

EASY THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP SEA TURTLES



Produced by the Franklin County Tourist Development Council in Cooperation with the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve



BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE BEACH

- Bring in beach gear including chairs, tents, tables and toys.
- Fill in holes and knock down sand sculptures.
- Take your trash with you.



SO TURTLES DON'T GET CONFUSED AT NIGHT

- Turn off outdoor lights underneath houses, around pools and porches
- Close curtains in beach homes at night during nesting season
- Don't shine flashlights at nesting sea turtles or hatchlings

A Guide to Franklin County's Annual Sea Turtle Nesting Migration and how you can help protect these Important Visitors

SEA TURTLES ARE PROTECTED VISITORS

Scan the code to learn more about Franklin County's Sea Turtles.

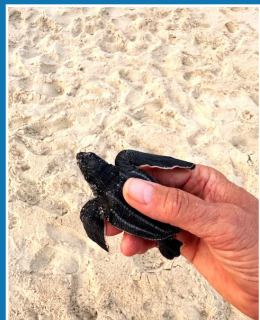


LEAVE NO TRACE

From May through fall, Franklin County Beaches become nesting habitat for protected sea turtles.

Franklin County has a Leave No Trace Ordinance that requires chairs, umbrellas and equipment to be removed nightly. Removing items from the public beaches helps mama turtles more easily navigate the beaches to nest and allow hatchlings a clear path back to the water. If you dig a hole on the beach during the day, please fill it in before you leave.

PROTECT THE TURTLES DURING YOUR VISIT



Sea turtles are some of the most mysterious and loved creatures that visit our Florida beaches. In Franklin County, as in many coastal areas throughout the southeastern United States and world-wide, there are active efforts to protect these animals on their nesting beaches and the waters they swim in the bay and Gulf.

Five of the world's seven sea turtle species swim in Florida waters, and three of these species nest on our local beaches. Loggerhead sea turtles are the most common nesting turtle in Franklin County and in all of Florida. Green sea turtle nests are less common, and leatherback turtles are the rarest nesters, returning to the panhandle every few years to lay only a handful of nests. Sea turtles typically nest on the barrier island Gulf beaches, but they do occasionally nest on mainland areas such as Carrabelle Beach.

Nesting season is from May to October each year, with females laying nests from May to August and hatchlings incubating and emerging from these nests into October. A female will lay several nests within one season, but only nest every couple of seasons. Each nest may contain between 80-120 ping-pong-ball sized eggs. By laying multiple nests, females are spreading out the chances that some of these nests will be successful. Nests face many threats from natural predators, weather disturbances and obstacles such as beach chairs, tents and other items left by beach visitors. It is estimated that 1 in 1,000 eggs will make a turtle that survives to adulthood.



Visitors to Franklin County beaches can help keep sea turtles safe by keeping beaches "clean, dark, and flat" Sea turtles' eyes follow faint light in the night sky from the moon and stars. Bright, white lights, like those from houses, pools and flashlights, can confuse and disorient turtles. Turtle hatchlings will crawl towards these artificial lights instead of towards the water and can die if they cannot find their way to the water. Keeping lights shielded and using turtle-friendly lights (amber to red lights) disturb turtles less. Franklin County has a lighting ordinance (§2015-1) to assist in the goal to reduce harmful lighting.

KEEP IT CLEAN

Sea turtles can also be deterred from nesting, become hurt, or even die when they run into obstacles or large holes on the beach. Hatchlings that fall into holes are too small to get out, and large nesting adults cannot move backwards and can get caught in large holes, beach chairs, umbrellas, or other equipment. Franklin County has also adopted a "Leave No Trace" ordinance to encourage responsible behavior regarding these items (§2014-01).

LEARN MORE



Visit [Floridasforgottencoast.com/ things-to-see-do/beaches/sea-turtles](http://Floridasforgottencoast.com/things-to-see-do/beaches/sea-turtles)



Visit the **St. George Island Volunteer Turtlers Facebook page**



Attend the **Apalachicola NERR's free "Turtle Tuesdays" talks, every Tuesday at 2:00 PM ET from June – August.**

ANERR is located at 108 Island Drive, Eastpoint.
Visit www.apalachicolareserve.com for details.