

# Sea Turtle Nests Update

By Peggy Sagmiller

For several weeks, there has been a huge crab hole on Nest #1, but no one ever saw the crab. The hole was regularly filled in, only to reappear by morning, with the fill sand piled outside the hole. After 7 p.m. on Saturday, August 8, two dead green sea turtle hatchlings were found on top of this nest. One had obvious crab damage; the other was mostly intact. We excavated Nest #1 on Wednesday, August 12.

The excavation was performed by Liz Mauser and Danny Frye. Mindy Furrer inventoried the contents. In the nest were 41 shells, 54 unhatched eggs, 12 pipped (partially hatched) dead hatchlings, four dead hatchlings and one live hatchling. The total clutch size was 109, with one egg having been removed for DNA analysis. Everyone enjoyed watching the live hatchling make its way into the ocean, and many photos were taken. The emergence success of Nest #1 was 66%. This nest had been overwashed by high tides for most of July. It was high and dry when laid, but the protective escarpment eroded after it was too late to move the nest.

On Friday, August 7, a few loggerhead sea turtle hatchlings emerged from our suspected nest, #2 1/2. This nest was the one where no eggs were found, yet we strongly suspected it was a nest. We decided to wait until August 12 and excavate this one at the same time

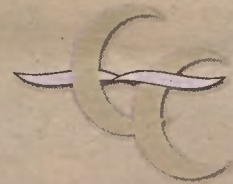


Left photo: Liz Mauser, Danny Frye and Mindy Furrer excavate Nest #1; right, Malcolm Bone, Mindy Furrer and Arlene Terrell excavate Nest #2 1/2.—Photos by Suzanne Deneau

as Nest #1, thinking that the wait would give additional hatchlings time to emerge. Not all sea turtle nests boil when hatching. Sometimes the hatchlings trickle out over several nights. This nest was one of those.

The excavation of Nest #2 1/2 was performed by Malcolm Bone and Mindy Furrer. Arlene Terrell inventoried the contents. In the nest were 93 shells, 6 unhatched eggs and one pipped dead hatchling. The total clutch for Nest #2 1/2 was 100. No egg was taken for DNA analysis at discovery, because we never found any. However, a sample was taken after the inventory was completed. Nest #2 1/2 had an emergence success of 93%—a great result.

As of mid-August, we are still watching Nests #2 and #3, and we are about to get Nest #4 ready for sitting. We will continue to keep everyone up to date on the nests in Pine Knoll Shores as they hatch.



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