

Beaches Sea Turtle Patrol, Inc.

March 20, 2007

Dear Sea Turtle Friends and Supporters,

It's that time of year again. Patrol volunteers are beginning to emerge from hibernation to prepare for the new season. We have a few new things to tell you about but first let's review last year. The 2006 sea turtle season was a mixture of both joy and sorrow. There were 36 nests throughout Atlantic, Neptune and Jacksonville Beaches, one of which was lost completely to high tides. The very first emergence of the season resulted in a major disorientation caused by residential and street lighting. A majority of the hatchlings were lost although we were able to rescue about 7 from a storm drain and nearby yards. Prompt assistance from the Jacksonville Beach Public Works and Fire Departments netted another single rescue later in the morning. There were 4 other disorientation events, two of which were considered major. Most of the nests in south Jacksonville Beach were again invaded by dogs. We recorded about 11 instances of dog activity resulting in a loss of an estimated 75 eggs. One of the invaded nests was our only Green nest of the season. Human vandalism also played a role again this year. We recorded 5 instances of nest disturbance by humans but fortunately no egg damage was evident.

Below is a matrix summary of the 2006 nesting activity that we were able to document. Not everything can be fully documented, for example "Clutch size" would only be known if the nest were relocated.

First nest.....	May 24	Last nest.....	August 1
First emergence.....	July 18	Last emergence....	September 24
Clutch size when deposited....	2,721	Empty egg shells.....	3,613
Dead in nest.....	41	Unhatched/damaged eggs....	402

Using these figures we can conclude that no more than 3,170 hatchlings made it to the ocean, but that number does not take into account the 5 disorientation events. Although it is difficult to assess survival numbers of those events, the actual number of hatchlings to reach the ocean is probably closer to 3,000. Since biologists estimate that only one out of 1,000 hatchlings will survive to reproductive age, we can expect that only 3 turtles from all those eggs that were deposited on our beaches last season will someday reproduce. It is a stark indicator that our efforts are so very important to the preservation of these animals.

And the bad news doesn't stop there. You may have seen media reports of the record high number of strandings that occurred from southeast GA through central FL in 2006. Our 3 beaches recorded 27 reports of dead or injured turtles. Of those, we documented 24 turtles, 17 just in September. Five of the turtles were alive at the time of our reports and were transported to a rehabilitation facility, but most have since succumbed. Biologists have been working hard to figure out the cause and have narrowed it down to an unknown type of biotoxin that seemed to affect only Loggerheads.

We are now making preparations for the upcoming season which begins on May 1. Here are some of the new things you can expect to see this year: Our familiar red Kawasaki Mule ATV has been replaced by a green Yamaha Rhino, purchased second-hand. It is well-marked with our name and you can't miss our bright yellow "volunteer" shirts, so give us a wave when you see us out there. Our website has been completely renovated and contains many excellent sea turtle resources and we invite you to take a tour of our made-over home on the web. Beside the new design layout and content,

regular visitors will notice one more major change. You may be aware that FL Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and other agencies are strengthening many of their conservation guidelines across the board. To maintain compliance with our FWC permit, which enables us to work with the turtles, we are no longer able to publish individual nest data. The FWC strongly opposes attendance at emergences and by publishing nest information we would be disregarding that directive and putting our permit status at risk. We will, however, publish an aggregate nest total on the home page so you can follow the season's progress. We know that may be disappointing to some of you but we appreciate your understanding that the safety and welfare of the turtles is our primary responsibility.

Below is our 2007 event calendar to date. Prospective volunteers should plan to be at our first meeting on April 14. Thank you for your continuing support through donations, nest adoptions and memberships. We still have t-shirts, ornaments and other turtle gear available at events and online via mail, for separate donations, to show your support for the turtles. BSTP is virtually dependent on your donations — we receive no government funding and all work is conducted by unpaid volunteers. Please visit our website for more information about sea turtles, the patrol and our events. We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and exhibits, and, of course, on the beach.

2007 Calendar of Events (check website for additions and updates)

April 14, Saturday, 11:00 am-12:30 pm: First meeting of the season, volunteer sign up, Beaches Library, Neptune Beach.

April 29, Sunday, 2 pm: BSTP entry in annual Beaches Parade, Jacksonville Beach.

May 1 through June 10: Sea turtle art exhibit & sale to benefit BSTP, First Street Gallery, Neptune Beach.

May 18, Friday evening: Opening reception for First Street Gallery sea turtle art exhibit and sale. BSTP meet & greet with artists.

July 5, Thursday, 7-9 am: Annual Fifth of July beach clean up, sponsored by BSTP and Clean It Up, Green It Up. Pick up supplies on the beach at Atlantic Blvd., Beach Blvd. and 16th Ave. S.

September 15, Saturday, 7-9 am: Annual International Coastal Clean up, sponsored by BSTP and Clean It Up, Green It Up. Pick up supplies on the beach at Atlantic Blvd., Beach Blvd. and 16th Ave. S.

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904.613.6081 (*Urgent issues & emergencies only, please. Refer to website for general inquires*).

Extinction is forever



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