



Sea Turtle Foundation Monitoring Nesting and Hatching Sea Turtles Guidelines for Participants

When participating in sea turtle nesting and hatching events you are witnessing a crucial part of the sea turtle's life cycle. Any disturbance can stop a turtle from nesting or seriously disrupt a hatchling's chances of survival. Please follow these guidelines to ensure you cause no harm during monitoring events and to fully enjoy your sea turtle experience.

Behaviour

- Stop when you see a sea turtle emerging from the water and remain still until it has passed you and is in the sand dunes.
- Keep still while watching sea turtles as they are easily disturbed.
- Slowly and carefully move away if your presence is interrupting normal nesting behaviour.
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not touch turtles unless under the direction of your Team Leader.
- Keep behind nesting turtles until your team leader advises you to move.
- Never touch the eggs unless invited to do so by your team leader. Do not handle eggs if you are wearing insect repellent, perfume or hand cream as you may cause contamination.

Use of lights

- Keep light use to an absolute minimum.
- While patrolling the beach keep lights switched off unless needed for safety in which case shield the beam and point the light down.
- Do not shine lights on turtles leaving the ocean to nest as this can cause them to return to the water.
- Do not shine lights on turtles before they start to lay their eggs as they are very vulnerable to disturbance during this period.
- Once they are laying their eggs keep lights behind the turtle and away from the face.

Photography

- Camera flashes can disturb nesting turtles and disorientate hatchlings.
- Do not take photos until instructed by your Team Leader.
- Only take photos from behind the turtle while she is laying her eggs.
- Never take flash photos directly in a turtle's face.

Special considerations for hatching events

- Keep lights off while hatchlings emerge from the nest. Hatchlings find the ocean by looking for the brightest area; lights will lead them in the wrong direction.
- Do not take flash photos unless approved by your Team Leader.
- Do not shine lights on hatchlings even once they have reached the water.
- Do not assist hatchlings out of the nest or into the water. This period is a vital preparation for when they start to swim and for their future ability to navigate.
- Ensure there are no major obstacles in the sand such as hollows left by car tyres or holes dug by children.
- If you see a hatchling in obvious trouble such as stuck in thick undergrowth or heading the wrong way, move it back to safety. But leave it to find its own way down the beach to the sea.

Sea turtles move at a slow pace and nesting can take several hours.

Please be prepared for a long wait and please be patient.

Follow instructions from your Team Leader and enjoy the experience.