

# Dogs on the Beach

Be a wildlife-friendly pet owner!



photo: Karen Parker



Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com

## Beach habitat is important for wildlife

Many kinds of wildlife depend on Florida's beaches for their survival, including endangered and threatened species.



FWC

*Over 30 species of shorebirds and seabirds use beach habitats for nesting, resting and finding food. Some birds also use the beach during winter or for rest during long migrations.*



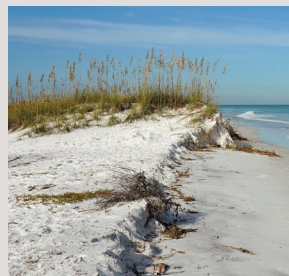
FWC

*Sea turtles use Florida's beaches as nesting sites from March to October. They dig nests in the sand and lay their eggs, which incubate and then produce hatchlings.*



photo: Alice Bard

*Beach mice live in and use beach habitats, specifically coastal dunes, for their entire life cycle.*



FWC

*Beach habitats are home to numerous other species and are an important link between marine and terrestrial environments.*



## How dogs impact beach wildlife

Dogs have many wonderful attributes and are important as human companions. However, their natural instincts to hunt, chase and dig can endanger shorebirds, sea turtles and their nests and result in decreased survival of wildlife on the beach. Dogs may kill or eat adult shorebirds, hatchlings or eggs or scare adults off their nests, leaving eggs and hatchlings unprotected from heat and predators. As a result, birds may abandon nests or whole colonies due to disturbance from dogs. Additionally, when birds are fleeing from dogs, they burn vital energy needed for migration and nesting.

Although unleashed dogs present the biggest danger, leashed dogs also impact wildlife simply by their presence. Birds respond differently to dogs than they do to people. They fly away from dogs sooner, they go further away, and they are more reluctant to return to the area, which means they leave eggs and chicks vulnerable and have less time for critical activities like finding food that they need to survive.

Nesting female sea turtles also can be disturbed by dogs on the beach at night. They may abandon their nesting attempt, returning to the water without laying their eggs. Beach mice are also active at night, making them vulnerable to predation by dogs.

## How you can help

- Obey local and Florida State Parks rules on beaches closed to pets.
- To best protect wildlife, leave dogs at home when going to the beach. However, if you plan to bring your dog, go to a beach where dogs are allowed and follow all leash laws.
- Stay out of posted Critical Wildlife Areas, listed on [MyFWC.com/CWA](http://MyFWC.com/CWA).
- Keep out of roped or flagged beach areas, even if you don't see any wildlife.
- Keep your dog as far away from wildlife as possible. Do not allow a dog to disturb or chase birds or dig holes, which could damage turtle nests or trap hatchlings.
- Make sure your dog stays out of the dunes to avoid disturbance of beach mouse habitat.
- Avoid walking your dog on the beach at night during the March-October sea turtle nesting season.
- Pick up pet waste and throw it in the trash.
- Spread the word about being a wildlife-friendly dog owner on the beach!
- If you see dogs disturbing wildlife, report it to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline: **888-404-FWCC (3922)**.



FWC

## Some Florida beaches that allow dogs

### **Panhandle** (Dogs required to be on leash at all times):

- Pensacola Beach Dog Park – Pensacola Beach
- Dog Beach at Pier Park – Panama City Beach
- Cape San Blas Beaches – Cape San Blas

### **Southwest** (A fee is required to use the dog beach):

- Honeymoon Island State Park Pet Beach – Dunedin
- Fort De Soto Dog Beach Park – St. Petersburg

### **Southwest** (No fees or leashes required):

- Brohard Beach Paw Park – Venice
- Dog Beach Park – Fort Myers Beach

### **Keys** (No fees or leashes required):

- Anne's Beach – Islamorada
- Dog Beach – Key West

### **Southeast** (A fee is required to use the dog beach):

- Haulover Beach Bark Park – Miami Beach

### **Southeast** (Dogs required to be on leash at all times.

A fee is required to use the dog beach):

- Fort Lauderdale Canine Beach – Fort Lauderdale

### **Southeast** (No fees or leashes required):

- Jupiter Dog Beach – Jupiter
- Walton Rocks Dog Beach – Jensen Beach

### **East Central/Indian River** (Dogs required to be on leash at all times):

- Canova Beach Park – Indian Harbour Beach

### **East Central/Indian River** (Dogs required to be on leash at all times. A fee is required to use the dog beach):

- Smyrna Dunes Park – New Smyrna Beach

### **Northeast** (Dogs required to be on leash at all times):

- Flagler Beach – Flagler Beach
- St. Augustine Beach – St. Augustine Beach
- Jacksonville Beach – Jacksonville Beach
- Fernandina Main Beach Park – Fernandina Beach

*This is not an exhaustive list of all Florida beaches where dogs are allowed. Please check for current local rules before bringing your dog to the beach.*

## Are service dogs allowed on the beach?

In accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act Title III regulations, disabled individuals are allowed to be accompanied by service dogs on any beach open to the public. A service dog is trained to do specific tasks directly related to the owner's disability. Emotional support animals, comfort animals and therapy dogs are not considered service animals under Title II and Title III of the ADA and therefore are not permitted on beaches that are closed to pets. A service dog must remain under the owner's control at all times. Any individual whose failure to maintain control of a dog results in disturbance to wildlife will be asked to leave the beach and may receive a citation.



photo: Jennifer L. McGee

[MyFWC.com/conservation/special-initiatives](http://MyFWC.com/conservation/special-initiatives)

The FWC receives financial assistance from the Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The DOI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility or need more information, contact: FWC, Office of Human Resources, 620 S Meridian St., Tallahassee, FL 32399, 850-488-6411, or: Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Civil Rights, Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

