

PLEASE DO NOT

- ◆ **DO NOT** use lights on the beach at night! Even red lights. Both nesting females and hatchlings can be adversely affected by beach lights. Nesting females hone in on slightly raised land when entering the beach area to locate a nesting spot and newly emerged hatchlings can be confused by lights since they are looking for the brightest horizon to return to the sea.
- ◆ **DO NOT** touch a sea turtle, nest, eggs, or hatchlings or disturb or walk over any marked turtle nest.
- ◆ **DO NOT** sit at a nest in hopes of seeing it hatch. They are protected and both of the above are illegal.
- ◆ **DO NOT** step on the newly planted dunes or enter the bird sanctuary areas. Dogs, people, and recreational equipment can pose a danger to our shorebirds that visit there as well as turtles that nest in these areas.

WHY DO SEA TURTLES NESTING ON HISP NEED US AND HOW DO TRAINED FOHI VOLUNTEERS HELP ?

Because of the severe impact human related activities have had and continue to have on global sea turtle numbers our intervention has become necessary to help restore healthy populations. Hunting Island State Park is a prime nesting location for Loggerhead sea turtles and averages 150 nests per year. From May through October, daily FOHI sea turtle patrols composed of dedicated, trained volunteers set out to locate nesting activity. Their aim is to protect each nest from predation, tidal action, storms and human interference in order to give the eggs in the nest the 56-60 days they need to incubate so the hatchlings within have an optimal chance to reach the ocean. After the nest has been marked, protected and relocated when necessary, return trips are performed to check on predation or other disturbances and then to inventory the nest following hatching to gather scientific data on nest success results. Other trained volunteer responsibilities include tabulating nest egg counts and collecting single eggs from each nest for genetic testing.

ADOPT A NEST PROGRAM

Your adoption of a Sea Turtle nest shows your support of the Hunting Island Sea Turtle Conservation Project and the mission of dedicated volunteers to preserve and protect our sea turtle's coastal nesting habitat.

How to Adopt a Nest-

- ◆ Go to the Friends of Hunting Island website utilizing the QR code below.
- ◆ Click **DONATE** for payment, nests are \$50.
- ◆ Provide your contact information and a dedication, if you choose.
- ◆ Receive a certificate from FOHI within two weeks of payment.
- ◆ Follow all our nests on the **LOGGERHEAD BLOG**.
- ◆ Visit our facts page here:
FOHI Sea Turtle Conservation Project
- ◆ Looking for a great gift or a unique way to memorialize a loved one? Get your name on our board and help the sea turtles reach the water! All proceeds from nest adoptions go directly to our conservation project.
- ◆ A FOHI recommended watch-
Sea Turtles: The Lost Years



friends of
HUNTING ISLAND



SCAN HERE FOR
CONSERVATION DETAILS



SCAN HERE TO
ADOPT A NEST

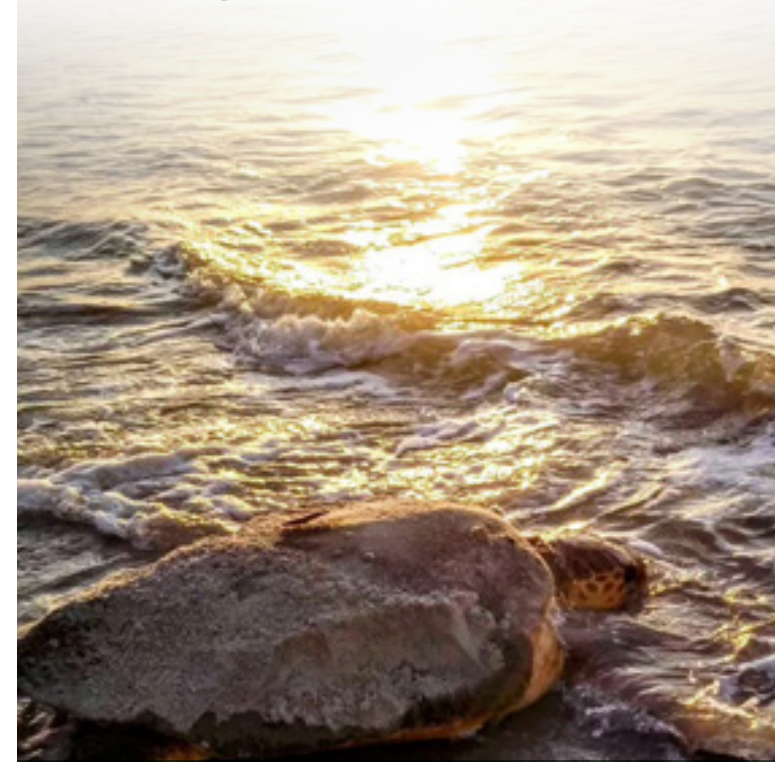
Check out [Facebook Friends of Hunting Island Sea Turtle Conservation Project](#) to find up to date information and happenings for our Sea Turtle Conservation Project



