

2009 Sea Turtle Nesting Season

Sea turtle nesting season has returned to Sanibel's beaches once again. Nesting and hatchling emergence will take place from **May 1 through October 31**. This natural process has happened on Sanibel Island for centuries and the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) and the City of Sanibel are committed to protecting these threatened and endangered species.

One of the most remarkable natural phenomena occurring on our Gulf beaches is the nesting ritual of the loggerhead sea turtle. Sanibel's eleven miles of Gulf-front have more nesting activity than any other beach in Lee County. The rare opportunity to witness this ritual on a dark summer night is both an honor and a great responsibility. Sought by predators and susceptible to dehydration, sea turtle hatchlings have only a one in a thousand chance of survival. Human activities can further reduce that chance.

By following the simple guidelines below, you can do your part to ensure the survival of these magnificent creatures:

- Turn off or shield lights near the beaches. Artificial beach lighting can inhibit female sea turtles from nesting and disorient hatchlings. Most beachfront lighting issues can be addressed by turning off all unnecessary lights, repositioning or modifying light fixtures, or closing blinds and drapes.
- Remove furniture and other items from the beach and dune area, when not in use, between the hours of 9:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. Items left on the beach including beach furniture, toys and trash may provide barriers to nesting or result in entanglement and predation of hatchlings.
- Level all sandcastles and fill any holes dug during play. These are fine during the day but may pose additional hazards at night. Please leave the beach as you found it, so that sea turtles and hatchlings are not hindered on their way to nest or to the water.
- Pick up all trash. Sea turtles mistakenly eat debris, especially plastic, which results in death.
- Honor the leash law. All dogs on the beach must be on a leash and not allowed to disturb nesting turtles or hatchlings.

Gulf-front property owners should make sure that their properties are in compliance with the City's marine turtle protection ordinances and ensure that artificial lighting from the property is not illuminating the beach (Sanibel Code Section 74-181—74-183, Section 126-996—126-1002). **An easy way to test if your property is in compliance is to stand on the beach on a moonless night and look seaward. If a shadow is cast towards the water, there is a potential to deter female turtles from nesting or disorient hatchlings as they emerge from the nest.**

We look forward to another successful sea turtle nesting season and hope to uphold Sanibel's reputation as having one of the darkest and most "turtle friendly" beaches in the state. We ask for your continued compliance with City's marine turtle protection ordinances and remind all residents and visitors that violations of these ordinances may be subject to City, State, and/or Federal fines and penalties. Violations should be reported immediately to the Sanibel Police Department at (239) 472-3111, Sanibel Code Enforcement (239) 472-4136 or Natural Resources at (239) 472-3700.

For more information regarding sea turtles on Sanibel, please visit the City's website:

<http://mysanibel.com/Departments/Natural-Resources/Protecting-Our-Beaches/Sea-Turtles>

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