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Green turtle nesting

Sea Turtles

Female sea turtles nest on Florida beaches from March through October. There are some things you can do during that time and year-round to protect them.

- Keep outdoor lights off, and close drapes at night. Lights can disorient turtles (especially hatchlings) and cause them to get stranded. Lights also can discourage females from nesting or interrupt their nesting process and cause them to return to the water.
- Avoid the beach at night. If you must be on the beach at night, do not use flashlights or flash photography and limit your beach walking.
- Look out for the posted signs of sea turtle nests, and leave nesting turtles, their nests and hatchlings alone.
- Don't leave furniture, cabanas or boats out overnight on the beach. Nesting turtles can become trapped or abandon nesting attempts if they encounter furniture.
- Fill in holes you dig on the beach. Holes can trap hatchlings or adult turtles.
- Be aware of chemicals and other waste draining into the water that can impact turtles and the food they eat.



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Loggerhead hatchling

Leave Only Your Footprints!

THANK YOU for helping protect our beautiful beaches. Share what you know!



Tim Donovan, FWC

If you find a dead, sick, or injured sea turtle, or see someone disturbing sea turtles or shorebirds, please call FWC's 24-hour Wildlife Alert Number at **1-888-404-FWCC (3922)**, call **#FWC** or ***FWC** on your cell phone, or text **Tip@MyFWC.com**.

Want to Learn More?

Your caring is critical to conserving beach and ocean ecosystems in the present and for future generations. If you want to get involved and do more to help, please check out the resources below. Some are global, some focus on Florida and others are specific to local beach communities (with similar local groups existing throughout Florida).



- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission:** MyFWC.com/SeaTurtle
- Florida Shorebird Alliance:** fishorebirdalliance.org
- Audubon Florida:** fl.audubon.org/coastal-conservation-0
- Sea Turtle Conservancy:** conserveturtles.org
- Sea Grant:** flseagrant.org
- Ocean Conservancy:** oceanconservancy.org
- Surfrider Foundation:** surfrider.org

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- Florida Master Naturalist Program:** masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu
- Coastal Wildlife Conservation Initiative:** myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/cwci/
- City of Fernandina Beach:** fbfl.us/turtle
- Beachkeepers Fernandina Beach**

It was done with the assistance of the Wild Amelia Nature Festival, Amelia Island Nature Center and Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch.



- Beachkeepers Fernandina Beach
- Wild Amelia Nature Festival
- Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com

Be a Beach Hero!



Help keep Florida beaches healthy and safe for people, wildlife and plants



Tim Donovan, FWC

Welcome to the Neighborhood...

From sea oats to shorebirds, the beach is a diverse community. Beaches are a special part of Florida for you, and for the plants and wildlife that depend on them for survival. Together residents and visitors can ensure Florida beaches are healthy and safe places for everyone for years to come. Here are tips to help you protect these natural treasures.

Trash and the Beach

The beach is home to many plants and animals, and you can help keep it tidy! Plastic debris is not only unattractive but can be washed out to sea, where it can be eaten by turtles and birds and kill them.

- When your visit is over, take back everything you brought to the beach, including clothes, sandals, sunglasses, towels, toys and beach chairs, as well as your trash.
- Leave the beach cleaner than you found it. If someone else left trash, pick it up and take it to a garbage can.
- Food scraps attract raccoons and other animals that eat the eggs and hatchlings of birds and turtles, so deposit your leftover food and wrappers in secure garbage cans.
- Fishing line injures and kills birds and other coastal wildlife. If you fish, dispose of used line in bins



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designated for fishing line or cut it into small (less than 6 inch) pieces and put it in the garbage.



Tim Donovan, FWC

Beach Wrack and Sand Dunes

Sand dunes are important to the beach and the land behind it. They act as a barrier to high tides and storm surges, and help prevent erosion.

- Stay off the dunes – instead use designated boardwalks and dune walkovers.
- Piles of washed-up seaweed, seagrasses and animal debris on the beach are called wrack. Wrack helps the beach community thrive by serving as a buffet providing food for birds and other wildlife. Wrack is also a natural fertilizer, promoting growth of dune plants such as sea oats, which stabilize the dunes.
- Sea oats are protected and removing them is illegal.
- If you are permitted to drive on the beach, stay below the high tide line and avoid the wrack line. It may be hiding sea turtle hatchlings or baby birds, which are very difficult to see from inside a vehicle. The best way to be a Beach Hero is to simply avoid driving on the beach; it's safer for beach-goers and wildlife.



Beach wrack and shorebirds

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Pets and the Beach

Know the rules about pets for the beach you're going to, before you bring your pets. Many beaches do not allow pets for health and safety reasons, and to protect

vulnerable wildlife. An easy way to be a Beach Hero is to leave pets at home when you go to the beach.

- If pets are allowed, keep them leashed or restrained at all times on the beach, for their safety and the safety of other people and wildlife.
- Pet waste contains bacteria, so always pick up after your pet.
- Don't allow pets in dunes or posted areas where they can disturb wildlife.
- Birds see dogs (even leashed ones) as predators and react to them, even at a distance. When birds have to fly away they can't get the food or rest they need and their vulnerable eggs and chicks are at risk. Birds may even abandon nests or whole colonies due to disturbance from dogs. Keep your dog as far away from birds as possible; a good rule of thumb is that if birds take flight, your dog is too close.
- Outdoor cats harm wildlife and don't live as long as indoor cats. For the safety of all, it is best to keep cats indoors. Cats eat birds, turtle eggs and hatchlings, and other wildlife such as beach mice, so don't feed cats on or near the beach.



Alex Kropp, FWC

If birds take flight, you are too close.



Jessica Theriault, FWC

Seashells

Collecting seashells is a lot of fun, and shells are also an important part of the beach community.

- Check to make sure a shell is empty before taking it. The creature that made it may still be alive inside, or it may be home to another animal such as a hermit crab.
- Leave live seashells where you find them. You must have a license to collect live shells.
- Shells help hold sand in place and eventually replenish sand as waves break them down, so please do not take too many.



Least tern incubating

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Shorebirds and Seabirds

Many birds depend on beaches for their survival, and some of these species are in decline due to threats such as habitat loss, predators and disturbance from humans and pets.

- If birds fly off when you walk by, you are too close. When nesting birds fly away, the hot sun can destroy eggs or predators can eat the baby birds. At other times of year, birds may be taking a much-needed break after having flown for thousands of miles. When they are forced to fly, it puts great stress on these birds.
- Never walk through areas posted for nesting shorebirds. From March to August, be especially careful on beaches where birds are present. There may be nests or baby birds in the dunes or open beach, and they are very hard to spot.
- Try to remember at least one bird you see so you can learn more! Look at its bill, leg color and shape to identify the bird.



Piping plover

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