

Sea turtle nest found at Virginia Beach's North End is first since 2019—and the eggs are close to hatching

August 25 2023, by Stacy Parker, The Virginian-Pilot



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Loggerhead sea turtle eggs inside a nest discovered at Virginia Beach's North End earlier this summer are on the verge of hatching, and

volunteers and staff from the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center are standing by to ensure the tiny creatures make it to the sea.

"We're expecting a hatch any day now," said Chelsea Witherup, [aquarium](#) stranding and research technician.

A sea turtle nest hasn't been found at the North End since 2019, but others have been seen on more remote beaches in Virginia Beach, including False Cape State Park.

The North End beach is adjacent to houses and is less busy than the resort area to the south, making it an attractive spot for female turtles to build a nest.

"The mother is going to come up and is basically looking for a quiet dark beach, no people running around and talking, no dogs," said Witherup.

Dan Reis, a volunteer who was patrolling the [beach](#) at sunrise June 23, found tracks that led to the nest site near the high tide line. Aquarium staff confirmed it contained 129 eggs, which they relocated closer to the dune line for protection, Witherup said.

A loggerhead nest is about two-and-half feet deep and shaped like an upside down light bulb with a funnel to the top. When the [hatchlings](#) begin to emerge from ping-pong ball-sized eggs, it's called a boil because the sand looks like it's bubbling up. They emerge after dark.

The aquarium's team has smoothed out a path to the ocean to help the hatchlings, which are typically about 3 inches long, crawl to the water's edge.

Aquarium [volunteers](#) are monitoring the North End nest every night. If the hatchlings head the wrong way or if predators, such as ghost crabs,

approach, the team will intervene.

"Our priority is letting these guys do their thing," said Witherup.

Adult loggerheads can weigh up to 400 pounds and live between 60 and 80 years. The species gets its name from having a very large head.

The aquarium has documented 10 turtle nests along Virginia's coastline this year. All have been loggerheads except for one, a green turtle [nest](#).

The public should not handle hatchlings or other marine life. The discovery of hatchlings or nests can be reported to the aquarium's stranding hotline at 757-385-7575.

©2023 The Virginian-Pilot.

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Sea turtle nest found at Virginia Beach's North End is first since 2019—and the eggs are close to hatching (2023, August 25) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-08-sea-turtle-virginia-beach-north.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.