



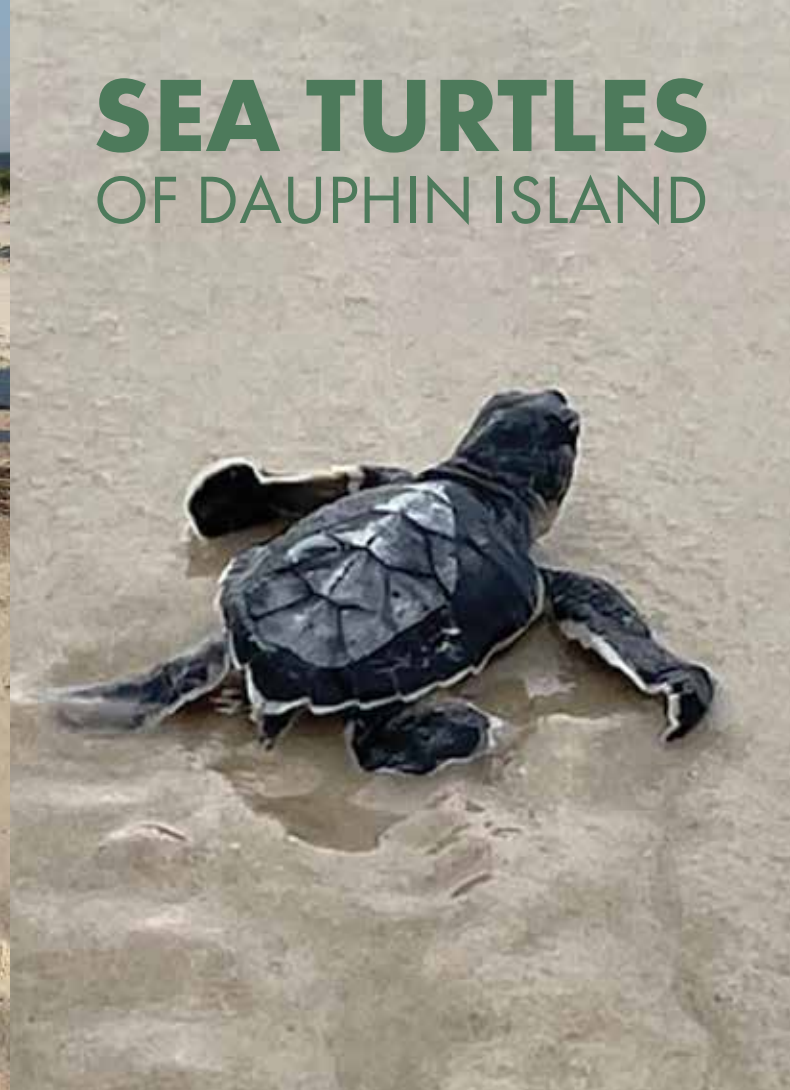
# Dauphin Island

Located at the mouth of Mobile Bay, Dauphin Island serves as a barrier between Mobile Bay and Mississippi Sound and the Gulf of Mexico. The island marks the point where the brackish waters from the Bay/Sound meet the saltwater of the Gulf. Dauphin Island is subject to the meteorological conditions from both directions as well as the strength of the Gulf waters. The Island was constructed by the constant flow of sand eastward from the Florida Panhandle. The movement of this sand has caused the island to build from east to west and in such a location that its character has been shaped by the impacts of the waters, the winds and weather into what we see today; although as a barrier island, it is constantly changing. A dominant feature of the Island is a ridge of dunes, running east-west. Distribution of plants through deposition of seeds from both winds and by birds has resulted in the formation of different ecological features, from maritime forests to the semi-tropical nature of the coastal plain you will find here.

Within this geography are wetlands, creeks and lakes supporting different species of animal and plant life. Sea turtles also utilize Dauphin Island's sandy beaches for nesting, permitting the preservation of several species. Dauphin Island is the first and last landfall for migrating birds on their long journey across the Gulf of Mexico. The species of marine creatures, from both brackish and saltwater, have provided food and recreation for residents of the Island for centuries. As a barrier island, the nature of Dauphin Island is unique. It was colonized by Native American tribes, explored by many European discoverers, and was instrumental in the Civil War. Now we are the stewards of this colorful heritage and these natural treasures. Preservation of the community's unique nature while sharing all the various aspects of the island with both residents and visitors is the responsibility of all of us who live and visit here. Let's continue to work together to ensure that its distinct character will be maintained for generations to come.



