

*Dear Sea Turtle Friends and Supporters,*

We hope this finds you all well and getting back to normal. While life in 2020 was far from typical for us humans, the turtles kept the status quo with an average number of nests.

- 64 nests (60 loggerheads, 3 leatherbacks, 1 green)
- 3,695 hatched eggs (from 55 evaluated nests)
- 108 false crawls (aborted nesting attempts)
- 12 unproductive nests (infertile eggs, submersion)
- 5 nests partially or completely washed out (confirmed)
- 4 nests final status unknown (possible washouts)

While the nests fared well during Tropical Storm Isaias, the most damage occurred from the September nor'easter. Sea turtles have adapted their nesting strategy to accommodate for natural events like these. Each nesting female deposits several nests throughout the duration of the season – essentially “hedging her bets” to make sure that even if a storm hits at some point there is a high probability that at least a few of her nests will incubate successfully.

We recorded 10 disorientation events across the 3 beaches in our monitoring area. Half involved nesting mothers but only one was able to nest successfully. The other half involved hatchlings emerging from their nests. We also recorded one obstructed nesting attempt involving a dune crossover that resulted in a false crawl.

**A disorientation event occurs when the turtle is influenced to travel in the wrong direction (away from the ocean) by any kind of artificial light source. This includes lights on homes/buildings, in parking lots & landscaping, flashlights and camera flashes.**

To learn more about dangers from artificial lights please visit the FWC resource at [bit.ly/FWC-lights](https://bit.ly/FWC-lights)

There were no major predation or vandalism events.

We were often asked whether the beach closure due to COVID-19 had any impact on the nesting season. In our region, nesting season starts on May 1, and the beaches were reopened in mid-April. Because there was no overlap, we saw no obvious benefit of empty beaches for the turtles.

In other work, we were very pleased to coordinate efforts with the City of Jacksonville Beach and FL Fish and Wildlife to update the city's sea turtle protection ordinance. While it didn't take effect until November 2020 (after nesting season) city officials were very proactive in educating residents and businesses throughout the summer so they will be better prepared for the new season.

Before COVID was a daily part of life, the awesome students at River City Science Academy Elementary School held a sea turtle day in January. They wore the color green for a cash

donation and raised enough money to adopt 5 turtle nests. Impressive!

We were able to hold one fundraising event prior to the shut down, at Jumpin' Jax House of Food in Atlantic Beach. In February, management invited us to hold a sea turtle night with an educational exhibit, during which a percentage of the food sales was donated to BSTP. We also used this opportunity to introduce a new partnership with Stroke of Light Studio. Owner/artist JJ Gray and her daughter Hope have created a beautiful stained glass piece named “Heart of the Sea” to honor their love of sea turtles. A portion of the sales is donated to BSTP to fund our conservation efforts.

Each piece is individually hand-crafted and may be purchased online at [strokeoflight.org/products/heart-of-the-sea](https://strokeoflight.org/products/heart-of-the-sea) or at any of their artwalk events.



A socially-distanced fundraiser kickoff was held in July by our friend, artist Marie Lyon Carney, at Archway Gallery and Framing. This was Marie's 4<sup>th</sup> annual event to benefit BSTP and she took great pains to ensure that the event could still be held during the pandemic. It continued online for a month.

In June, the fine folks at Beaches Energy Services rolled out a sea turtle awareness campaign to promote our message of keeping the beach **Clean, Dark and Flat** for turtles. The CDF message was printed on coffee mugs and sold at many local shops, with proceeds donated to BSTP. The campaign was wildly popular and will be repeated this year with a new mug design. Please visit Beaches Energy online or our website and Facebook page for additional details when the design is unveiled.

We also held our popular volunteer-led online fundraiser with Thirty One products.

*Statewide Report*

Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) records for 2020 include 105,185 loggerhead nests (slightly lower than 2019); 26,656 green turtle nests (low year pattern) and 1,652 leatherback nests (very high year).

We told you last year that 2020 was expected to be a lower nesting year for greens since they typically nest in a high year/low year pattern. They stuck to the pattern but gave us a higher “low” year than expected.

Leatherback nesting has already started in south FL and continues moving northward, although they haven't yet reached our general region as of this writing.

