

# End of a Great Sea Turtle Season

By Peggy Deneau

The 2018 sea turtle nesting and hatching season in Pine Knoll Shores was a very short one this year. No nests have been laid on our beach since June, but those we had all hatched successfully. Although we have no fall nests to sit, we also have had no losses to storm tides.

Nest #5 boiled at 11:40 p.m. on August 10, after an incubation period of 55 days, and after all but two people went home. Volunteers Linbe Blackford and Cary Spencer decided to stay for a while in case the lack of noise and movement might lure the hatchlings out—and that's exactly what happened. I believe that the hatchlings prefer quiet, and I am sure they can feel the vibrations in the sand and hear the voices of the waiting group. Perhaps they believe predators are waiting and stay in the nest until all is calm and quiet. Sitting a nest is not a party, but a time for observation and assistance if needed.

Nest #5 was excavated on August 14 at 7 p.m. by Donna Stevens and Julia Parks. Linda Pearson inventoried the contents. In the nest were 92 shells and 11 unhatched eggs. The emergence success of Nest #5 was 78.6%.

Nest #6, our last of the season, boiled at 9 p.m. on August 22, with a second group of hatchlings emerging shortly before 10 p.m., 54 days after having been laid. This nest was excavated on August 25 at 7 p.m. by Jennifer Bryan and Maria DeCandia. Barbara Prutzman took inventory. In the nest were 110 shells, one unhatched egg, two dead hatchlings, one live hatchling and one pipped/live hatchling. The live hatchling was released to walk into the ocean. The emergence success of Nest #6 was 95.5%.

The pipped/live hatchling was helped out of his shell on the runway. After a short walk, it was obvious that the little guy was dragging his yolk sac behind him and would be unable to make the swim to the Gulf Stream. He needed time to absorb the yolk and the energy it contained in order to make his swim.

Volunteer Freddie Nelon placed some damp sand in her bucket, and then added the hatchling. She took him home and kept him in a dark closet with a towel over the bucket to mimic the conditions of a nest, and to keep him calm. She named him Grover, because he was born behind Ocean Grove Condominiums. After nearly 72 hours of regular checking, Grover had absorbed his yolk sac. Freddie waited until 7 p.m. on Tuesday, August 28, when the sun was low, to release Grover. He was strong and lively, and ready at last to make his journey. Congratulations, Freddie.

This year's sea turtle season was short, but very productive. Six-hundred-thirty-two Loggerhead Sea Turtle hatchlings were released from our beach in Pine Knoll Shores. No nests were lost, and all were successful.

Thanks go out to all the volunteers who gave their time and energy to watch over and protect these turtles. You are the reason we have such a great program, and I hope you will all return for the 2019 season.

Please clearly mark recycling containers to ensure that recycling is not picked up by the trash truck. Stickers for this purpose are available at town hall. Contact Sarah Williams at town hall at 247-4353, ext. 13, or [swilliams@townofpks.com](mailto:swilliams@townofpks.com) with questions.



From left, Donna Stevens, Linda Pearson and Julia Parks prepare to excavate Nest #5.—Photos by Peggy Deneau



From left, Jennifer Bryan, Barbara Prutzman and Maria DeCandia prepare to excavate Nest #6.



The last from Nest #6 to enter the ocean, Grover begins his journey.

—Photo by Freddie Nelon