



Nesting Sea Turtle Information

The middle of April is the beginning of the sea turtle nesting season in the Florida Keys. April through October, female sea turtles crawl out of the ocean onto the beaches and dunes to lay their eggs under the sand. Sea turtles dig a large body pit, then a smaller clutch cavity [egg chamber] in which they lay about 100 eggs. The turtle covers the nest with sand and crawls back into the water.

Approximately 50 days after being deposited the eggs will hatch. Hatchlings emerge from the nest and make their way to the sea. The young turtles' voyage through the seas is a life fraught with peril.

The next 20-30 years will be spent growing and maturing. The surviving females return to the same nesting area where they were hatched. They will continue the cycle of sea turtle life that has existed for millions of years.

Male sea turtles do not come on beaches; instead they spend their lives at sea.

Here are some things you can do to help ensure nesting females and hatchlings are as safe as possible during their brief time on the beach:

- 1. Turn off any unnecessary lights. Keep necessary lighting low and avoid any light on beaches. Nesting females are repelled by light and hatchlings are attracted to light.**
- 2. NEVER have a fire on the beach.**
- 3. At night, keep noise to a minimum to prevent interrupting nesting attempts.**
- 4. Chairs, kayaks, canoes, boats, etc. left on the beach at night can deter females from nesting and prevent hatchlings from reaching the ocean. Please do not store any such items on beaches.**
- 5. Do not approach nesting females or hatchlings. You may disrupt their natural behavior.**