

July 2005

Update on the Sea Turtles

Although Hurricane Dennis took out all of the existing sea turtle nests (56) on St. George Island, the turtles began crawling again as soon as the storm passed, and we now have over 25 nests on the island again. I am still enjoying my work as a volunteer, walking my assigned stretch of beach at dawn each morning to mark new nests from the night before. The storm left the sand packed, so the mother turtles are crawling far up into the eroded dune areas, looking for soft sand in which to dig their nests. This makes for good protection against future storms and high tides, but puts some of the nests very close to homes and access to the beach. Homeowners and vacationers are working with us to re-route paths to the beach around the nests.



Two excellent helpers, measuring the crawl width



A nest site

where the mother turtle scrapes the sand with her front flippers to throw sand behind her as she covers the nest. There can be over 100 eggs in each nest. The egg chamber widens



Eggs!

out in a lightbulb-shaped manner below the narrow neck at the top of the nest that we find (shown above). We dig down just enough to verify the exact location of the egg chamber, then return the nest to the state in which

The eggs will incubate 55-60 days, so we will be working with homeowners to insure lights are kept off during periods when we expect hatchings. This will serve to keep babies from becoming disoriented, and let nature take its course in guiding the babies to the water. We are eagerly awaiting the first emergence of baby turtles sometime towards the very end of August and first of September.



A crawl in the Plantation, right up to the eroded dunes