Holes a Safety Hazard for Sea Turtles and People

By Maria Lamb

Several coastal cities in Florida have adopted "no holes on the beach" ordinances. Most recently, Holmes Beach has already passed one such ban, and Anna Maria Island (Manatee County) is in the process of making it safer for beachgoers and newly hatched turtles to navigate the beach. According to these ordinances, holes dug on the beach should not go deeper than one foot below the surrounding sand.

The solution taken by these coastal cities is an ordinance that bans the use of metal shovels other than "kid's type plastic shovels" from being used by the beachgoing public and limits the depth of holes dug. Kristen Mazzarella, Anna Maria Island Turtle Watch representatives stated, "adults (sea turtles) are at risk of falling into large holes, and when they do, they might struggle to climb out. As for the baby turtles (hatchlings) heading to the ocean, they can fall into these same holes and are too tiny to escape."

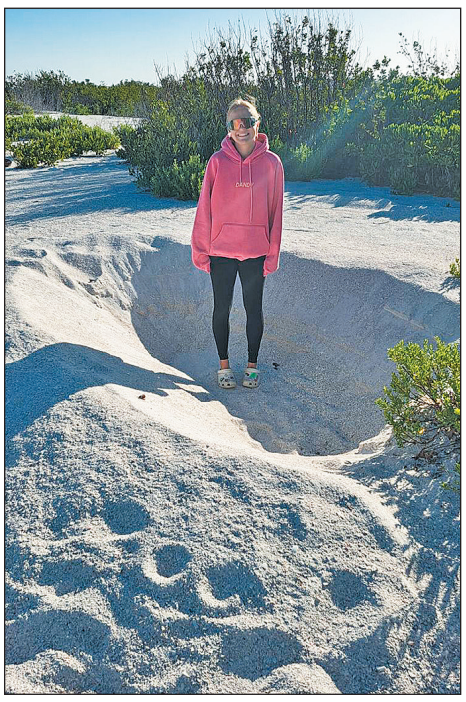


Photo by by J. Jewett

Deep holes are a hazard for both sea turtles and humans. Please fill in the holes before leaving the beach.

Their ordinances regarding digging holes also stated, "No person shall possess on or about the sandy Gulf beach a metal shovel of the type customarily sold in hardware stores – not a children's toy," and "no person shall dig a hole in the sandy Gulf beach deeper than one foot below surrounding grade unless part of a construction project permitted under the Florida Building Code or similar law."

On Marco Island, holes on the beach of varying depth and width have become the norm. But sometimes these holes are over six feet deep. It is a safety issue even for humans, and it is not about prohibiting kids and adults from having fun digging holes. When left unfilled, it is up to beach vendors in the morning to fill these holes, along with Marco's Code Enforcement Officers.

Just last weekend, an adult female loggerhead came ashore looking for a nesting site at the southern end of Sand Dollar Island. Imagine a scenario where she might have fallen into one of these deep holes and sustained irreparable injuries. Also, hatchlings will soon be emerging from their nests and will head to the water. Holes of any size are a potential death trap as they scamper to reach the water.

Remember: Only one in 1,000 baby sea turtles make it to adulthood. **Please fill in holes before leaving the beach – you are saving a Sea Turtle!**



Photo by Henry Leono

A female Loggerhead came ashore last week looking for a nesting site at the southern end of Sand Dollar Island.

Sea Turtle Activity Update June 24 - 30, 2025

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	220	187	214	129	1	4	0
Delnor Wiggins	55	38	71	36	0	0	0
Vanderbilt	219	180	164	162	4	2	1
Parkshore	161	149	227	128	0	2	0
City of Naples	198	188	186	234	0	0	0
Keewaydin Is.	407	231	580	457	1	0	0
Sea Oat Island	13	9	15	14	0	0	0
Marco Island	66	75	214	191	0	0	0
Kice and Cape Romano	128	94	187	151	0	1	0
10,000 Islands	112	93	129	108	0	3	0
Collier County Totals	1579	1224	1987	1610	6	12	0

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

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