

SEA TURTLE REPORT

# Leatherback Turtle Reported Visiting Nearby Beaches

By Maria Lamb

The Conservancy of SW Florida monitors the sea turtle nests on Keewaydin Island. According to Dr. Jeffrey Schmid, Environmental Research Manager at the Conservancy, “On April 23, the first crawl of the season left behind tracks that were NOT from a loggerhead sea turtle.”

Dr. Schmid wrote, “There was a noticeable tail drag down the center of the track characteristic of the relatively larger tails of green turtles. But Schmid added

that the sheer size of the turtle track suggested that this was not a green turtle but that of the leviathan of sea turtles, the leatherback.”

Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation also recorded their first nest of the season was from a leatherback. The last time a leatherback nested on Sanibel was four years earlier.

According to Schmid, “The first leatherback recorded on Keewaydin was in 2015, and the most recent on Collier County beaches was in 2022.

Given leatherbacks are such infrequent nesters, the false crawl on Keewaydin and the subsequent nest of Sanibel probably were the same female turtle looking to deposit her eggs on a favorable stretch of beach.”

Schmid added, “Leatherbacks return to nest every two to three years, so the recent two-year interval of nests on Southwest Florida beaches (2020, 2022, and 2024) may very well be the same female turtle. These collective observations demonstrate the interconnectivity of the various beaches along our coast.”

It’s a possibility that we may see Leatherback tracks on Marco beaches!



Photo by Maria Lamb

This nest cage on Marco will prevent raccoons and other predators from trying to dig up the nest while still having holes large enough for the hatchlings to crawl out.



Photo by FWC Permit MTP-18-010

These track patterns on Keewaydin Island came from a Leatherback Sea Turtle, considered the leviathan of sea turtles.

## Sea Turtle Activity Update May 28 - June 3, 2024

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	74	83	56	192	0	0	0
Delnor Wiggins	20	24	14	57	0	0	0
Vanderbilt	92	106	72	157	0	0	0
Parkshore	60	42	47	103	0	0	0
City of Naples	81	95	112	112	0	0	0
Keewaydin Is.	147	134	220	311	0	0	0
Sea Oat Island	2	8	3	30	0	0	0
Marco Island	26	35	72	162	0	0	0
Kice and Cape Romano	39	42	63	64	0	0	0
10,000 Islands	45	32	46	47	0	0	0
Collier County Totals	586	601	705	1235	0	0	0

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



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