



What should you do if you find a small washback sea turtle?

From August through November, young sea turtles may be mixed in with Sargassum seaweed on the beach. If you find a turtle in the seaweed, **DO NOT** put it back in the ocean or hold it in standing water. These animals are often exhausted and can barely lift their heads to breathe.

- 1.** Make sure the sea turtle is out of harm's way. All sea turtles are threatened or endangered species and are protected by state and federal laws. **DO NOT** take the turtle home.
- 2.** Leave it on the sand and provide shade over it. Determine your exact location. The address, building name, street name or GPS location are most helpful.
- 3.** Immediately notify Beach Safety:
 - Beach Safety Dispatch: 386-239-6414
 - New Smyrna Beach office: 386-424-2345
 - After hours (7 p.m. to 7 a.m.): Sheriff's Dispatch, 386-248-1777, ext. 6

Keep the turtle in a quiet, dry, shaded area with no direct air conditioning or standing water. Do this even if you think it is dead. Beach Safety or a partner organization will meet you to obtain the turtle.

What are washbacks?

Young sea turtles use floating Sargassum seaweed offshore for safety and food during the first stages of their lives. Heavy surf and strong winds often push this seaweed, and the turtles among it, onshore. When their shell length is five inches or less and they are found “washed back” onto the beach, they are called washbacks.

Washbacks may die if they are left on the beach or placed back in the water. They are usually unable to make the long swim back offshore and require medical care. If rescued, they will be brought to the Marine Science Center or another sea turtle hospital, where they will be treated and returned to their offshore habitat.

Washback Watchers

From August through November, this team of permitted volunteers searches through deposits of seaweed for sea turtles.

If you would like to become a Washback Watcher, please call Volusia County Environmental Management at 386-238-4716 or 386-238-4668 or visit VolusiaSeaTurtles.org.



For more information

To learn more about sea turtles, call the Marine Science Center at 386-304-5544, go to MarineScienceCenter.com, or visit the center at 100 Lighthouse Drive, Ponce Inlet. The center is closed on Mondays.



Environmental Management

