsletter memberships. The Turtle Patrol also runs souvenir trailers at the speedway each year. Donations of arts and crafts items are also helpful for raffles at festivals and other events. For example, we have raffled a handmade quilt and stained glass pieces created by our talented volunteers.

Education is one of the most important parts of our efforts. Our educational activities include festival exhibits, school and club presentations, the newsletter, our web page and the educational materials we develop and distribute. A shortage of volunteers and time limits our expansion in all of these areas.

Related to education are communications and governmental issues. We try to provide information



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and participate in public issues involving sea turtles, but it is impossible to do it alone. When issues related to sea turtles and beach protection are raised, please remember that your voice is important. Write or call your local lawmakers and tell them how you feel, and get your friends and neighbors involved as well. Don't think someone else will do it for you. Many times, we are just too busy to keep up.

If you are not volunteer material but would like to help, we are always in need of supplies and equipment. Please check our wish list at the end of this article. If you have a particular talent or skill, such as carpentry and mechanics, and would be willing to help occasionally if the need arises, please let us know. And remember your annual newsletter dues provide needed funds.

As you can see, there are many ways to help Volusia and Flagler's sea turtles. And you don't have to have any special experience to do it. All you need is the desire to make a difference.

Turtle Patrol Wish List

The Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol is a nonprofit organization that receives limited funding, and we are always in need of supplies.

- Polaroid Cameras and film to document strandings
- Calipers for measuring turtles
- Survey stakes for marking nests
- Survey ribbon
- Slide projector for educational programs
- Additional ATV for Flagler County
- 2 Storage Buildings for ATV storage
- Computer, new or less than 1 year old
- Fax Machine
- Plastic File Boxes
- File Folders
- Permanent Markers
- Printing and Copying Services
- ATV Repairs and maintenance

All donations are tax-deductible, and we will provide you with a receipt if needed. Thank you for your continued support and contributions.

Quilt Donation

Several members of the Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol recently donated artwork that we raffled for much-needed funding. Chris Harwell and the Hand Quilting Class of Flagler County Adult Education stitched a beautiful turtle quilt for us to raffle at the Manatee Festival. It was so lively and colorful; everyone wanted to win it. We raised over \$800.00 from that raffle. Ted Knopf also donated a beautiful stained glass stepping stone, which we raffled at Washington Oaks Earth Day. Thank you for your generous donations!



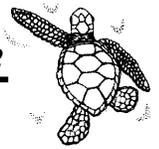
Totally into Turtles Quilt

New Smyrna Beach Permit Update

As reported in the last issue of "Turtle Tracker," the sea turtle permit in New Smyrna Beach was hanging in limbo due to the resignation of longtime permit holder, Marye Marshall. She cited personal reasons, stress, the burdens of turtle patrol, and inadequate compensation from Volusia County for her resignation. She cried on everyone's shoulder and was quite convincing. We felt sorry for her and wished her well with her new life.

Volusia County has wanted the permits of the volunteer turtle patrols for a long time so they could have ultimate control. Marye left the door open so the "fox" could get into the hen house. Even though the Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol and one of Marye's own volunteers applied for the permit, it was given to Ecological Associates (EAI), the consulting firm who helped Volusia County get their Incidental Take Permit to kill sea turtles. This was made possible by

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Marye's agreement to go to work for EAI and be in charge of sea turtle monitoring in New Smyrna. She is no longer a volunteer with the best interest of sea turtles at heart; she is a paid "biostitute," who in essence, works for Volusia County. It is reported that EAI will be paid \$155,000 this year for sea turtle related activities in Volusia County. Marye will receive about \$27,000 for her role. It's amazing how a little money can make all of your problems go away. Everyone will be watching her every move.

New Season a Chance to Look Back

By Jo Ellen Basile

As we begin a new nesting season in Volusia and Flagler Counties, we look forward to what the season may bring, and review some of the exciting times in past seasons.

The 1996 season will always stand out because the most endangered sea turtle in the world, the Kemp's ridley, nested in our area. This was the first known occurrence of ridley nesting on the east coast of Florida. Ridleys are known to nest on only one beach in Mexico. They are unique because they nest in the daytime in a group event called an arribada. No one knows why this lone lady showed up in Ponce Inlet, but it caused quite a stir in the scientific community, especially when she returned to nest two weeks later in New Smyrna Beach. Adding to the miraculous nature of the event, she nested in front of sea turtle advocate Shirley Reynold's home. We have not seen any other ridley nests since 1996, but we are still hoping.

Our good fortune continued in 1997 with our very first leatherback nests in our monitoring area, which signaled the beginning of a statewide trend of increasing nests for this species. We closely monitored the three leatherback nests that year, and have many happy memories of seeing them hatch and sharing the moments with our community. Then in 1998, we had another unusual occurrence when a leatherback nested at 10:00 a.m. in Ormond-by-the-Sea. The leatherback is the largest species of sea turtle and is quite a sight in broad daylight.

Our 1999 season stands out because of the triple whammy of three hurricanes. Hurricanes Dennis, Floyd, and Irene passed close by the coast and ended the season early in mid-September, taking 391 nests in Volusia County with them. In spite of this, the

season still brings some good memories to several volunteers who made a last, mad dash before Hurricane Floyd arrived to clean nests and rescued several hundred hatchlings.

The 2000 season ranks as the highest year for Volusia and Flagler nesting, with 2,888 nests, but 2001 was our banner year for leatherback nesting, with a record of 22 leatherback nests in Volusia and Flagler Counties. Two of the nesting leatherbacks were part of a satellite-tracking program. Brown Eyed Girl and Surfer Girl were fitted with transmitters when they nested in the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Brevard County. Brown Eyed Girl gave quite a show for about 200 people when she tried to nest three times during the day on June 5 in Ormond and Daytona Beach.

Of course, please don't be misled by these highlights because every sea turtle nest is spectacular. It reminds us of the mystery and complexity of nature and touches our souls.

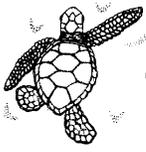
First Nest of the Season

May 1 is the official start of nesting season, and this year, a sea turtle showed perfect timing by laying the first nest of the season on the first day of monitoring in our area. Although we begin patrol on May 1, we usually don't have nests until around mid-month, but statewide, early nests are being reported, probably due to the unusually hot weather.

So far this season there have been 89 loggerhead nests and 1 green nest in Volusia north of the inlet and 75 loggerhead nests and 1 green nest in Flagler County. There should be several more green turtle nests this season, as this is the up year for greens.



Green turtle nest



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
- * nest success evaluation report
- * 1 bumper sticker

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

This actually involves baby sitting 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 _____

