

4/2024

AMELIA ISLAND SEA TURTLE WATCH VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with AISTW! This document will provide you with general information about our group as well as the volunteer requirements. We play a vital role in the protection and conservation of sea turtles and their habitats and have an obligation to meet the requirements of our permit. Therefore, being a volunteer requires a serious commitment and is a very important component of the work we do.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

AISTW has held a marine turtle permit on Amelia Island since 1985. We operate under the rules and regulations of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission "FWCC" and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. All marine turtles are protected under the Endangered Species Act. ***Our mission is to locate and protect nests, turtles, hatchlings, nesting habitat, and collect and report our data to FWCC. It is also our mission to educate the local community and tourists to our island about our local sea turtles.***

AISTW Team Captains: AISTW beach is divided into five Team Captain sections. Regular volunteers will notify the Team Captain for their section when they are unable to do their walk and a sub is required. The Team Captain will assign the sub.

Sea Turtle Nesting Season/Volunteering Season: Volunteers are on the beach each morning from May 1st through August 31st. Volunteers may be asked to perform nest checks after August 31st until nests on their route have hatched and/or been excavated.

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

Age: Must be at least 18 years of age unless volunteering with a family member or other adult.

Health: Must be in good physical condition. Routes are approximately 2 miles round trip. Weather conditions on the beach will be hot, humid and possibly wet.

Communication: Must have a smart phone and be able to send and receive texts with photos attached.

Volunteering Frequency:

Regular Volunteers – Agree to a commitment of one day per week during the nesting survey season; notify your Team Captain in a timely fashion when you are in need of a sub.

Substitute Volunteers – Team Captains will contact you when a need for a substitute is required. If a sub does not respond to an attempt to contact, another sub will be notified. Subs who are easy to contact will be utilized on a regular basis.

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TRAINING

In addition to classroom training, all new volunteers must attend our on-beach training session held early on morning.

WALKING

Expectations: You must let your Team Captain know as soon as possible if you are going to be unable to walk. Walks begin at Civil Twilight (20 minutes before sunrise) during the course of the season. Apps are available for smart phones with details on sunrise and tides. If you are late to start your walk, it is entirely possible that the general public on the beach will report crawls.

We walk in almost all weather conditions, but we do not expect volunteers to be on the beach with lightning in the area. Please notify your Team Captain if you will not proceed on your walk or will walk later.

As a volunteer, you are also serving as an Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch ambassador. Always try to remain courteous and helpful. Do not engage in political conversations or arguments. Never do anything that appears inappropriate as those actions will most likely be reported to AISTW leadership or the local law enforcement. There are eyes and cameras everywhere!!

The following links will familiarize you with some helpful information about sea turtles:

<http://myfwc.com/research/wildlife/sea-turtles/nesting/training-materials/>
<http://myfwc.com/research/wildlife/sea-turtles/>