

Nearing the End of the 2018 Sea Turtle Season

By Peggy Deneau

The passing of Hurricane Chris raised the tides out on the beach, but not high enough to affect our nests. Hurricane Beryl became a non-event, breaking up far to our south.

For some unknown reason, no new sea turtle nests have been laid in Pine Knoll Shores since the end of June. It would not be surprising to have a very light year, as the past two were very heavy. We had 11 nests in 2017, and 15 in 2016. Sea turtles come ashore to nest only once every three or four years, and we have many more nests now than we did in the early 2000s, when we were lucky to have one or two each year. I like to think our work is paying off.

Nest #2 was the first to hatch, after a very short incubation of just 50 days. It was also the first of two nests that were moved this summer, as it was laid below the high tide line. A telltale depression was apparent on the nest on Friday, July 20, showing that it had already hatched. That evening, our sitters saw one vigorous hatchling emerge and make his way into the ocean. There was no activity Saturday night while our sitters were there, but on Sunday morning three small crawls showed that a few more hatchlings had emerged in the wee hours. On Monday morning one dead hatchling was found on the nest, and another one was wedged in a ghost crab hole.

Nest #2 was excavated on Tuesday, July 24, at 7 p.m. by Sandy Bridger and Donna Fountain. Maria DeCandia took inventory. In the nest were 110 shells, 13 unhatched eggs, two dead hatchlings, three live hatchlings, and one pipped/live hatchling. The three live hatchlings walked down the runway into the ocean, and the pipped/live hatchling followed, after working his way out of his shell to cheers and applause. The emergence success of Nest #2 was 74%.

Nest #1 boiled at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 24, 55 days after having been laid. We got word of the imminent hatch right after excavating Nest #2. A few volunteers were present to witness the textbook perfect boil as many hatchlings made their run into the ocean. There was also a huge crowd of tourists and local residents who enjoyed the show.

Nest #1 hatched a bit earlier in the evening than usual. Perhaps the lack of sunlight heating the sand made the hatchlings think it was later and darker than it actually was. Sea turtle hatchlings will feel the sand temperature near the top of their nest. If it is warm, they will settle down and wait. If the sand is cool they will emerge if they are ready. This is a survival instinct. Cool means dark, and seagulls will not pick them off the beach or dive on them in the water. Fewer predators will notice them under cover of darkness, giving them a better chance of making it into the ocean. With all the rain and overcast skies we had in late July, I am surprised (but pleased) that more nests haven't hatched in the daytime.

Nest #1 was excavated on Friday, July 27, at 7 p.m. by Cindi Davia and Brianna Jones. Donna Stevens took inventory. In the nest were 90 shells and one unhatched egg. The emergence success of this nest was 99%.

Back in April of this year, we had a young, emaciated Green Sea Turtle stranded on the beach behind The Inn at Pine Knoll Shores at about 8 p.m. The police were alerted and called volunteer Liz Mauser, who called me and volunteer Danny Frye. As the turtle was alive, I asked Liz and Danny to take it to the aquarium, while I tried (unsuccessfully) to find someone to open the doors. I finally contacted Sarah Finn on the hot line, and she asked me to have the turtle delivered to the loading dock at C-MAST in Morehead City, and placed in any container found there. After leaving the turtle in a black rubber tub, Liz and Danny returned home a little after 9 p.m. The turtle was later picked up by a veterinarian, Dr. Emily Christiansen, who took it to a rehabilitation facility on Roanoke Island.

A delightful and unexpected surprise. Over the next several months, Liz and Danny wondered if there was any hope of the turtle being released here by our group. On Thursday evening, before the excavation of Nest #1, Dr. Matthew

Godfrey told me he could bring our turtle and another one to the excavation so we could release them both. I was pleased and excited, especially for Liz and Danny. Matthew told me the turtle had been named at rehab, and he was now called Anders Celcius. He was also tagged with a microchip for monitoring. For me he will always be Anders Celcius Mauser-Frye, in honor of my two dedicated volunteers.

Nest #3 boiled at 10:55 p.m. on Saturday, July 28, after an incubation of 56 days. All the hatchlings were safely in the water by 11:02. The boil was witnessed by Mindy Furrer and the Trinity Center team. The nest was excavated on August 1 at 7 p.m. by Barbara Prutzman and Becca Knudson. Donna Fountain took inventory. In the nest were 126 shells, 11 unhatched eggs, one dead hatchling, and one live hatchling that walked down the runway to the delight of all present. The emergence success of Nest #3 was 82%.

Nest #4 had a partial emergence at 6 a.m. on July 31 during a downpour, after a 52 day incubation. Kay Howe was walking the beach and alerted me. I sent reinforcements Freddie Nelson and Donna Stevens to help. Donna Fountain was also there to assist. Several hatchlings were rescued from clumps of seaweed and plucked out of ghost crab holes. All were seen safely into the water, and everyone went home. At 8:20 a.m. there was a second emergence, and the troops met again, just in time for a second drenching. A few more hatchlings emerged during the early afternoon and were seen entering the water by a family of tourists renting the house overlooking the nest.

Nest #4 was excavated on August 3 at 7 p.m. by Ken and Cathy Smail. Inventory was taken by Cindi Davia. In the nest we found 100 shells, and nothing else. This was the only perfect nest I have ever seen, and it was wonderful. The emergence success was 100%.

Since we had only six nests laid this summer, and none since the end of June, this might be the shortest sea turtle nesting season on record in Pine Knoll Shores; however, the action has been fast and furious. With all the rain in July following the incredibly hot month of June, nests are hatching early. One nest hatched before the runway was even built, and another hatched the day after. All the runway building, nest hatchings, and excavations have come in very quick succession. We are now down to our last two nests in Pine Knoll Shores. We might get a Green Sea Turtle nest yet, as they nest later in the season—and we're hoping we do.

Please see the Town Crier pages in this issue for photos from this year's turtle season up to this point.

Concert at St. Francis by the Sea

By Linda Laughton

On Friday, September 7, at 6:30 p.m., Carteret County resident Bright Walker will present "Sounds of the Singing Bowls" at St. Francis by the Sea Episcopal Church. Ms. Walker has worked with integrative therapies for over 27 years, and her experience in complementary healing includes massage therapy and acupuncture. After earning her B.S. degree from Springfield College in Massachusetts, she attended the Carolina School of Massage Therapy in Carrboro, and started practicing therapeutic massage in Morehead City in 1991.

In the late 1990s, Ms. Walker was introduced firsthand to the relaxing effects of the singing bowls, which emitted soothing vibrations she not only heard, but felt. After each performance, she observed her body to be in a more peaceful and relaxed state and her energy renewed. Deeply inspired by this experience, she later studied and trained with leaders in sound therapy.

Used for thousands of years to promote healing, sound therapy is an ancient practice that has recently gained widespread attention. Embarking on an inward journey of peace and tranquility, Ms. Walker's two-part performance will showcase the therapeutic sounds of the bowls, gongs and chimes, and will offer an opportunity to experience the relaxing benefits of sound and vibration. The first

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