

Can you believe it's almost turtle season again? Seems like only yesterday we were putting away our nest supplies and cleaning the sand from our ears.

The preliminary 2008 statewide data gathered by Florida Fish & Wildlife (FWC) shapes up like this: 59,696 loggerhead nests; 9,312 green nests; and 837 leatherback nests. That represents a decrease for green and leatherback nests from 2007, but an increase for loggerhead nests. Conversely, the general trend as measured over the past 21 years shows that loggerhead nesting is on the decline while green and leatherback nesting is on the rise.

Locally in 2008, we had 36 nests and 11 false crawls (all loggerheads). Of those nests, we recorded the following:

- ◆ Number of eggs: 3,019
- ◆ Viable hatchlings: 2,509
- ◆ Dead hatchlings in nest: 116
- ◆ Unhatched eggs: 394
- ◆ Vandalism incidents: 6
- ◆ Predation incidents: 6

We were only able to evaluate 29 nests. Six could not be evaluated because of lost markers from Tropical Storm Fay, and the contents of another nest were destroyed by standing water from the September nor'easter. The 'dead in nest' count includes one entire nest of 87 that had hatched but drowned pre-emergence during TS Fay.

Even though there were 9 more nests than in 2007, losses from the weather made it an almost equal season. The number of predation and vandalism incidents increased from the prior year, as well. Fortunately no eggs were destroyed by the human vandals, but at least 200 eggs were destroyed by animals. As usual, racoons and dogs were the guilty parties, with south Jax Beach again taking the lead in dog incidents.



*Remains of hatchling from dog-predated nest, two weeks from full development. Some embryos were still moving.*

We recorded only 9 stranding incidents in 2008, down from 26 in 2007. Interestingly, this number included greens and kemp's ridleys in addition to loggerheads. All 9 were deceased when stranded. Statewide, there were 683 loggerhead strandings (down from 2007); 474 green strandings (2<sup>nd</sup> highest year); 8 leatherback strandings (2<sup>nd</sup> lowest year); and 77 kemp's ridley strandings. Propeller wounds were observed on 250 of these turtles.

We're already recording stranding incidents for 2009. As of this writing we have documented 5 stranded turtles in Atlantic and Jax Beaches. Three of them were still alive when we arrived on-site but one expired before it could be transported to a rehabilitation facility. What should you do if you come across a stranded turtle? Do not touch the turtle



or attempt to put it back into the ocean, and keep others away. Call BSTP at 613-6081 immediately and be prepared to provide all pertinent details. We will advise what else, if anything, you should do at that time. If you happen on a stranding **not** located in Atlantic, Neptune or Jax Beaches, you can call FWC at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922). This is also the number to report law enforcement issues or problems with any type of wildlife.

You may recall that we recently implemented a special committee to monitor artificial lighting situations near nest sites that could impact the hatchlings. In its inaugural year (2007) we had 100% cooperation from beach-side residents in the affected areas. In 2008 that was down slightly due to some concern by south Jax Beach residents about a rash of break-ins. But overwhelmingly, residents were eager to cooperate and for that we salute you. One concerned lady even went to the trouble of obtaining FWC-approved sea turtle-friendly light fixtures! For the second consecutive year, there were no documented cases of hatchling disorientations. With this kind of success we will definitely continue our efforts. If you would like more information about sea turtle-friendly lights, please contact the patrol or go online to the FWC website's wildlife lighting page at [http://myfwc.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS/Seaturtle\\_WildlifeLighting.htm](http://myfwc.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS/Seaturtle_WildlifeLighting.htm).

Throughout 2008 our volunteers again participated in many community outreach events. These ranged from speaking engagements at schools and civic group meetings, to conducting mock turtle-nesting activity to educate groups of girl scouts. We co-sponsored the annual beach clean ups (during a nor'easter, no less) and set up an information booth at the zoo for their Earth Day celebration. And we continued our new tradition of marching in the Beaches Parade as a great way to kick off the season and bring sea

turtle awareness to the minds of those watching. We also were honored to be included as a member of the art selection committee for the Turtle Trails project to benefit the Child Guidance Center. Their previous projects took the form of big cats and manatees, and this year it's sea turtles! Next month they'll be unveiling the finished artwork so watch our website for breaking news about that, and pick up your Turtle Tracking map at any Daily's store. You can also go to <http://www.turtletrails.org/> to learn about the project.