GREEN TURTLE TRACKS



# SEA TURTLES OF DAUPHIN ISLAND

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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**LOGGERHEAD HATCHLING** (*Caretta caretta*)



**GREEN** (*Chelonia mydas*)



**KEMP'S RIDLEY** (*Lepidochelys kempii*)

## YOU CAN HELP PROTECT SEA TURTLES

Sea turtles are among the largest living reptiles. They are cold-blooded, breathe air and lay their eggs on land. Three species of turtles lay their eggs on Dauphin Island's beaches: green (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) and loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*). An adult loggerhead, the most common to our beaches, weighs between 175 and 350 pounds, while baby turtles weigh only one to two ounces. Studies show only 1 or 2 out of 1,000 hatchlings will live to adulthood. Sea turtles are protected under the Endangered Species Act, making it unlawful to disturb nests, hatchlings and sea turtles.

Sea turtle nesting season is May-October. During the nesting season, adult females come ashore to lay their eggs. Females use their flippers to remove the upper layer of dry sand and dig egg chambers in moist sand, where they lay approximately 100 white ping-pong ball-sized eggs per nest. They cover the eggs with sand and return to the water.

Turtle eggs incubate for about 60 days, after which hatchlings emerge from the nest and scurry toward the water. They swim offshore until they reach safety within the protective masses of floating seaweed in areas where ocean currents meet. They eat, sleep and grow for up to ten years, then they return to coastal waters to forage and migrate.

As adults, female sea turtles return to the same beaches where they hatched to lay their eggs, often navigating across great expanses of water.

At night, both adult female sea turtles and hatchlings are disturbed by artificial light. Females may not nest, and hatchlings may become disoriented heading inland instead of toward the ocean. Beach-facing properties are encouraged to retrofit all outdoor lights to sea turtle-friendly fixtures. Until this is done, during nesting season, please turn off outside lights, shade inside lights and avoid using flashlights, flash photography or constructing campfires at night on the beach.



Remove equipment, such as lounge chairs, cabanas, tents and umbrellas from the beach at night, as these items can deter nesting attempts and prevent hatchlings from reaching the ocean.

Since most nesting occurs at night, scientists rely on using the crawl, or the tracks left in the sand, to identify where a nest has been laid and by what species. Scientists measure the width of a sea turtle's track, called the straddle, as well as note the crawl pattern, and look for tossed sand to indicate a nest, so be sure to leave these.

If you encounter a turtle on the beach at night, remain quiet, and stay at least 30 feet away, and call Share the Beach at (866) SEA-TURTLE (866-732-8878) to report. Share the Beach will mark the nest for monitoring and take protective measures to keep out predators such as foxes. Remember, nesting sea turtles should not be approached or disturbed, as this could prevent successful nesting.

Also use the STB hotline to report injured, dead and hooked turtles. If a turtle is hooked while fishing, do not attempt to cut it free or remove the hook before help arrives.

Learn more at [www.sharethebeach.com](http://www.sharethebeach.com)

## SEA TURTLE FACTS

**3 SPECIES OF TURTLES** lay their eggs on Dauphin Island's beaches:

- 1 Green (*Chelonia mydas*)
- 2 Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*)
- 3 Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*)

An adult loggerhead weighs **175-350 LBS.**

Baby turtles weigh **ONE TO TWO OUNCES**

**1 OR 2** OUT OF 1,000 Hatchlings will live to adulthood.

## HELP PROTECT SEA TURTLES



- **Turn off all outdoor lights** at night during nesting season.
- On beach-facing properties, **use sea turtle-friendly fixtures** on all outdoor lights.



- **Avoid use of flashlights outdoors.**
- **Remove equipment such as lounge chairs, tents and umbrellas** each night.
- If you encounter a turtle at night, **stay quiet** and stay at least 30 feet away.



- **Call Share the Beach to report turtles you encounter.** (866) SEA-TURTLE (866) 732-8878