



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Padre Island
National Seashore

PO Box 181300
Corpus Christi, TX 78480-1300

(361) 949-8068 phone
(361) 949-9951 fax

Padre Island National Seashore News Release

Release date: Immediate

Contact (s): Juan Rodriguez, Dr. Donna Shaver

Phone number: (361) 949-8068, 949-8173, ext. 226

Date: May 25, 2004

Release code:

Sea Turtle Arribada at Padre Island National Seashore

(Corpus Christi, Texas)- On May 22, 2004, six Kemp's ridley sea turtles came ashore to lay their eggs in a group nesting known as an *arribada*. The 590 eggs from these six nests are being incubated in a sea turtle biological facility at park headquarters and which will probably hatch sometime between July 8-13. One of these nests was found on Galveston Island and five on North Padre Island, including four from Padre Island National Seashore that were detected at the 7, 25, 46, and 59 mile markers.

This was the most Kemp's ridley nests recorded on the Texas coast in a single day. So far this year, 26 Kemp's ridley nests have been discovered on Texas beaches, exceeding the yearly totals for all other years of record except 2002, when 38 Kemp's ridley nests were located.

"We have worked for many years to increase the number of endangered Kemp's ridley turtles nesting on our beaches and May 22 was one of the most exciting days of my career", said Dr. Donna Shaver, head of the Sea Turtle Science and Recovery Division at the National Seashore. "With over 7 weeks remaining in the Kemp's ridley nesting season, we hope to exceed the record 38 nests found in 2002."

Colin Campbell, Superintendent of Padre Island National Seashore, commented, "The success of this program can be attributed to the dedicated volunteers, turtle patrollers, and park visitors who have been vigilant and hard working in their efforts to help restore this endangered species."

In an effort to help save endangered sea turtles from the brink of extinction, the National Seashore incubates most of the sea turtle eggs found along the Texas coast and releases the hatchlings into the Gulf of Mexico. This protects the baby sea turtles from predators that would harm them in the nest or on the beach and interrupts the turtles' life cycle as little as possible.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Although viewing the turtles in the incubation facility is not permitted, the public is invited to attend most of the hatchling releases at no charge. page 2

To attend a release, take Park Road 22 to the National Seashore and turn on the first left. This road leads about a quarter mile to the beach, where releases are held. Park on the beach at the end of the road. Rangers will provide information and guidance on the do's and don'ts of attending a hatchling release. To help ensure safe passage of the hatchlings down the beach and into the surf, white clothing, flash photography, smoking, and entering the water with the hatchlings are prohibited at the releases.

Releases occur sporadically during the summer. Hatchlings are released after they emerge from the eggs and become active. Below are the ranges of dates when hatchlings may be released from eggs currently incubating at the national seashore. Hatchlings from each nest will likely be released during one or two days within their projected range of release dates. For the date of the next release, contact the Hatchling Hotline at 949-7163.

Be aware that, depending on the species and activity of the turtles, sometimes the hatchlings must be released earlier or later than expected or the public release may have to be cancelled. If traveling from out of town to attend a release, it is best to come during a projected release period when hatchlings from a few nests may be released and be prepared to stay for a few days during that period. It is wise to call the hotline daily starting about a week before the release you plan to attend and to call it again on the night before the release and once again on the following morning before departing for the release. The releases may take as little as 15 minutes, it is best to arrive between 6:30 and 6:45 am.

Projected Hatchling Release Dates at Padre Island National Seashore:

May 24-27 (Kemp's ridley nest 1)
June 2-8 (Kemp's ridley nest 2)
June 12-18 (Kemp's ridley nest 5)
June 17-23 (Kemp's ridley nests 6, 7)
June 18-24 (Kemp's ridley nest 8)
June 27-July 2 (Kemp's ridley nest 10,11)
June 30-July 5 (Kemp's ridley nest 14)
July 3-8 (Kemp's ridley nest 15, 16)
July 7-12 (Kemp's ridley nest 18)
July 8-13 (Kemp's ridley nests 19-24)
July 9-14 (Kemp's ridley nest 25)

(Note that Kemp's ridley nests 3, 4, 9, 12, 13, 17, and 26 found on South Padre Island and Boca Chica Beach, Texas were transported to a protective screen enclosed area on South Padre Island, and the hatchlings from those nests will be released there).

See the Padre Island National Seashore website at www.nps.gov/pais for more information on our sea turtle restoration project.

###