



Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute and Volusia County stranding team responders assist a pygmy sperm whale that beached itself.

Live whale stranding occurs in Daytona Beach

Local beachgoers were witness to an incredible sight Tuesday, June 27, when a live whale stranding occurred near the Main Street Pier in Daytona Beach. The whale was an adult female pygmy sperm whale (*Kogia breviceps*) measuring 9.58 feet. The whale was first spotted Tuesday morning as she came up in the surf in about 10 to 15 feet of water. Just before 1 p.m., she came ashore.

Members of the Volusia County Marine Mammal Stranding Team, Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute and Volusia County Beach Patrol responded quickly by shading the animal with umbrellas and placing wet towels over the whale's body to keep her cool. Despite her weakened state, the whale managed to flip towels off and bent an umbrella pole nearly 90 degrees – just a reminder that even when a whale is sick and out of its element, it still possesses remarkable strength.

Nearly 200 beachgoers gathered as the stranding responders carefully rolled the whale upright and continued to pour buckets of water onto the animal as they awaited the arrival of Sea World's animal care team and veterinarian. While pygmy sperm whales are common throughout Florida waters and are the second most common marine mammal to strand in the Southeast, there hasn't been a pygmy sperm whale stranding in Volusia County in nearly two years.

Pygmy sperm whales naturally live in offshore waters and feed on deep water organisms which are not found near the coast. Therefore, if this type of animal is seen near our shores it is may be weak and dehydrated from a lack of its usual food source, in addition to an illness.

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Sea turtle nesting update

From May through October, loggerhead, green, and leatherback sea turtles lay nearly 400 nests on our beaches. The most frequent nesters on Volusia County's beaches, loggerhead sea turtles, laid 378 nests this year. Green sea turtles account for 20 nests and there is one leatherback nest this year.

Coincidentally, there have been an almost equal number of false crawls as nests. A false crawl is when a sea turtle emerges from the ocean but does not lay a nest. Development, human activity and reduced dry sand in these areas result in an undesirable nesting habitat. Human disturbances (such as flashlights, flash photography, standing too close, making too much noise or even abandoned beach furniture and equipment) also can cause a female turtle to abandon her nesting attempt and crawl back into the ocean.

By October, the female turtles are typically done nesting and the nests laid earlier in the season are hatching. Specially trained volunteers check each nest daily until it hatches. Three days after the first baby hatchling emerges, these specially permitted volunteers evaluate each nest for reproductive success. For the nests that emerged in 2006,



23,564 hatched eggshells have been counted and 1,247 live hatchlings have been recovered from their nests. These hatchlings were either released on site because they were in good health or taken to the Marine Science Center for rehabilitation and future release.

As hatchlings emerge from the nest at night, they instinctively move toward the lightest open horizon. Artificial light sources may outshine the natural glow of the ocean and draw the hatchlings away from the water leading them west toward the street. If you live close to the beach, you should inspect your property from the beach at night for any sign of a visible light source and make sure your lighting follows the County's ordinances. For more information about sea turtles and lighting, visit www.volusia.seaturtles.org.

Environmental learning center update

Designs for the exhibits at the future environmental learning center at Lyonia Preserve are underway. Because the center is adjacent to Lyonia Preserve, a 360-acre scrub habitat preserve, the focus of the displays is Florida scrub habitat.



Lyonia Preserve is home to about 125 Florida scrub jays.

Scrub is characterized by low-growing shrubs that may or may not have a canopy of pine trees and is home to the protected Florida scrub jay.

The task of the exhibit designers, ThemeWorks Inc., is to tie the scrub story, including ecology, history, and land-use timeline, into the displays at the center.

The main display on scrub habitat will feature the plants and animals within Lyonia Preserve and will include many species that require this habitat for survival. The display also will highlight the critical role scrub habitat plays in aquifer recharge and its importance to Volusia County's human inhabitants.

