



BOCA GRANDE SEA TURTLE PATROL

Turtle Talk

A post-Idalia look at our sea turtle population

■ BY SHEILA EVANS

Erosion of Boca Grande beaches was bad enough after Hurricane Ian. Now Hurricane Idalia has grabbed most of what Ian left. Beaches throughout the entire west coast of Florida have lost significant amounts of sand.

While this is annoying to beachgoers, many people are concerned it could have a more serious impact on sea turtles and other coastal species. Dr. Jake Lasala, Mote Marine sea turtle biologist, said he believes the lack of sand on the beaches will have little to no effect on next year's sea turtle nesting.

"They will continue to come," he predicted, adding that sea turtles usually do not care how wide the beach is, as long as there is sand in which to nest.

The problem with that is, in most of the area between 1st and 5th Streets, there is no sand except at low tide. There is a possibility that some sand will shift prior to next year's nesting season, but nothing is guaranteed.

Asked if renourishment should happen quickly, Lasala said sea turtles tend to reject renourished beaches, sometimes abandoning or avoiding them altogether. He noted that natural wave action will usually restore

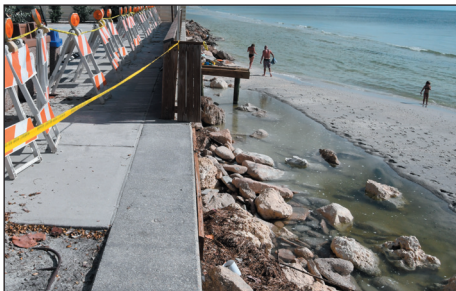
beaches adequately for turtles and other wildlife.

"Idalia did more damage to our beaches than expected," he said, "but roots and dune systems seemed to have done their job."

He said this should give those interested in preserving beaches a valuable nudge to pay attention to those aspects of the environment in the aftermath of these storms.

Bryon Maxwell, a ranger at Gasparilla Island State Park who monitors sea turtle nests, said the situation for nests that hadn't already hatched was dire.

"The impact on our sea turtle nests from Hurricane Idalia was huge," he said. "We lost the majority of our remaining nests, if not all of them. Fortunately, we had a lot of nests early in the season that did already hatch out."



■ Beneath the seawall between 4th and 5th is nothing but rocks, except at low tide. Photo by Dusty



REPORT FOR WEEK ENDING

September 1, 2023

ZONE	CC NESTS	CC FALSE CRAWLS	CM NESTS	CM FALSE CRAWLS	DEPREDACTIONS
1	30	77	0	1	1
2	47	69	1	0	9
3	71	109	3	1	9
4	125	120	9	7	11*
5	176	159	3	8	25
6	134	211	4	5	6
7	90	183	1	8	4
8	113	124	5	20	27
TOTALS	786	1,052	26	50	92

Information provided courtesy of the Boca Grande Sea Turtle Association *Corrected from previous report

GASPARILLA ISLAND STATE PARKS AND CAYO COSTA TURTLE NUMBERS

CAYO COSTA

543 LOGGERHEAD

14 GREEN

16,966 HATCHLINGS

GASPARILLA ISLAND STATE PARK

59 LOGGERHEAD

10 GREEN

2,448 HATCHLINGS