

Dear Sea Turtle Friends and Supporters,

It's that time of year again and we expect it will be a busy one. But first, a brief recap of 2015:

- Total nests were 63. We evaluated 60. Seven were unproductive, and we were unable to determine a final status on 3. There were 59 loggerheads, 2 greens and 2 leatherbacks.
- From the 60 evaluated nests, there were a total of 5,441 hatched eggs.
- Unhatched eggs totaled 1,358
- Live hatchlings found in nest: 13
- Dead hatchlings found in nest: 116

The first nest was discovered on 5/16 and the last one on 7/31. We are happy to report no major losses from predation events by either domestic or wild animals, weather conditions, or human disturbances.

Despite our best efforts, our nests experienced 4 hatchling disorientation events: 3 in Jax Beach and 1 in Atlantic Beach. Two of the events occurred near hotels and condo buildings, and two occurred in areas of single family homes (north Atlantic Beach and south Jax Beach). We estimated roughly 150 hatchlings were negatively impacted.

A disorientation event occurs when the turtle is influenced to travel in the wrong direction (away from the ocean) by artificial light sources.

You can help us protect the turtles by letting people know that the nest fences are erected to protect the eggs. Also, the buckets attached to the posts are for rescuing wayward hatchlings. Many of the buckets and perimeters themselves are being used as trash receptacles, which is nasty for us and dangerous for the hatchlings!

As you know, it is highly illegal to interfere with a nest or the turtles themselves, so please report any human disturbances immediately to the local police department and FL Wildlife Commission (FWC) at 1-888-404-3922, or #FWC from cell phone.

Last year's newsletter included this statement:

"Another human activity that can negatively impact adult and hatchling survival is the digging of large deep pits on the beach that are left unfilled. Every year seems to be worse than the last, with folks digging huge caverns that are extremely dangerous not just to turtles, but to other unsuspecting beach-goers. We have no problem with digging as long as the holes are filled back in. Some of our dedicated Facebook fans have even joined forces to fill in these holes!"

The writing has been on the wall for a number of years now about these deep pits, and in June our fears were realized. A nesting

mother tumbled into a 4-foot deep pit and was unable to escape. She had likely been there for many hours before discovery during our morning beach survey. It required the efforts of 3 men to extricate her from what could very well have become her grave. Luckily she had already nested before she encountered the pit and sustained no visible injuries. Make no mistake, these pits are literally death traps so please encourage folks to fill them in before leaving the beach.



<https://www.youtube.com/user/bstpJax>

The incident garnered local and international attention so we hope it helped raise awareness to this very serious problem. We have some video of the rescue on our YouTube channel.

A sad footnote to this saga is that only 3 eggs from her nest produced hatchlings, most likely due to water intrusion.

Statewide Report

Overall, 2015 was a good year statewide. Preliminary FWC reports include 89,285 loggerhead nests, 37,341 greens, and 1,493 leatherbacks. This represents an enormous increase for greens (5,895 in 2014), a slight increase for loggerheads and a slight decrease for leatherbacks. Greens will typically nest on an up-year/down-year pattern, and 2015 was a fantastic up-year! For more detailed statewide information please visit <http://myfwc.com/research/wildlife/sea-turtles/nesing/statewide/>

Calendar of Events

- March 19**, 8-11 am. Beach clean up. Sites at Atlantic Blvd., Beach Blvd., and 16th Ave. S.
Flyer at <http://www.bstp.net/extras/2016/SJRC-FLYER-2016.pdf>
- April 2**, 10:30-11:30 am. Season kickoff meeting, Beaches Library
- May 1**. Official start of nesting season.
- May 20**, 10-3. Exhibit table at Jax Zoo Endangered Species Day.
- May 21**, 10-4. Exhibit table at Dancing in the Street.
- May 21**, 11-2. Exhibit table at Beaches Library 30th Anniversary.
- May 26 through July 5**. Annual sea turtle art show/benefit at First Street Gallery. Opening reception **May 26**, 7-9 pm.
- July 5**, 7-9 am. Annual 5th of July beach cleanup.
- Sept. 17**, 7-9 am. Annual International Coastal Clean Up Day.
- Oct. 31**. Official end of nesting season.

We expect to add other events to the calendar so please check the website or Facebook page for new additions throughout the season.

On The Horizon

In 2015 we formed an educational partnership with Jacksonville Beach Elementary that has proven to be extremely popular, and we will continue to support the program. We would like to thank the parents and teachers for all the work they have done to help raise awareness of our mission. Kudos to all!

We are progressing with our beach signage project and hope to have them installed at most beach accesses at some point this season. The educational signs will display appropriate behavior for co-existence with the turtles and nests.

As mentioned in last year's newsletter, we have added some great new BSTP gear. We'll have items for special donations at the kick off meeting, and they'll be available through the website soon. We also have some new designs for our window decals that will be implemented when the current supply runs out. Our hatchling mascot has served us well over the years but he's getting weary and would like to retire.

As you may know, the beach renourishment project will begin in early July. It will keep us very busy relocating the nests to an area outside of the project boundaries.

We know that many of you are interested in volunteering with us. We have already filled our openings from the waiting list, but you can still help the turtles by keeping the beach clear of trash and obstacles; reporting tracks and hatchlings if you see them; and being ambassadors on behalf of the turtles. You are welcome to flag us down to chat if you see us on the beach.

In closing, we wish to thank all of you for your continued support. Without your donations we would be unable to provide the protections that are so vital to keeping these wondrous creatures alive for future generations. All donations are tax deductible (receipt provided upon request), and many employers have implemented matching donation programs. Please also consider purchasing a state-issued sea turtle license tag. It is the second-most popular Florida tag and the proceeds are used to fund research projects, provide educational materials and promote sea turtle conservation throughout the state. We'll soon be updating the website with our new BSTP gear so check it out and get yours while supplies last.

Thank you again, and we'll see you on the beach!

Finally, we are extremely proud to have been chosen as the 2015 winner of a \$2,000 conservation grant from the American Association of Zoo Keepers, AND a matching grant from the Jacksonville Zoo's chapter of the AAZK!

BSTP Directors

BSTP, Inc. is a registered 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(2) organization under the U.S. Internal Revenue Service Code. We are a 100% volunteer organization and receive no direct government funding.

Reference Links

BSTP Online

bstp.net
facebook.com/beachesseaturtlepatrol
youtube.com/user/bstpJax

External Resources

smile.amazon.com/ch/59-3100324
myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/sea-turtles/
myfwc.com/research/wildlife/sea-turtles
myfwc.com/conservation/you- conserve/lighting/
oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/
 Online nesting database: <http://goo.gl/9764Zu>

Special Events

firststreetgalleryart.com
jacksonvillezoo.org
neverquitnever.com
tinyurl.com/dancingstreets2015
tinyurl.com/coj-cleanups

Local Lighting Ordinances

bstp.net/PDFs/JaxBch_Ord_202000-7789.pdf
bstp.net/PDFs/NepBch_Ord_201999-01.pdf
bstp.net/PDFs/AB_Resolution.pdf

Fun Fact:

The temperature of the sand in the nest determines the gender of the hatchlings. Cooler sand produces more males, warmer sand produces more females. Cool dudes and hot chicks!



How your donations are used

- Utility vehicle (maintenance, gasoline)
- Nest protection materials
- Office supplies and administrative support
- Educational materials
- Volunteer support (training materials, etc.)

Full color PDF version of this newsletter is available at http://www.bstp.net/annual/2016_BSTP_annual_letter.pdf