SEA TURTLE REPORT

Hatched Nest Monitoring and Releases on Marco

By Maria Lamb

Sea Turtle monitors are busy checking out all the nests during their morning inspection. As the expected sea turtle hatch date (approximately 60 days) approaches, sea turtle monitors observe all nests for signs of hatching, such as the obvious depression in the sand or hatchling tracks around the nest. According to the Collier County Annual Report, sea turtle monitors excavate each nest for evaluation approximately 72 hours (three days) following signs of first emergence.



Photos by Anthony Filippini

A Sea turtle monitor is removing all the contents of the nest by hand and recording all data, such as empty eggshells.signs of emergence.

The monitors examine and remove all the contents of the nest by hand; they measure the depth of the nest and record all data, such as empty eggshells, which account for live hatchings that escaped from the nest and/or dead turtles, found inside the nest. Unhatched eggs are opened and inspected to determine the stage of development. If live hatchlings are found in the nest, they are either released immediately or transferred to a bucket of moist sand for night release.

Last week, on the south end of Marco, sea turtle monitors found five live hatchlings still inside the nest, and they were released into the water. Hatchling releases are conducted according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission – Marine Turtle Conservancy Handbook (Rule 68E-1.004, 2016).

A reminder for all beach-facing residents - lights off after 9:00 PM through

October 31st – so indoor lights do not illuminate the beach. According to FWC, "disorientation from artificial lighting causes thousands of hatchling deaths

each year in Florida and is a significant marine turtle conservation problem."



Sea turtle monitors found five live hatchlings still in the nest when they excavated the nest 72 hours following signs of emergence.

Sea Turtle Activity Update August 26 - Sept. 1, 2025

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	300	222	270	187	212	102	35
Delnor Wiggins	65	55	99	75	59	21	0
Vanderbilt	274	221	205	198	217	116	34
Parkshore	217	213	272	188	169	71	52
City of Naples	268	244	224	277	200	70	52
Keewaydin Is.	556	421	736	658	351	161	0
Sea Oat Island	19	10	24	17	10	0	0
Marco Island	118	97	310	231	68	36	12
Kice and Cape Romano	187	135	216	190	50	34	0
10,000 Islands	155	129	171	134	98	44	0
Collier County Totals	2159	1747	2527	2155	1434	655	185

To report dead, injured or disoriented sea turtles on Marco call 239-289-9736 or 239-289-9687

Sawfish from A5



Photo by Angela Collins

Lukas Heath and Tonya Wiley preparing to release the smalltooth sawfish into Tampa Bay at the Bishop Harbor Boat Ramp.

Tampa Bay region. Multiple reports of sawfish sightings at Redington Beach resulted in HCC responding to capture, tag, and release two newborn sawfish in April and May 2021. Thanks to several reports from the public, HCC scientists responded to the area around Rattlesnake Key in lower Tampa Bay and successfully caught, tagged, and released three sawfish in 2023.

The angler who reported the stranded sawfish on August 9, 2025, had first encountered the species through a fishing tournament where HCC distributed educational materials. Remembering that encounter, he knew exactly how to report the sighting. "He's the reason the sawfish is swimming free now," Wiley said. "He remembered what he learned at that event and knew to report it."

"All of these threats - habitat loss, shrimp trawls, and now the spinning fish phenomenon - have put sawfish in a precarious state," Wiley reflected. "That's why rescues like this matter so much. Each survival increases the odds that this ancient species, with its distinctive rostrum and prehistoric lineage, will remain part of Florida's waters. At this point, saving even one sawfish can make all the difference."

More Information

The U.S. Sawfish Recovery Team encourages anyone who encounters a sawfish to report it through www.sawfishrecovery.org, by calling 1-844-4SAWFISH, emailing sawfish@myfwc.com, or using the FWC Reporter app. It is crucial to report any sawfish sighted, even if it seems perfectly healthy and without needed assistance.

For those wishing to support research, tax-deductible donations can be made to oceanfdn.org/projects/friends-of-havenworth-coastal-conservation/. Updates are also available through HCC's monthly newsletter: lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/eRXX8df.

