

Sea Turtles

of Palm Beach County



- Five of the seven species of sea turtle in the world can be found in Palm Beach County's (PBC) coastal waters, reefs and lagoons.
- Between March 1st and October 31st, sea turtles are the most active on PBC's beaches where they come ashore to lay eggs.
- Loggerheads nest most frequently on PBC beaches; followed by green, leatherback and occasionally hawksbill and Kemp's ridley.
- After mating offshore, females return to the same region from where they hatched when it is time to nest.
- At night, they crawl out of the ocean, dig a hole 1 to 3 feet deep, lay their eggs, and cover them with sand.
- Nests are typically located above the high tide line and sometimes up in the dune vegetation.
- Each species of sea turtle makes unique crawl patterns in the sand allowing researchers to identify the type of turtle that laid the nest.
- For six to eight weeks 80-120 eggs in the nest (clutch) develop into baby sea turtles.
- When the eggs hatch (most often at night), baby sea turtle hatchlings crawl out of the sandy nest all at once.
- The hatchlings head east guided by natural light, waves, and magnetic cues to the sargassum seaweed beds in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.
- Lights along the coast from buildings and inland (sky glow) can disorient hatchlings guiding them away from the ocean.
- REMEMBER: *Lights Out During Nesting Season*
March 1st to October 31st
- Additional sea turtle facts:
 - Leatherbacks are the largest
 - Kemp's ridleys are the smallest
 - Green turtles enjoy swimming in Lake Worth Lagoon
 - Sea Turtles may live 50 to 80 years
 - Sand temperature can determine gender.
 - Cooler temperatures tend to produce male hatchlings.
- Sea Turtle Counts for PBC 2014
 - Loggerhead Nests 24,951
 - Green Turtle Nests 1,884
 - Leatherback Nests 511

That's 2,000,000 hatchlings emerging on PBC's beaches each year!

PBC's beaches have more sea turtle nests per mile than anywhere else in the United States.

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