

HOW TO MOVE A NEST

Relocated nests may have a lower hatching rate than natural nests, but careful and timely handling and transport of eggs will reduce this risk. The shorter amount of time between laying and relocation, the better the chances that successful emergence will occur. Beach patrols should be made as early in the morning as possible. If you determine that relocation is absolutely necessary, use the following guidelines:

1. Find the egg chamber by using the methods described in the section entitled NEST SITE IDENTIFICATION.
2. Try to move nests within 6 hours after they are laid or **before 9:00 AM the following morning at the very latest**. Embryos have a better chance for development when relocation is accomplished within that time period.
3. Take extreme care not to rotate eggs in any way during handling. Maintain the original orientation throughout the relocation process. It is sometimes helpful to place a small light pencil mark on the top to help maintain the original orientation. **Do not use ink** since it may contain solvents harmful to the embryo if it permeates the eggshell.
4. Excavate the eggs by hand, not with a shovel. Place them in a rigid container (for example, a bucket) with a 2 - 3 inch layer of moist sand on the bottom. When all the eggs are in the container, cover them with a layer of moist sand or moistened towel. Keep excavated eggs shaded on hot, sunny days. If you have enough of them, chicken egg cartons are also a good method for transporting sea turtle eggs to the new relocation site.
5. Relocate the nests as close to the original nest site as possible, while at the same time avoid making clusters of nests. Concentrating nests in a small area may attract predators and/or alter natural sex ratios. Additionally, nests should be relocated to areas above the high tide line that are relatively free of vegetation. Invasion of the nest by roots will prevent the hatchlings from emerging from the nest.
6. Dig the new egg chamber by hand or with a trowel to the same depth and dimensions of the original nest. Round out the bottom with a cockle shell so that the shape of the nest is similar to a round-bottomed flask or inverted light bulb.
7. Relocate the eggs into the new egg chamber by transferring them one at a time while continuing to maintain each egg's original orientation. Try to wipe off any excess sand, because airspace between the eggs in the chamber is important for respiration. After all the eggs have been transferred, cover them with moist sand excavated from the new nest chamber. Dry sand should not be allowed to fall into the egg chamber. Once the eggs are reburied to the upper level of the surrounding moist sand, gently pat the sand surface above the eggs with your hand. Replace the dry sand over this area to the depth present before you began.