Other displays will highlight animals and plants found in various ecosystems and illustrate the connection of these ecosystems to scrub habitat. As these connections are made, scrub habitat's unique characteristics will become evident to the center's visitors. The displays will include characteristics of major ecosystems including, geology/soil types, native plants and animals (species that rely on the habitat for survival) and elevation/topography. A riverine display will illustrate the importance of aquifer recharge and how this feeds the springs that protect manatees during cold weather.

For more information about the Center or volunteer opportunities, contact Katrina Locke at (386) 736-5927, ext. 2331, or go to www.lyoniapreserve.org.



Volusia County holds derelict crab trap cleanup



Katrina Locke (left) and Cara McCallister (right), Volusia County Environmental Management staff, pull a derelict crab trap out of the water.

Volusia County held a derelict crab trap cleanup in the Mosquito Lagoon estuary June 19. Derelict, or abandoned, crab traps are not only a nuisance and a navigation problem within the boating community, but also pose a serious threat to marine life. Ropes attached to the crab traps can entangle wildlife leading to injury and death. The traps themselves can become so dilapidated that any marine animal curious enough to go inside one may never be able to get out. A derelict trap can continue trapping and killing marine life for years. Studies indicate that every abandoned trap results in the needless death of dozens of blue crabs per year and untold numbers of fish and other aquatic life. Approved guidelines are used to determine whether a trap is derelict and must be removed from the water.

Volusia County, with the help of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, recovered 75 derelict traps reaching 100 percent of their goal. With the success of this cleanup, future trap cleanups in other areas of the county are being considered.

For more information, contact Georgia Zern at (386) 736-5927, ext. 2839, or gzern@co.volusia.fl.us.

Monofilament recycling program

So far this year, Volusia County has installed 12 new monofilament-recycling bins throughout the county. These new bins join others that have been placed at area parks, marinas, boat ramps and docks in an effort to collect used and excess fishing line that may otherwise end up in waterways or the landfill. Local volunteers empty the bins and take the used fishing line to recycling boxes at bait and tackle shops. When filled, the boxes are sent to a company that specializes in recycling the fishing line into other plastic items such as artificial fish habitats.

We need your help! The success of this program is due in part to the collaboration of citizens and communities getting involved and taking action. As we continue to install new recycling bins more volunteers are needed to empty the bins.

To be a part of this project, contact Jennifer McGee, Volusia County Environmental Management, at (386) 736-5927, ext. 2235. For more information about monofilament line recycling, visit: www.volusia.manatees.org.



Coastal Cleanup

For the past 20 years, the Ocean Conservancy and coordinators from around the globe have worked together to create the largest daily volunteer effort - known as the Coastal Cleanup. Data collected during this annual event is analyzed and tracked from year to year, which helps scientists understand the sources of marine debris and find solutions to the problem of pollution.

In 2005, more than 448,000 volunteers from 74 countries made a difference by collecting more than eight million pounds of trash from 18,242 miles of coastline. Data compiled from this cleanup showed the impact of human activities. Fifty-two percent of the debris collected was related to food consumption such as wrappers, straws, beverage containers, plastic utensils, etc. Items related to cigarette smoking made up 26 percent of the debris collected.

For the 2006 cleanup, more than 600 volunteers in Volusia County participated Sept. 16, picking up an estimated 1,000 pounds of debris from more than 15 miles of beaches. Among the top items collected were 6,527 caps and lids, 3,217 food wrappers, 1,783 beverage containers and more than 30,000 cigarette butts! Thanks to everyone who came out and made a difference!

Don't forget to mark your calendars for next year's coastal cleanup to be held Saturday, September 15.



Shoreline restoration

Staff from Volusia County Environmental Management (VCEM) is wrapping up a successful season of native salt marsh plantings to restore habitat along the Halifax River in Ormond Beach and Holly Hill. These areas were severely damaged during the hurricanes in 2004 which caused erosion that collapsed sidewalks and put roads in danger. To stabilize the upland area and prevent further erosion, Volusia County Road and Bridge obtained grants that funded the shoreline repair and the placement of large coquina rocks, while the Ponce deLeon Inlet and Port District provided funding to VCEM for the shoreline plantings.

