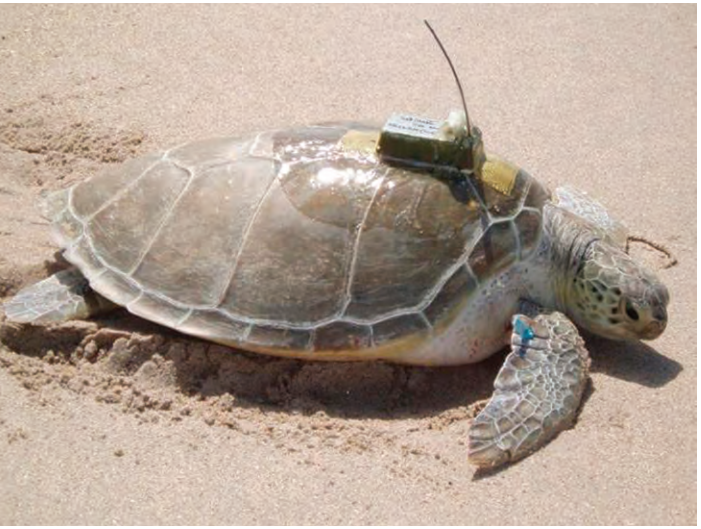
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Marine Turtle Protection Program has two components:

The FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) coordinates collection of nesting and stranding data, facilitates rescue and rehabilitation, and conducts research on sea turtle behavior, migrations, ecology and threats. For more information, please call (727) 893-8626 or visit the FWRI Web site at http://research.myfwc.com/

The FWC Imperiled Species Management Section (ISM) coordinates the Commission's management activities to ensure protection of sea turtles. The activities include reviewing and conditioning construction permits to minimize impacts to sea turtles and reviewing and permitting research, rescue and nesting surveys for sea turtles. Section staff also coordinates efforts between local government or non-profit organizations and citizens for marine turtle protection. Contact staff at (850) 922-4330 or visit the ISM sea turtle Web site at MyFWC.com.



The tracking device on this green turtle provides information on its travels.

Sea turtle protection

The federal Endangered Species Act lists all five species of sea turtles in Florida as either threatened or endangered. In addition, sea turtles are protected by Florida Statute 370.12, the Marine Turtle Protection Act. Anyone found harassing a sea turtle or interfering with the nesting process faces criminal and civil penalties.

Call the FWC Wildlife Alert number 1-888-404-FWCC to report:

- Stranded hatchlings
- Harassment of sea turtles
- Disturbance of nests
- Dead or injured sea turtles or hatchlings
- Entangled sea turtles
- Sea turtles caught with fishing gear

Purchase a specialty "Helping Sea Turtles Survive" license plate from your tax collector's office when you register your vehicle or vessel. Proceeds directly benefit sea turtle research and conservation. License plates also are available online at buyaplate.com

I'm helping sea turtles survive.

helpingseaturtles.org

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com
Habitat and Species Conservation
Imperiled Sepcies Management Section
620 S. Meridian Street, 6-A
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600

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Florida sea turtles

Share the beach

Helpful information for beach visitors during sea turtle nesting season

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com

Blair Witherington

Left: A green turtle returns to sea. Motion, noise and lights can cause a nesting sea turtle to return to the sea without laying her eggs.

Nesting sea turtles

If you happen to see a nesting sea turtle while you are on the beach, stay behind her and at such a distance that she cannot see you.

Please:

- Keep your distance, remain quiet and keep all lights off (including flashlights, flash photography and video equipment). Motion, noise and lights can cause the turtle to return to the sea without laying her eggs. Remember, your activities can also affect other turtles nesting in the vicinity.
- Keep hands and other objects off and away from the turtle. After nesting, she may appear slow and hesitant. Touching, prodding, shining lights or causing commotion may disturb her, disorient her and cause her to spend less time covering and camouflaging her nest.

If you see someone harassing a sea turtle or disturbing a nest, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Resource Alert number at 1-888-404-FWCC or by mobile at #FWC (note: out-of-state cell phones may not work).

Sea turtle hatchlings

If you happen to find sea turtle hatchlings on the beach, watch from a distance.

Please:

- Allow hatchlings to crawl to the water on their own, as the journey from the nest to the water allows them to imprint on their home beach. Picking up the hatchlings may interfere with this process. Scientists believe imprinting helps the hatchlings remember where they came from so they can return and lay their own eggs 20 to 30 years later.
- Leave sea turtle hatchlings in their nest; they will exit the nest when they are ready. If hatchlings are removed from the nest before they are ready, they are less likely to survive.
- Keep all lights off (including flashlights, flash photography and video equipment). If sea turtle hatchlings see artificial lights, they become confused, crawl in circles or head away from the ocean. If they crawl in the wrong direction for long, they will be eaten by other animals or die from dehydration.

Call the FWC Resource Alert number immediately at 1-888-404-FWCC (or by mobile at #FWC) if you find hatchlings wandering on a road, parking lot or in a direction other than toward the water.

Public sea turtle walks

If you want to watch a nesting sea turtle, join an organized sea turtle walk that has been approved by the FWC Imperiled Species Management Section (ISM). Permitted walks are usually offered from May through July each year. The turtle walk leaders are trained to aid the public in watching sea turtles without disturbing them during nesting.

For a list of organized walks in Florida, please call (850) 922-4330 or (561) 575-5407. An on-line list is also available at MyFWC.com.

Thomas J. Dunkerton

Sea turtle hatchlings like this loggerhead should not be interfered with as they make their way to the surf.