

# Mid-season Sea Turtle Nesting Report

By Peggy Deneau

All of our walking and watching has certainly paid off. We now know that we have seven loggerhead sea turtle nests on our beach. This is already one more than we had in all of 2018.

Nest #4 was discovered by volunteer Donna Fountain on the morning of June 24. Volunteer Linda Herbst was there to help us find the eggs and take the necessary measurements and readings.

Nest #5 was found by volunteer Jennifer Bryan early on the morning of July 1. Soon volunteers Lisa Park and Kim Elliott arrived, and the search for the eggs began.

We thought that it would be very unlikely that a sea turtle would nest on the evening of July 4. All the loud fireworks and lights in the sky and on the beach are not conducive to nesting at all. Sea turtles much prefer dark, quiet nesting places. However, bright and early on the morning of July 5, we were proven wrong. We had not one, but *two* nests, both laid on the night of the 4th.

Nest #6 was discovered by resident Cathy Cawthorne, who lives next door to the beachfront home where the nest is located. She called me to let me know about it, and I immediately called volunteer Anne Charlton, who was just leaving home to walk that part of the beach. She soon arrived with Donna Fountain, and the eggs were quickly found.

Nest #7 was first spotted by town resident Leslie Pylko's son, Jim Jablonski, who was visiting for the holiday and taking a very early morning walk on the beach. Soon

volunteers Ken Smail and Cathy Crandell arrived, and measurements and readings were taken. By the time we started to dig for the eggs, Donna Fountain, Anne Charlton, and Linda Herbst all arrived, having walked down the beach from Nest #6 to join us. That was one busy morning.

Soon we will begin sitting the first of our nests, while the nesting season continues, and we will still walk the beaches and look for turtle crawls for weeks



Jennifer Bryan with an egg from Nest #5.—Photo by Lisa Park

to come. Sea turtles can nest here all the way through the month of August, and occasionally into the fall. Green sea turtles tend to nest later in the season than our usual loggerheads. Two years ago, we had a green turtle nest that was laid at the end of September. Due to two early freezes, the entire nest died. We gave it every opportunity, finally excavating it on New Year's Eve. We found all the approximately one-inch-long babies perfectly formed inside their shells. Hopefully, when this mama green turtle nests again, she will do it a bit earlier in the season.



Some members of the Pine Knoll Shores Turtle Patrol gathered to walk in the town's July 4 parade. Joining them (holding the sign) is turtle volunteer Carolyn Patton's grandson, James Heeden, visiting from Greensboro.

Ken Smail removes an egg from Nest #7 as Peg Deneau looks on.—Photo by Anne Charlton



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