

Volusia Coastal Wildlife Season's Calendar

www.volusiaseaturtles.org

January

Small shorebirds called Piping Plovers are visiting their wintering habitat in the south eastern United States and can be observed locally around Ponce Inlet from August through May. It is always important to observe migratory birds and other wildlife from a distance. If a bird takes flight or vocalizes loudly, you are too close!

February

Nesting season for Ospreys begins in February. These large birds of prey which are sometimes mistaken for Bald Eagles because of their brown and white feathers can often be seen at the beach putting on an exciting display while diving for fish along the shore. Often, you can observe them hovering over the water looking for a meal or flying away with their meal held between their strong talons or claws.

March

March is the last month of the season (December to March) that you can observe Right Whales off the coast between Georgia and Florida. These large whales are the most endangered baleen whale in the north Atlantic and come down from the north east to give birth to their young. If you see a Right Whale call, 1-888-97-WHALE to report your sighting!

Shorebirds lay nests on the beach between March and September. Unlike some birds that nest high in trees, these birds lay their eggs right on the sand and are very vulnerable to foot traffic. Please abide by posted or closed bird nesting area signs. When adult birds feel threatened, they may abandon their nests or chicks.

April

Turtle Day is held at the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet each year. This special turtle event hosts educational booths, children activities, and ends with a beach gathering to watch the release of sea turtles and birds which healed successfully at the rehabilitation clinic.

Gopher Tortoises are mating April through June. These terrestrial turtles use the dune ecosystem to forage and dig their magnificent burrows. Please keep off the dunes to protect this unique habitat for all wildlife. Dunes also provide the first line of coastal protection during storms!

Earth Day is April 22nd.

May

Sea Turtle nesting season is from May 1st to October 31st. During this time, females which hatched off of nearby beaches, as babies, are returning, more than 20 years later, as adults, to lay their own nests. If you see a sea turtle nesting on the beach, please do not disturb her. Observe all nesting activity from a distance of at least 50 feet away and speak quietly. Sea turtles can be scared back into the water by the presence of people or artificial lights, so make sure to keep your flashlight turned off! If a sea turtle washes ashore or appears to need help, contact Beach Patrol staff.

Female Gopher Tortoise lay their eggs in May and June.

June

World Ocean's Day is June 8th! This year, try to plan an activity to help the ocean by organizing a neighborhood clean-up or by committing to reduce waste and increase recycling throughout the year.

Manatee mating herds are often seen off beaches and in waterways as the waters warm up. Sometimes these herds can be in very shallow water or even out of the water. Although these animals may appear distressed, this activity is natural. Keep a safe distance from all wildlife to minimize disturbance.

July

Sea Turtle hatchlings are emerging from their nests July through October. Let their first sight be moonlight! Artificial lights can discourage nesting adults and disorient hatchlings. If you are a beachfront property owner, properly shield, redirect or replace lights which can be seen from the beach and are not compliant with the Sea Turtle Lighting Ordinance.

August

Washback Season is August to November. During this time, watch out for young, post-hatchling sea turtles that have been washed back on to the beach with seaweed. If you find a washback sea turtle or any other wildlife in peril on the beach, contact Beach Patrol at 386-239-6414 x 0 and do not put them back into the water.

September

On the 3rd Saturday of September, the Ocean Conservancy hosts the International Coastal Clean-up each year. Help clean your favorite beach in Volusia County or on any coastline on earth during this event. Visit www.signuptocleanup.org for locations and details.

October

Sea turtle nesting season officially ends October 31st. Sea turtle nests may be still incubating and hatching on the beach! Check out the "Turtle Journal" on this website under the "what's hot" button to learn about the nesting season and other beach events that happened this year!

November

Visit the Marine Science Center during the Wings on the Wind event held in November to celebrate the fall migration of birds. This fun educational event hosts expert talks, educational booths, displays and kids activities. The event wraps up with a release of birds that have been successfully rehabilitated at the on-site bird hospital.

White Pelicans begin arriving to Florida for the winter. These pelican are much larger in size to our year-round residents, the Brown Pelicans.

December

Visit natural coastal parks to experience the wonders of migratory bird season. Being in a migratory bird flyway, Volusia County winters host a warm home for an amazing amount and diversity of bird species.