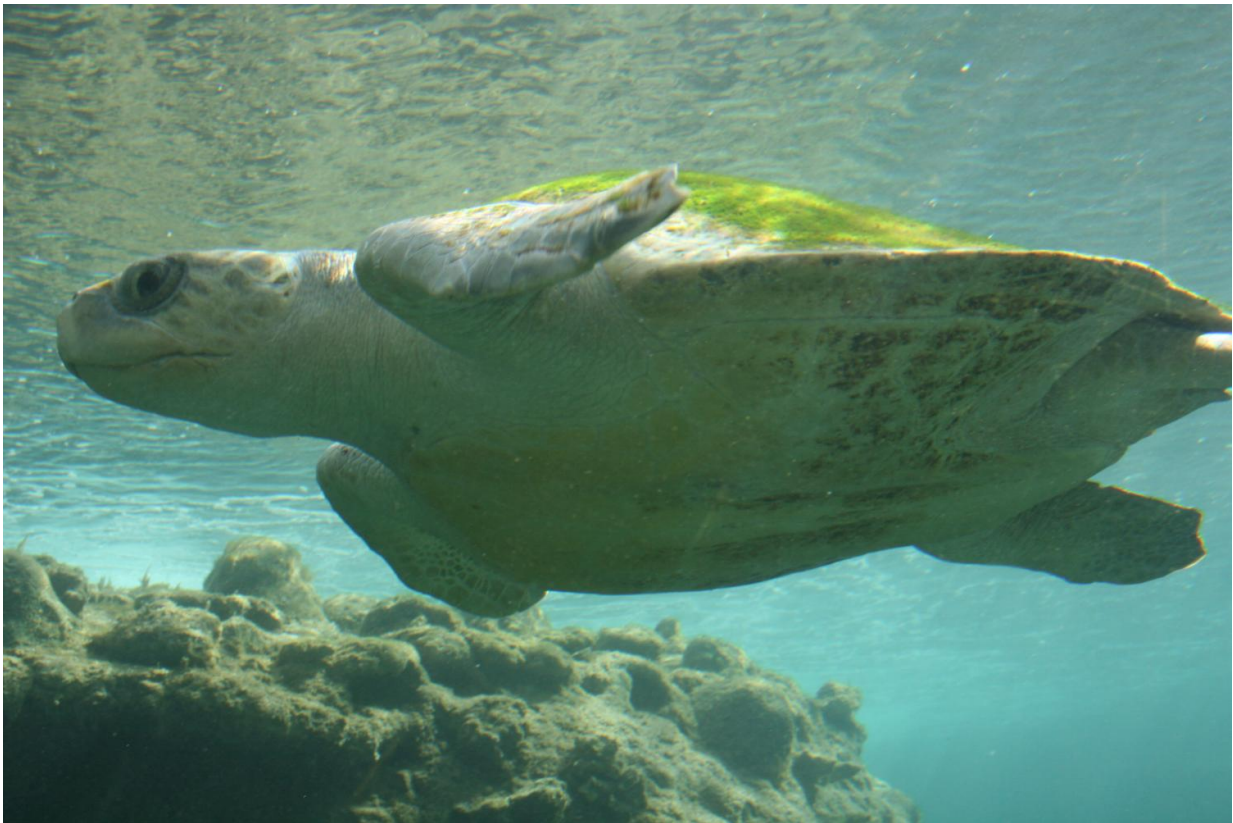


Hundreds of sea turtle nests lost after Hurricane Dorian: 'It could have been worse'

September 17 2019, by Lisa Maria Garza



An olive ridley sea turtle, a species of the sea turtle superfamily. Credit: Thierry Caro/Wikipedia

Strong tropical winds and high tides associated with Hurricane Dorian unearthed hundreds of sea turtle nests on beaches along the Space Coast,

officials said.

The massive storm brushed past the East Coast earlier this month and [beach](#) runs were halted until conservation teams could safely survey Dorian's impact on the marked nests.

The state accounts for 90% of the nation's sea turtle nests and many East Coast beaches are expecting record numbers this year.

Officials at Canaveral National Seashore estimate that 1,500 nests of 6,000 marked before Dorian's arrival were affected.

Spokeswoman Laura Henning said the estimate is based on the number of markers that were washed away. There's still a chance the nests weren't wiped out and any remaining buried eggs could hatch, she added.

"Canaveral National Seashore documented over 13,000 nests this season, so even with the storm it was an extremely successful nesting season and at least 6,000 or so of the nests had the whole incubation period and hatched if they were going to before the storm," Henning said in an email.

Sand erosion and tidal inundation are the main factors that caused the loss of 257 sea turtle nests on Volusia County beaches, according to Jennifer Winters, sea turtle habitat conservation plan manager.

"The sand eroding causes the eggs to wash out into the ocean so they're just completely lost," Winters said. "The tides come up higher overwashing the buried eggs so essentially they're held underwater for too long and they can drown that way."

Conservation officials urged the public not to interfere with [mother](#)

[nature](#) by trying to rescue any stranded hatchlings or rebury uncovered nests.

Female sea [turtles](#) reproduce every other year and lay multiple clutches, which contain about 100 soft-shelled eggs the size of ping-pong balls, throughout the summer.

Volusia County staff, volunteers and contractors already marked nearly 1,000 sea turtle nests this season on its beaches, breaking the previous high [nest](#) count of 919 set in 2012. In 2018, 577 nests were counted.

"It could have been worse, for sure. We could have lost everything in the storm and not had any to follow up on," Winters said. "Some of the nests left out there have been successful and we've got good counts out of hatched [eggs](#). It's not a total loss. The turtles are still nesting."

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