SEA TURTLE REPORT

Keeping Marco's Beach Dark

By Maria Lamb

The May Nightly Beach Reports show notable challenges for nesting sea turtles. Keeping the beach dark and clearing the beach of manmade moveable objects are top of the list. Manmade moveable objects on the beach past 9:00 PM can obstruct nesting sea turtles coming ashore to nest.

For the past 24 nights in May, 28 manmade movable objects were reported on the beach after 9:00 PM. The officers on night patrol advised the subjects of the city ordinance and the objects were removed immediately for compliance. The officers reported kayaks, skim boards, chairs, towels, buckets, coolers, wagons, and tables. Officers also encountered abandoned equipment and these are taken off the beach. All these items can obstruct nesting turtles and pose risks to hatchlings.

Sea Turtles Like it Dark! According to the Sea Turtle Conservancy, nesting sea turtles used to have no trouble finding a quiet, dark beach on which to nest. But now, they encounter individuals on the beach at night using cell phones and flashlights, and beachfront properties are glowing with bright white lights, which can cause a sea turtle to disorient or crawl in circles on the beach and abandon nesting and go back to the water.

The beach is monitored each night to ensure compliance with Marco's sea turtle lighting ordinance. The month of May is not quite over, but already the Nightly Beach Report has taken photos of buildings past 9:00 PM that are not in compliance with the Sea Turtle Lighting Ordinance and forwarded them to Code Enforcement for follow-up. The nightly reports recorded 41 building light violations.

Under Marco's Sea Turtle Lighting Ordinance, "after one warning in a calendar year, excluding an irreparable event (a sea turtle or hatching dies), the following shall apply:"

- First Offense: minimum of $150, not to exceed $500 for each offense.
- Second Offense: minimum of $500, not to exceed $1,500.
- Third Offense: minimum of $1,500, not to exceed $2,000.

Pedestrian light is another category on the Nightly Beach Report. Sources come from individuals on the beach using cell phone lights and flashlights past 9:00 PM. According to the Nightly Beach Report, for the past 24 nights of May, 66 pedestrian lights were reported. The officer on duty would note on the report the number of individuals walking on the beach at night past 9:00 PM using cell phone lights or flashlights and the subjects were advised of the applicable City Code and the violations were immediately corrected."

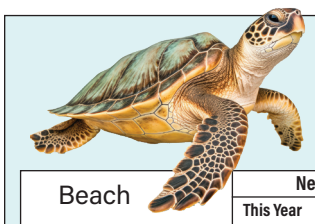
Helpful Tips to Keep Sea Turtles from Disorientation

- Turn off all unnecessary lights by 9:00 PM.
- Close blinds and curtains.
- Shield light sources.
- Do not use cell phones, flashlights, or flash photography on the beach after 9:00 PM.
- Interior lights should not be seen from the beach.



Photo by Maria Lamb

Fill in holes in the sand before you leave for the day. These large holes or pits can entrap both adult sea turtles and hatchlings.



Sea Turtle Activity
May 18 - May 24, 2026

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	39	63	32	66	0	0	0
Delnor Wiggins	11	16	5	27	0	0	0
Vanderbilt	37	56	25	40	0	0	0
Parkshore	36	52	38	60	0	0	0
City of Naples	42	38	24	52	0	0	0
Keewaydin Is.	127	136	153	138	0	0	0
Sea Oat Island	2	4	3	2	0	0	0
Marco Island	29	15	40	74	0	0	0
Kice and Cape Romano	35	29	44	39	0	0	0
10,000 Islands	33	35	27	38	0	0	0
Collier County Totals	391	447	391	536	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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