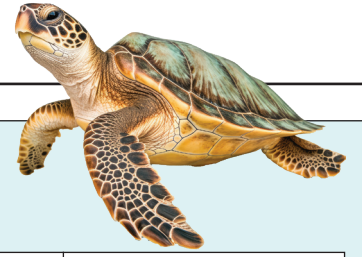


SEA TURTLE REPORT



# Get to Know Your Local Sea Turtle Ordinance

By Maria Lamb

Before heading out to the beach at night past 9:00 PM, it might be worth reading about your local ordinance during Sea Turtle Season, which is from May 1 through October 31. Marco Island has a specific ordinance in place to protect sea turtles and these regulations are designed to safeguard nesting sea turtles and their hatchlings during the nesting season.

Walking on the beach at night during sea turtle season requires a bit of pre-planning and respect for the sea turtles. For six months, Marco's beach is a nesting habitat (all seven miles of it) from the tip of Cape Marco to the end tip of Big Marco Pass.

The ordinance has a provision for temporary lighting, which is defined as "any non-permanent light source that may be hand-held or portable, but not limited to tiki torches, lanterns, flashlights (including cell phone flashlights), candles, flash photography, etc." These "non-permanent light sources" have taken a back seat to building light violations, but their effects on nesting sea turtles are becoming more evident through the number of false crawls recorded in a given season.

The May Nightly Beach Reports recorded a number of pedestrians on

Marco's beach past 9:00 PM using bright hand-held portable lighting. One particular night in May recorded 18 pedestrians using cell phones and cell phone flashlights, and for the entire Month of May, 74 pedestrians were encountered by



Photo by Maria Lamb

A sea turtle nested on the top edge of a berm on Sand Dollar Island - her crawl marks visible on the sand.

## Sea Turtle Activity May 25 - May 31, 2026

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	69	90	52	112	0	0	0
Delnor Wiggins	20	24	15	35	0	0	0
Vanderbilt	58	90	45	54	0	0	0
Parkshore	57	72	55	84	0	0	0
City of Naples	73	70	39	88	0	0	0
Keewaydin Is.	169	181	220	250	0	0	0
Sea Oat Island	3	4	3	2	0	0	0
Marco Island	44	24	62	104	0	0	0
Kice and Cape Romano	46	43	71	55	0	0	0
10,000 Islands	45	49	46	51	0	0	0
Collier County Totals	584	647	608	835	0	0	0

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

Marco Island police while on the beach past 9:00 PM. Some individuals are sitting on chairs using their cell phone lights, and during low tide, individuals were recorded using their cell phone flashlights while night shelling. The violations were immediately corrected by the officers with the education of the local sea turtle ordinance on artificial lights. These violations were observed and corrected during a one-hour nightly beach patrol.

Respect the Environment at night during the sea turtle season. Nesting sea turtles prefer coming ashore during the dark and it is possible you are walking over the crawl path of a nesting sea turtle. Our sea turtle volunteers use the tracks to locate the nest, to protect it from predators, and collect important data.

If you see a female on the beach at night, give her plenty of room to find a place to nest. Do not shine your flashlight or cell phone to take a photo.

If you enjoy a late night visit to our beach during sea turtle season, consider purchasing a sea turtle-friendly flashlight, as these types of flashlights typically emit red or long-wavelength light, which is less disruptive to sea turtles compared to standard white light. The ideal flashlight emits light in the range of 590-750nm, which is safe for sea turtles. They are portable and designed for outdoor use, such as the beach, and allow visibility without disturbing a nesting sea turtle.

Note: The Nightly Beach Report is now available on the MIPD Website!

Sea Turtle continued on A/14

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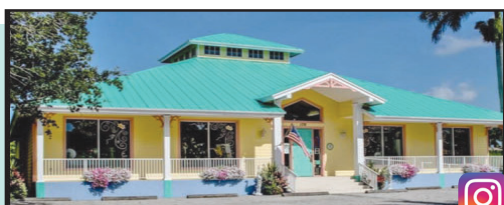
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