Volunteers march in the 2008 Beaches Parade

We invite you to join us at any of our public events. Here's what's on the horizon so far. Check the website calendar for additional details and updates throughout the season:

- ◆ Saturday, April 4, 10:30a: Pre-season meeting at the Beaches Library. New volunteer sign up.
- ◆ Sunday, April 26: Beaches Parade
- ◆ Sunday, July 5, 7-9a: Annual Fifth of July Beach Clean Up
- ◆ August 4-September 8: Annual sea turtle art benefit for BSTP, First Street Gallery. Opening reception Friday 8/7, 7-9p.
- ◆ Saturday 9/19, 7-9a: International Coastal Clean Up Day

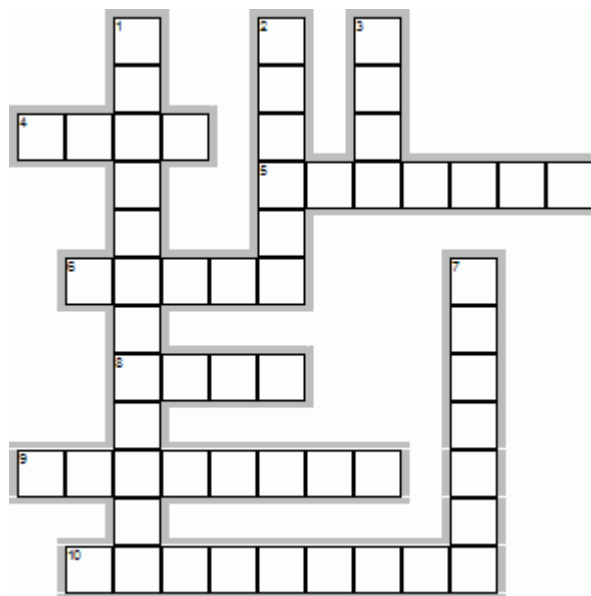
In other patrol news, we got a very unexpected and extremely generous gift in the form of a new (to us) Polaris Ranger! The 2006 utility vehicle was donated by Tom and Betty Petway after they noticed a posting on our website that we were looking for a second ATV. Our trusty old Rhino is getting a bit cranky and we thought we'd better start searching for an eventual replacement, thinking it would take awhile. The Ranger will now be our primary vehicle but since there's a little life still left in the Rhino we'll keep it as a back-up, which leads us to another little "want ad". Since the Ranger is based at the north end of Atlantic Beach, we would love to base the Rhino in south Jax Beach. This would enable us to respond quicker to situations there. We would need a secure area that's

accessible during daylight hours, preferably east of Third Street. If you have, or know of, a suitable place we would love to hear from you.

The Petways' gift enabled us to free up some funds that were earmarked for our next ATV acquisition, so we were able to purchase a supply of the laminated cards accompanying this letter. We anticipate that these cards will be helpful to volunteers and residents alike. If you would like an extra one or two they'll be available at the pre-season meeting, or you can flag down the ATV and we'll be happy to give you another.

If you haven't visited our website in awhile, you may want to check out the new links we posted for you — everything from environmental groups to educational clip art to sea turtle biology. We also created a page on the Facebook social networking website, so if you have a page you can help us spread awareness by simply adding us to your page. You're welcome to add yourself to ours. The address is <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=46754654410>.

We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and exhibits, and, of course, on the beach. In the meantime, please enjoy this little puzzle and decode a special message.



EdgeCrossword.com  
 Across: 4-A lot. 5-god of the sea. 6-Not hates. 8- Extremely. 9-Ocean we're next to. 10-Those that live here. Down: 1- Across the ditch. 2-Word of appreciation. 3-Acronym of our name. 7- Collective word for our little towns.

Visit [bstp.net](http://bstp.net) for puzzle solution and message.