friends of
HUNTING ISLAND
friendsofhuntingisland.org

SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION PROJECT

Protecting sea turtles
on the beaches of
Hunting Island State Park since 1993



We all want to keep Hunting Island pristine and beautiful for us and future generations to enjoy, and especially for the wildlife that makes this park so special

During sea turtle nesting season, here are some reminders that will help our tiny sea turtles and nesting mamas out. The Do's and Don'ts of how you can help protect nesting Loggerhead turtles.

PLEASE DO

- ◆ **DO** educate anyone you witness not respecting our beaches or turtle tracks, so that they understand the importance of preserving the natural environment for our wildlife. If you see anyone messing with a nest, sea turtle, hatchlings, or eggs, please contact the Park Ranger immediately. Monday-Friday 9-5 contact the Visitor Center office at (843) 838-2011 and off hours contact the on duty ranger at (803) 904-6121.
- ◆ **DO** observe sea turtles only from a distance. Stay at least 50 feet away from nesting adults and hatchlings. Please do not disturb them or their approach to and from the nest. Watch from a respectable distance behind them and away from their peripheral vision.
- ◆ **DO** say NO to plastics! Sea turtles and other ocean life mistake plastic including downed helium balloons as food and ingest it. It is estimated that more than 100 million marine animals die each year as a result of eating or getting entangled in plastic. Advocate for laws reducing plastic use and for companies to reduce their plastic waste.
- ◆ **DO** spread the word and educate others on the importance of protecting sea turtles, shorebirds and all wildlife.
- ◆ **DO** knock down any sand castles and fill in any holes you see on the beach to help keep the sea turtles from falling in and getting stuck.
- ◆ **DO** be sure to remove tents, canopies, toys, nets, and beach gear left behind to protect the path for the nesting and hatchling sea turtles.
- ◆ **DO** remove all beach litter; sea turtles and other wildlife can become entangled in it or mistake it for food.
- ◆ **DO** report any injured or dead sea turtles to a park ranger.

SEA TURTLES ARE AWESOME CREATURES!

Sea turtles first evolved at least 110 million years ago during the age of the dinosaurs; yet they survived when their reptilian cousins went extinct 66 million years ago. Unlike other ocean vertebrates- marine mammals, fish, and crustaceans, sea turtles are true reptiles just like land turtles. In contrast to their terrestrial cousins however, sea turtles spend their lives almost entirely in the ocean and can drink salt water due to salt removing glands.

Sea Turtles consist of seven different species worldwide; six of whom inhabit U.S. coastal waters and four of which are known to nest on South Carolina beaches. The Loggerhead primarily, and rarely the Leatherback, Kemp's Ridley and Green. Sea turtles undertake amazing migrations, some species covering thousands of miles and crossing entire oceans. Research suggests they navigate by sensing the strength and direction of the sun and Earth's magnetic field, providing them with a sense of location. All breathe surface air but can hold their breath underwater for up to two hours and are agile and efficient swimmers due to their streamlined fusiform shape. Their swim adapted body also creates a vulnerability since they cannot withdraw their heads into their shells for protection like most land turtles and tortoises. While on land for nesting, adult sea turtles move only with great effort and use up a lot of energy, especially when digging their sandy nests. All sea turtles are very environmentally beneficial since their feeding actions help maintain healthy reefs and fish populations. However, despite having been around for millions of years they are currently threatened or endangered due solely to mankind.