Salt marsh grasses provide the first line of defense against waves that come crashing to shore. These grasses grow in the intertidal zone and absorb the energy of waves that pass through them. These areas serve as important wildlife habitat providing food



and cover for many species including birds, juvenile fish, shrimp and crabs. These grasses also trap sediment and help to build up the shoreline. Healthier shorelines will be less susceptible to damage from future storms.

This project would not have been possible without the help of the many volunteers who came out to restore this important part of the ecosystem. For more information or if you are interested in participating in any future restoration projects, visit www.volusia.estuaries.org or contact Cara McCallister at (386) 736-5927 ext. 2330



Newly planted marsh grass helps trap sediment and build up the shoreline.

Ponce Inlet channel-dredging and Manatee Watch

A channel-dredging project in Ponce Inlet that was completed in September has enabled the Manatee Protection Program to gather additional data on manatee behavior and individual identification. The project involves maintenance dredging of the existing channel to provide more navigable access through the area. Certified manatee observers for the project monitored manatee movement around the dredging operation.

Volunteers with the Volusia Manatee Watch Program concentrate on observing manatees in local waterways, documenting behaviors and identifying scar patterns. If you would like to be a part of this new and exciting program contact Jennifer McGee at (386) 736-5927 ext. 2235, or jmcee@co.volusia.fl.us. For more information about the Manatee Watch program, visit www.volusia.manateewatch.org.



3rd Annual DeLeon Springs Cleanup

More than 50 participants volunteered their time to help clean up the community and springshed of DeLeon Springs Oct. 28. More than 10-tons of debris were collected in a little under three hours. In fact, the 20-yard rolloff dumpster donated by Waste Management was filled by 9:30 a.m., just an hour and a half into the cleanup. Efforts then shifted to collecting only tires. Approximately 200 tires were collected and piled separately from the other trash (per state law). Wachovia Bank graciously gave permission to use their dumpsters onsite, which were promptly filled with collected trash.



In planning for the cleanup, staff from Environmental Management identified the need for additional cleanup efforts, especially in the Magnolia Manor area of DeLeon Springs. To address this need, a community meeting is planned for Wednesday, Jan. 17. The next cleanup in the area is being planned for Saturday, Oct. 27.



In addition to the DeLeon Springs Cleanup, the Halifax/Indian River Cleanup will take place Saturday, April 21, and the St. John's River Cleanup will take place Saturday, June 2, so be sure to save those dates on your calendars.

For more information, contact Tom Carey at (386) 736-5927, ext. 2073 or visit www.volusia.org/cleanup.

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Unfortunately, when a marine mammal strands, the animal is already very ill and should not be returned to the ocean without veterinary treatment; doing so is almost always fatal.

In this case, the whale was terminally ill and died while in transport to Sea World. Researchers then performed a necropsy, or animal autopsy, to learn why the whale stranded.



Preliminary findings indicate that the whale may have suffered from a type of heart inflammation called cardiomyopathy. Other tests are being conducted to determine what may have caused this condition. The data gathered from stranded marine mammals provides important information about the species in general, the condition of each animal, and environmental factors that may have contributed to its illness.

To report a stranded or injured whale or dolphin, page Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute at (321) 638-9839 and contact the Volusia County Marine Mammal Stranding Team at (386) 822-1698 or (386) 316-2848. For more information, visit www.volusia.marinemamals.org.

To become more environmentally responsible, please sign up to receive EnviroNet via email by contacting Jennifer McGee at (386) 736-5927 x 2235 or jmcgee@co.volusia.fl.us

For timely notifications of environmental activities in Volusia County, please sign up for our EnviroNet E-Mail List Service: www.volusia.org/environmental/listserv.htm

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