For additional 2020 statewide nesting information visit FWC's research section at [bit.ly/FWC-research](https://bit.ly/FWC-research)

## 2021 Calendar of Events

Our outreach event calendar was fairly empty last year because of the pandemic so we are anxious to get back into the community and share the wonders of sea turtles with all of you. We hope to add more events as the season progresses.

**Mar. 20**, 8-11. St. Johns River Keeper Beach cleanup, Atlantic Blvd.

**Apr. 10**, 10-1. Educational exhibit, Springing the Blooms, Beaches Museum.

**Apr. 12**, 11am. Sierra Club virtual presentation

**Apr. 17**, 10:30am. DAR virtual presentation

**Apr. 24**, 10-2. Educational exhibit, Party for the Planet, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

**First week in May** Virtual annual pre-season meeting at bstp.net. Recorded, attend at your leisure.

**May 1** Official start of nesting season.

**July 5**, 7-9 am. Annual 5<sup>th</sup> of July beach cleanup. Beach & Atlantic Blvds.

**Sept. 18**. Annual International Coastal Clean Up Day.

**Oct. 31** Official end of nesting season.

Check bstp.net and Facebook page for more details and new events.

*Dates are subject to change or cancellation without notice.*

## On The Horizon

The website is under renovation and will soon debut its refreshed new look.

2021 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of BSTP as a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Although we have been protecting sea turtles for a few years longer than that, our official formation as a nonprofit was on June 26, 1991. That's a great milestone for any nonprofit, but for a local, all-volunteer organization it is nothing short of amazing, so we hope you don't mind us tooting our own horn. We are still deciding the best way to celebrate while the pandemic is still a factor. Ideally we would love to have a big party and invite all of our supporters, but we don't want to put anyone at risk.

In closing, we sincerely thank all of you. We would not have made it through 30 years without your continued support and advocacy. Your donations 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 third-most popular Florida tag and the proceeds are used to fund research projects, provide educational materials and promote sea turtle conservation throughout the state.

And last but certainly not least, we must acknowledge our founders, the late Mort Hanson and his lovely wife, Jan. They will always be the heart and soul of BSTP no matter how many anniversaries we celebrate. This season is dedicated to Mort and Jan.

We wish all good things for you and your families after such a trying year and we look forward seeing you again on the beach.

## 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.*

*All conservation activities are approved by FWC under Marine Turtle Permit #111.*

## Reference Links

### BSTP Online

[bstp.net](http://bstp.net)

[facebook.com/beachesseaturtlepatrol](https://facebook.com/beachesseaturtlepatrol)

[youtube.com/user/bstpJax](https://youtube.com/user/bstpJax)

[instagram.com/bstpjax](https://instagram.com/bstpjax)

[linkedin.com/in/bstp](https://linkedin.com/in/bstp)

### Local Lighting Ordinances

Atlantic Beach: [bit.ly/AB-ordinance](http://bit.ly/AB-ordinance)

Neptune Beach: [bit.ly/NB-ordinance](http://bit.ly/NB-ordinance)

Jax Beach: [bit.ly/JB-ordinance](http://bit.ly/JB-ordinance)

## How your donations are used

- Utility vehicles, maintenance, gasoline
- Nest protection materials
- Office supplies and administrative infrastructure
- Educational materials (activity books, exhibits, brochures)
- Volunteer support (training materials, work shirts)

## BSTP is the only FWC-permitted turtle patrol in Atlantic, Neptune and Jax Beaches.

Our name is clearly visible on our work shirts and ATVs. If you observe anyone touching a turtle or a nest that is NOT identifiable as a BSTP volunteer, please notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency immediately. Similarly, there are no other groups who are authorized to accept donations or sell items on behalf of BSTP.

*You can help protect the turtles  
just by keeping the beach  
Clean, Dark and Flat!*

Pick up trash, keep lights off, fill in holes, knock down sandcastles.

**Nest watching or "nest-sitting" violates FWC protocol as it is highly illegal to interfere in any way with a nest or the turtles themselves. Please report any human disturbances immediately to the local police department and FL Wildlife Alert line at 1-888-404-3922, or #FWC from cell phone.**

