

# Hatchlings Navigate a Gauntlet of Beach Traffic

By Maria Lamb

On Marco Island “vehicles require a permit to drive on the beach and shall have wide, low footprint pressure tires, except for emergency vehicles, all vehicles will be limited to ten miles per hour – according to the City of Marco Island Vehicles on the Beach Regulations.

Per FWC “operating vehicles, including ATVs, on the beach can destroy wild-life habitat and be harmful or fatal to wild-life. This is one reason that in many areas, beach-driving is strictly prohibited year-



Photos by Maria Lamb

Beach vendor ATV loaded with beach umbrellas.

round to all but authorized personnel.”

If you visit the beach between 7:00 AM and 8:00 AM, you will observe assorted ATVs (All-terrain vehicles) driven by beach vendor personnel, pulling trailers full of chairs and umbrellas and delivering them close to the surf line.

That is the gauntlet of beach traffic a newborn hatchling has to navigate to reach the water. During the early morning hours of July 24th, a nest hatched in the vicinity of the Winterberry Beach boardwalk and the hatchlings saw the water for the first time.

But the nest disoriented according to the sea turtle monitor and one hatchling was found dead on the dunes and one hatchling was observed racing to the water. Another beach walker shared “I followed a baby turtle’s tracks today on the



Photo by FWC

It's hatchling season - let's make sure they make it to the water safely!



ATV loaded with beach chairs.

beach of JW, unfortunately when it got near the shore, those tracks were replaced by seagulls.’ This hatchling travelled half a mile North trying to reach the water.

“A nest disoriented” has become an all too common observation by sea turtle monitors.



ATV pulling a trailer of beach furniture while a jogger pushing a stroller whizzes by.

## Sea Turtle Activity Update July 23 - 29, 2024

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	221	244	182	495	57	85	10
Delnor Wiggins	55	58	73	165	19	22	0
Vanderbilt	218	323	193	429	69	110	10
Parkshore	211	216	186	393	34	47	5
City of Naples	243	331	273	390	45	71	7
Keewaydin Is.	404	494	635	912	79	95	0
Sea Oat Island	10	29	17	81	0	4	0
Marco Island	93	119	229	413	18	20	7
Kice and Cape Romano	131	153	187	267	17	27	0
10,000 Islands	125	113	134	171	35	20	0
Collier County Totals	1711	2080	2109	3716	373	501	39

To report dead, injured or disoriented sea turtles on Marco call 239-289-9736 or 239-289-9687

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