

First sea turtle nest of the season discovered on the Outer Banks

May 15 2023, by Kari Pugh



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Just in time for Mother's Day, rangers at Cape Hatteras National Seashore found the first sea turtle nest of the season Friday morning on Ocracoke Island.

"While most of us were sleeping, this mom was working. Who can relate?!" the National Park Service said in a Facebook post.

Park biologists on routine patrol spotted mama's tracks from the ocean and back, leading them to a loggerhead nest.

"After following the tracks and carefully digging in the sand, a nest with eggs was confirmed," the post said.

Biologists then covered the nest back up and installed rope fencing to protect it.

"Please adhere to signage and nighttime driving restrictions along the seashore as we share the [beach](#) with wildlife and provide them a safe nesting space," the [park service](#) said.

Outer Banks sea turtle nesting season runs from May through September, with turtles returning year after year to lay their eggs by digging nests into the sand. About two months later, the tiny turtles hatch out, scatter across the beach and head to the ocean.

Five species of turtles are found along the Outer Banks, the most common the loggerhead and [green turtle](#). Leatherbacks, hawksbill and Kemp's ridleys also make appearances.

This year's first Outer Banks nest arrived slightly earlier than usual.

By following a few guidelines, people can help protect endangered [sea turtles](#) as they nest this summer. Here are some tips from the North Carolina Wildlife Commission:

- Because sea turtles nest mostly at night, beachfront property owners and those renting beachfront property are encouraged to

turn off their outdoor lights and close their blinds/draperies after dark. Or, in lieu of turning off the lights, they can redirect lights so they are not visible on the beach.

- People on the beach after dark should refrain from using flashlights or cellphones. Bright, artificial light can deter females from coming on to shore to [nest](#) and can disorient sea turtle hatchlings, causing them to wander inland, where they often die of dehydration or predation.
- Beachgoers should remove beach equipment, such as lounge chairs, umbrellas, tents and other items from the beach when they leave. If left on the beach these items can prevent nesting attempts and prevent hatchlings from reaching the ocean. In fact, in many coastal towns, it is illegal to keep these items on the beach after dark.

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