Six of the seven sea turtle species are threatened with extinction due entirely to human caused

impacts. In US coastal waters, the hawksbill, leatherback, Kemp's ridley and green turtle are listed as endangered; the loggerhead is listed as threatened. Fisheries bycatch remains the greatest threat to sea turtle survival worldwide. Scientists estimate that millions of sea turtles have been accidentally captured and killed by fishing nets since 1990. Additionally, global pollution from oil spills, chemical runoff and especially plastics has taken a toll. Rampant coastal development where turtles breed and nest and often become disoriented by light pollution has been a growing threat making unspoiled barrier islands like Hunting Island all the more important. Other factors include: collisions with boats, nest disturbance, and direct consumption both legally and illegally of eggs for food and adults for food as well as products made from turtle shells. Finally, climate change is affecting suitable habitat worldwide and gender balance, since sea turtle sex is determined by nest incubation temperatures. For example, Florida currently has a severe shortage of male hatchlings due to warmer water temperatures related to global warming.



THE LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE IS THE STATE REPTILE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

- ◆ Loggerhead sea turtles are classified as “threatened” in the United States and “endangered” internationally. They are a state and federally protected species.
- ◆ In the United States, loggerheads nest from Virginia to the Gulf Coast.
- ◆ Loggerheads are carnivores, and eat crabs, lobsters, clams, sea urchins, and jellyfish. They use their powerful jaws to crush crustaceans. Juvenile loggerheads eat small invertebrates, such as crabs.
- ◆ Adult loggerheads are between 33 and 48 inches in length and weigh up to 350 pounds.
- ◆ Loggerhead lifespan is estimated to be 50 to 80 years or more.
- ◆ Loggerheads reach sexual maturity between 20 and 35 years of age, mainly based on food availability.
- ◆ Only females return to land, to lay their eggs. Males remain at sea their entire lives.
- ◆ In South Carolina, females dig nests 4 to 7 times a season, with 12-15 days between nestings. The female usually then takes a 2 to 3.5 year “break” before nesting again.
- ◆ Females may mate several times with different males, storing enough sperm for the entire egg laying season. Nesting season here in South Carolina begins in May and continues through August. Average egg incubation on our beach is 56 days.
- ◆ Nest temperature determines the sex of the hatchling sea turtles. Hotter temperatures produce more females, cooler temperatures produce more males. “Hot mommas and cool dudes”.
- ◆ After hatching, the hatchling sea turtle remains in the nest approximately two days while its shell hardens and it absorbs its yolk sac.

- ◆ Hatchlings must be allowed to crawl to the water unaided. This allows them to stretch and orient themselves to the earth's magnetic field. Research has shown that adult females often return to nest in the same region, or even the same beach, from which they were hatched, a phenomenon known as natal homing.
- ◆ After sea turtle hatchlings emerge from their nests, they disperse into the sea. Being only 2.5 inches long on average many are eaten by foxes, raccoons, coyotes, crabs, birds, dogs and other predators before they reach the sea and then by fish, crabs, birds, and octopus after entering the ocean. Some simply die from starvation and/or exhaustion. Once fully mature only two enemies remain to the sea turtles: sharks and mankind.
- ◆ Until recently, the hatchling journey was little known. Now researchers are beginning to understand where turtles go during their so-called “lost years”. Hatchlings are transported by strong ocean currents to open ocean habitats, where they live in flotsam, such as Sargassum (brown algae) and have an omnivorous diet. This stage can last from a few years to decades.

