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Sea Turtle nesting season begins in Sarasota County

Sarasota County Natural Resources officials are reminding residents and visitors that the sea turtle nesting season began May 1. Each year hundreds of turtles swim to our shores searching for the best possible habitat to lay their eggs. The beaches of Sarasota County host the highest density of loggerhead nests on Florida's West Coast.

Only one out of 1,000 sea turtle hatchlings survives to reach reproductive age. On land, light pollution and habitat loss threaten their survival. Lights from coastal development draw sea turtles away from the gulf and many die from exhaustion, starvation and predators. Furniture left on the beach overnight poses an entanglement hazard to nesting females and it's a barrier to the 2-inch hatchlings trying to make their way to the water.

To protect sea turtles and habitat, residents and visitors should:

- Minimize beachfront lighting by turning off, shielding, or redirecting lights away from the beach.
- Replace incandescent and fluorescent bulbs with amber or red LEDs.
- Close blinds and draperies in beachfront rooms at night.
- Remove lounge chairs, cabanas, umbrellas, and personal recreational items from the beach at night.
- Properly dispose of trash and discarded fishing gear. Turtles may mistake plastic bags and wrappers for food and can become entangled in old nets and fishing line.
- Knock down sand sculptures and fill in holes before you leave the beach.

All sea turtles, including those that visit Sarasota County beaches like loggerhead, green and Kemp's Ridley turtles, are protected by the Endangered Species Act and Sarasota County's Marine Turtle Protection Ordinance.

For more information, or to request a lighting inspection of your property, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit www.scgov.net.

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