

# Close of turtle nesting season greeted with enthusiasm, results

**S**ea turtle nesting season is officially over. Coinciding with Halloween and the Festival by the Sea, the extended tourist/sea turtle season wrapped up with fabulously sunny weather and warm temperatures.

Local Sea Turtle Protection Program coordinators, also, shined with optimism while reflecting on



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## THE COASTAL LIFE

the season past and the season to come.

Maureen Dewire, environmental education coordinator on Bald Head Island, re-

ported a total of 41 nests for this season, as opposed to 77 nests last year. Dewire said nesting was "low along the whole East Coast," adding that 18 of Bald Head's nests were lost to "erosion, wash over and storms."

However, an impressive 1,637 hatchlings were released into the Atlantic.

Sunset Beach program coordinator Carmel Zetts re-

### FROM PAGE 1C

were in line with our three or four year cycle." With records dating back into the 1980s, Purcell said she has noticed a cyclic pattern of low nesting years, citing the 2001 nesting season with 19 nests as an example. Nonetheless, in 2002, Holden Beach was back up to 40 nests.

Overall, Purcell was "very pleased with the 1,237 babies released" from the shore of Holden Beach and is confident that next season the nesting will be back on track.

Ocean Isle Beach program coordinator Gloria

Hillenburg reported a total of 10 nests for the season and the release of over 830 hatchlings. Hillenburg said "this season was like the 1984 season [with the first nest laid] almost to the day."

With that in mind, Hillenburg predicted a low nesting season with a lot of storm activity to all those who attended her "Turtle Talks" with an eerie accuracy. However, she cheerfully

ported one false crawl and no nests this season. Zetts' optimism beamed through though as she stated, "maybe they are smarter than us with all the hurricanes we had, they might have known something we didn't, [besides] it's out of our control whether they nest or not. We just hope it was an off year."

Linda Purcell, Holden Beach program coordinator, added, "the upcoming season will be better."

Oak Island's Kellie Beeson reported 21 nests with a recorded 776 hatchlings released. Beeson said "there were probably more, but we weren't there to verify them."

The close of the season for local turtle patrollers has little effect on Jean Beasley

**Close to 30 sea turtles are all inside the cramped facility during cooler weather.**

of the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center at Topsail Beach, which administers to the needs of the sick and injured from seasons past.

Beasley said the hospital is "bursting at the seams" as all inside the cramped facility during cooler weather.

Beach program coordinator, reported a total of 15 nests with a 65 percent hatch rate. Purcell said the hatching rate is usually closer to 90 percent, but three nests had a high number of non-fertile eggs due to tidal inundation this season. Regardless, Purcell reiterated the upbeat attitude, saying, "we

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Her "hope and wish [is] to be put out of business," but she knows that is unlikely as long as there are sea turtles still in the ocean.

She invites everyone to go online at [www.seaturtle.org](http://www.seaturtle.org) to track the progress of the sea turtles in her care, as well as follow the movements of Chilly, who was released in the spring with satellite surveillance.

Especially of local interest are Holden II, rescued at Holden Beach, and Obie, rescued from Ocean Isle Beach.

Beasley is confident that nearly a dozen sea turtles will be able to be released in the spring of 2005 stating, the "prognosis is good" for many and that "we do the best we can with what we have."

Since the non-profit hospital operates year-round donations and volunteers are appreciated year-round. Beasley may be contacted at the hospital at 328-3377.

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