

## Things to remember during sea turtle nesting season:

Help protect Florida's sea turtles and their coastal habitats. Nesting season is from March through October on the Atlantic coast, and from May through October on the Gulf coast. While visiting the beach during the nesting season, please remember a few simple things:

- \* **It is against the law to touch or disturb nesting sea turtles, hatchlings, or their nests.** Sea turtles are protected by both Federal and State laws.
- \* **Do not walk on the beach with a flashlight or shine lights at sea turtles.** The light can cause females to abandon the nesting process and discourage other turtles from coming ashore to nest.
- \* **Do not take pictures at night using a flash.** This high-intensity light can be even more disturbing than flashlights.
- \* **Turn off outside patio lights and shield indoor lights from shining directly onto the beach by closing the drapes at night.** Lights disturb nesting sea turtles and disorient hatchlings.
- \* **Avoid disturbing marked sea turtle nests** while enjoying the beaches during the day.
- \* **Dispose of trash when you leave.**
- \* **When crossing a dune, please use designated cross overs and walk ways.** Do not climb over the dunes or disturb dune vegetation.
- \* **If you see an injured or dead sea turtle,** call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Division of Law Enforcement at 1-888-404-FWCC or contact the Turtle Stranding Staff by Pager at 1-800-241-4653 (ID#274-4867).

*"If the world goes on the way it is going, it will one day be a world without sea turtles. Some people accept this calmly, but I mistrust the prospect. Sea turtles are part of the old wilderness of the Earth -- the environment in which man developed the nerves and hormones that make him human. If we let sea turtles go, it is a sign we are willing to let all wilderness go. And when that happens, we shall no longer be exactly human."*  
*by Dr. Archie Carr, CCC Founder*

## HOW YOU CAN HELP:

**Support the oldest sea turtle research and protection group in the world. Join CCC and its Sea Turtle Survival League!**

**Join on-line at: [www.cccturtle.org](http://www.cccturtle.org)  
Or call toll-free: (800) 678-7853**

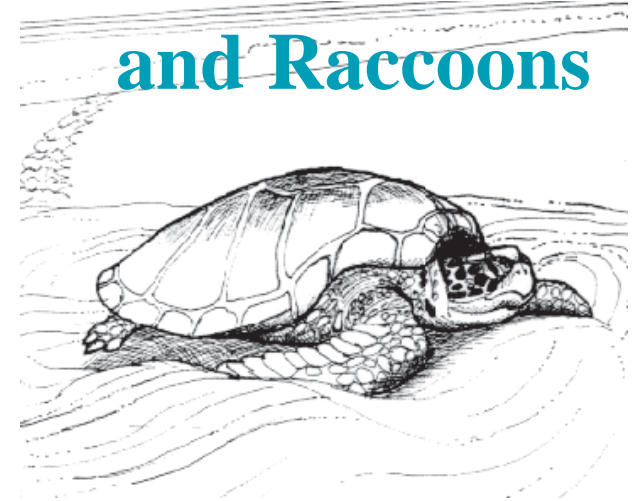
**Support Sea Turtle Research, Education & Conservation:  
Buy a Sea Turtle License Plate!**

You can directly support sea turtle protection by purchasing a Sea Turtle Specialty License Plate. It's simple! Go to your local county tag office, turn in your current license plate and request a new Sea Turtle Specialty Plate. You can do it at any time. The tag will cost an additional \$17.50, all of which goes to support sea turtle conservation in Florida. For more information on the turtle tag, look here:

**[www.helpingseaturtles.org](http://www.helpingseaturtles.org)**



# Facts About Sea Turtles and Raccoons



**Raccoons destroy thousands of sea turtle eggs each year and are the single greatest cause of sea turtle mortality in Florida. This brochure tells how you can help protect sea turtles and raccoons.**



## The Problem

Raccoons are usually harmless, interesting neighbors. Under natural conditions they pose little threat to sea turtles. However, because of the availability of food, loss of natural predators, and other reasons, in urban environments their populations have increased beyond what would be expected in the wild. Each year, raccoons living along the Florida coast destroy tens of thousands of sea turtle eggs and hatchlings. In fact, raccoon predation is the single greatest cause of sea turtle mortality in Florida! Along some stretches of Florida's most important sea turtle nesting beaches, raccoons dig up and destroy over 75% of the nests. The good news is that by doing a few simple things, people can help address this growing problem.

## It Is Illegal to Feed Wild Raccoons In Florida

Feeding wild animals has become a significant problem in Florida. To address this problem, in 2002 the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission passed a rule prohibiting the feeding of raccoons, bears, and foxes. It was already against the law to feed alligators. It is now a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree

misdemeanor in Florida to intentionally feed these wild animals. **Blatant and repeat violators may be fined up to \$500 and receive up to 60 days in jail.**

When people feed wildlife, the animals become less cautious of humans. They often become dangerous or cause considerable property damage. Raccoons are particularly troublesome because they can be found throughout Florida and in most urban areas; they're not fussy about their choice of food; and they're clever and persistent at getting to food sources. **One person feeding a raccoon is likely to cause problems for everyone in a neighborhood.** Raccoons, after being fed, will come back repeatedly, often bringing other raccoons. Soon, there can be dozens of destructive raccoons stealing pet food, tearing screens, and dumping garbage cans. Raccoons also are not fussy about where they live, often setting up house in attics, crawlspaces, or under decks, potentially causing considerable property damage.

When wild animals are brought in close proximity to people, it is easier for them to transmit disease through bites and scratches. Raccoons can carry distemper, rabies and harmful parasites, which can infect pets and people. Unfortunately, people who feed raccoons are likely killing the critters with kindness. Because it is illegal to relocate nuisance raccoons in Florida, habituated animals very often end up being euthanized.



Florida Power and Light

**The picture is blurry, but the problem is clear.** Packs of raccoons often steal turtle eggs before mother turtles even have time to bury their nests. This sight is all too common on many Florida beaches.

**Citizens who know or see someone feeding raccoons, should report them to the toll free Wildlife Alert Hotline at 1-888-404-FWCC.**

## The Solution Is Simple

Ninety percent of all loggerhead sea turtle nesting and 100% of green and leatherback sea turtle nesting in the continental U.S. takes place in Florida. Loggerhead sea turtles are classified as threatened under state and federal law. Green and leatherback turtles are endangered. Because some of the beaches along Florida's central Atlantic coast are nationally and internationally important to sea turtles, the Federal Government established the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Brevard and Indian River Counties to protect the nesting beaches. These beaches, and others along Florida's Atlantic coast, host the highest densities of nesting sea turtles in the United States.

It is important to reduce the unnaturally high and unhealthy raccoon populations adjacent to important sea turtle nesting beaches. There are a few simple things people living on barrier islands and along the coastline can do to discourage raccoons, thereby, protecting both sea turtles and raccoons.



**Do not feed raccoons. It is illegal!**



**Keep garbage cans covered and secured. Keep them in the garage or build a bin with a latchable lid.**



**Do not leave pet food outside at night, when raccoons are actively searching for food.**

