

Sea Turtle Hatchlings and Tropical Storms

By Maria Lamb

On Sunday morning August 4th, Tropical Storm Debby delivered strong winds and heavy rains creating street flooding, power outages, and warnings of isolated tornadoes across Collier County. On August 28, 2023, Tropical Storm Idalia passed by Southwest Florida creating significant storm surges in Marco Island.

According to Tyler Beck, sea turtle monitor, “We have a lot of ‘unknown’ hatches. If we can’t find any evidence (tracks or hatchlings), we have no way of knowing whether they made it or not.” Beach walkers were concerned with the nests and hatchlings emerging during a storm and what to do if they found hatchlings struggling on the sand. Please do not try to pick them up and bring them to the water. Call Marco Island Code Enforcement non-emergency number and they will call local sea turtle monitors: 239-389-5060.

Using last week’s sea turtle activity update (July 23-29) Marco had the highest fraction of nests that showed evidence of disoriented hatchlings: 38.9 %, which is two and a half times higher than the closest beach (City of Naples) and almost four times the figure for the County as a whole! Lights Out Marco Island! We can do better to save the hatchlings from the irreparable damage of disorientation!

Marco Island can do a lot to protect emerging hatchlings by enforcing the Marco Island’s Beach Ordinance also known as Regulation and Use of Conduct on the Beach.

South Beach has become the spot for an evening of shark fishing, according to



Photos by Maria Lamb
The sea turtle nest on Residents Beach on August 4th during Tropical Storm Debby.

beach residents living on the south end of Marco. They have observed the use of drones to deliver bait offshore to attract sharks.

It was tent city on Marco’s beach last week. Beach walkers on the beach around 6:30 AM observed as many as 13 tents left overnight along with chairs, coolers and personal items. Photos were taken and sent to Marco Code Enforcement who responded as follows: “Report of tents (six to eight) with personal items on the beach prior to 8:00 AM in violation of Code and group organizer stated that they have been coming to Marco for years but unaware of

code violation.” They were issued a warning. Thanks to Code Enforcement Officer Raymond Leshinger for the quick response.

Big Litter problem: Discarded tents have become a collection challenge at the Winterberry boardwalk and on the dunes area.

Kudos to the staff at Eagles Nest located at 410 South Collier Boulevard. According to Eagles Nest’s Claudia Phoenix their security staff checks their buildings

each evening and contacts rooms that are not light compliant. If no answer from the room, their security and front desk staff will enter the room to turn off the lights.

The July Code Magistrate’s did NOT list any sea turtle light violations for the month of May. According to Code Enforcement Officer Ray Leshinger, “When we started enforcement this season we gave everyone an initial warning on their first violation so that’s why they didn’t make the magistrate calendar in July.”

[Aircraft on beach prohibited.] Use of aircraft on beach or adjoining water is prohibited. No person, other than emergency, public safety, or mosquito control personnel, shall operate an aircraft, including seaplanes, ultra-lights or helicopters, on or from the beach or the water within 750 feet from the beach.



Image from City of Marco Island Website
Residents living along the beach have observed the use of drones to deliver bait offshore to attract sharks for shark fishing.

TS Debby impacts to Collier County Sea Turtle nests

Beach	Washed Out	Nests left on Beach*
Barefoot Beach	110	46
Vanderbilt Beach	87	45
Parkshore Beach	125	35
Naples Beach	168	22
Marco Island	22	44
Total	512	192

*Almost all nests left on the beach were washed over by storm tides



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