

June 05

Turtle Patrol on St. George Island



I've been volunteering with the St. George Island Volunteer Turtles group for the last two years, walking an assigned stretch of beach at dawn each morning. We look for turtle crawls left the night before that indicate a new nest (as in this picture taken by Andree Grogan) and for baby turtle tracks later in the season as they begin to hatch and emerge from their nests.

The mother turtle crawls are very distinctive – 30-40 inches across, with alternating flipper marks on either side and the smooth wide track of their shell in between. The baby tracks are similar, but much smaller in scale.

Once we find the nests, we mark, measure, and record the stats for the crawl, to be added to a larger database managed by the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve folks, and to the larger organizations in Florida.

The babies emerge approximately 55-60 days after the mother lays the nest, usually at night, and make a dash for the ocean. There can be 50-100 babies or more in a nest.

The first nests on St. George this year were found on May 27, but Tropical Storm Arlene and Hurricane Dennis took care of most of them. We have marked 7 nests so far on the island since Dennis. Last year we had over 100 nests that we monitored.

A Little Background

I grew up on the Florida/Georgia border near Quincy, Florida, where my dad grew tobacco and my mom taught school. I lived in Alabama (with sojourns at both Auburn and UAB), Tennessee, and New Mexico before returning to Florida. My family has vacationed on St. George since the 70's, and I only wish I had bought sooner, what can I say. Although we always rented beachfront houses, I really fell in love with the bay side when I began to shop for a place to move full time in 2003. I like the island for its peace and quiet, migrating birds, the very vocal frogs, gorgeous wildflowers, and great neighbors. Having been a scientist, university prof, and entrepreneur, I am finding life on the island and the real estate business intriguing and enjoyable

A Newsletter

I have started a newsletter relating observations on our neighborhood and the island, my brother's fishing exploits, the turtles, and other tidbits. If you would like to be on the electronic mailing list, please drop me an email with your email address.