



Patrol Orientation

Last updated 2026

Patrol Basics and Expectations

- Each morning during nesting season (May 1st – August 31st), the patrol team walks both Carolina and Kure beach looking for tracks.
 - The goal is to identify sea turtle nests that need to be marked off, monitored and protected.
 - If a nest has been missed, it can not be protected, and is often destroyed by fox/coyote.
 - Wild nest hatchlings end up in dunes, parking lots, never making it to the ocean.
 - *Patrol is one of the most important roles in the project!*
- Patrol team volunteers should be physically able to:
 - Walk a mile or more on soft sand, sometimes in wind and rain
 - Stoop and/or dig in the sand, sometimes for an hour or more
 - Locating the eggs in a cleverly disguised nest chamber, in a large/messy body, pit can be tricky sometimes
- Patrol starts at 6:00am
 - This varies with sunrise, so do NOT go out while it's dark. **First light is the rule of thumb.**
 - This allows us to see turtle tracks before humans have been out to walk over them.
 - Time is of the essence! We have a very short window to relocate a nest, it is critical we do this **immediately!**
 - People walking on the beach often don't notice tracks, and can unintentionally destroy them if the sand is dry and soft, potentially leaving a nest unidentified and unprotected.

- **Patrol down low (closer to the water or low tide line) on your 1st pass, then up high (closer to the dunes) walking back the other direction.**
 - This is important to avoid missing different views/perspective from each direction as the sunlight changes/rises.
 - *Crawls are usually identified on the 1st pass (low) and should be reported immediately.*
- **If a nest is missed, it can not be protected, and is often destroyed by fox/coyote.**
 - Wild nest hatchlings end up in dunes, parking lots, or worse... most will not make it to the ocean.
 - The goal of patrol is simple... to identify sea turtle nests that need to be marked off for protection and monitoring.
- **Picking up trash**
 - Seeing trash all over our beach is frustrating, but picking up trash can distract you from noticing a faint possible crawl/nest. *It also lengthens the time your patrol takes... please patrol first!*
- **Checking Nests / Wild Nests**
 - Once the season is underway, patrollers will often be the 1st eyes on nests each morning.
 - Identifying depressions... some are obvious... some are not.
 - Evidence of a hatch v/s crab or fox predation may not always be clear.

***** FRIENDS / FAMILY ARE WELCOME TO PATROL WITH YOU... BUT PLEASE REMEMBER PISTP EXPECTATIONS!**

Patrol Safety

- Do not go out alone in the dark.
- Patrol team volunteers should be physically able to:
 - Walk a mile or more on soft sand, sometimes in wind and rain.
 - Wearing [Safety goggles](#) sounds funny but are the only way to see while patrolling in the [rain](#)!
 - Stoop and/or dig in the sand, sometimes for an hour or more.
 - Locating the eggs in a cleverly disguised nest chamber, in a large/[messy body pit](#) can be [tricky](#) sometimes.



If you are unable to go out by 6:15, or if you don't feel safe, call Jennifer 910-622-6259.



Summer Storms



- **We *DO* patrol in the rain**

- *If there is nearby lightning, stay in your vehicle and check the weather on your phone (there are several weather apps have alerts for lightning in the area).*
- *Stay safely sheltered, and use your best judgement to go out when lightning has moved off.*
- *Freeman Park does not have sheltered areas, and storms can pop up quickly. Jennifer may delay or call off patrol in FP (and/or other zones) if it us unsafe to patrol.*

- **It is often more difficult to identify tracks in the rain**

- *This is why it is critical to do our best so ALL nests can be protected. A nest that has not been identified for protection is often destroyed by fox/coyote, or will have hatchlings that end up in the dunes (or worse) never making it to the ocean.*

Patrol Zones

- **Each zone will have 2 volunteers** (FP will have 3).
 - Most volunteers chose to patrol 1 day a week. Some chose 2-3 days a week.
 - Whatever day you chose, that will be your day for the length of the season.
 - Nesting season in NC is from May 1st through the end of August.
 - Please think carefully about the importance of this role before you commit to more than 1 day a week.
- **Most zones can be completed in 30-45 minutes.**
 - Freeman Park is typically completed in 1 1/2 hours.

<u>CB ZONE 1 - 0.8 miles</u>	<u>CB ZONE 2 - 0.8 miles</u>	<u>CB ZONE 3 - 0.7 miles</u>	<u>CB ZONE 4 - 0.5 miles</u>	<u>CB ZONE 5 - 2 miles</u>
Ocean Blvd to Atlanta Ave	Atlanta Ave to Scallop	Scallop to Sand Dollar	Sand Dollar to CB Pier	CB Pier / Freeman Park
<u>KB ZONE 1 - 0.8 miles</u>	<u>KB ZONE 2 - 0.8 miles</u>	<u>KB ZONE 3 - 0.6 miles</u>	<u>KB ZONE 4 - 1 mile</u>	*There is no public parking at the KB Village Gazebos
Ocean Blvd to *KB Village Gazebos	J Ave to *KB Village Gazebos	J Ave to E Ave	E Ave to FF Rocks	

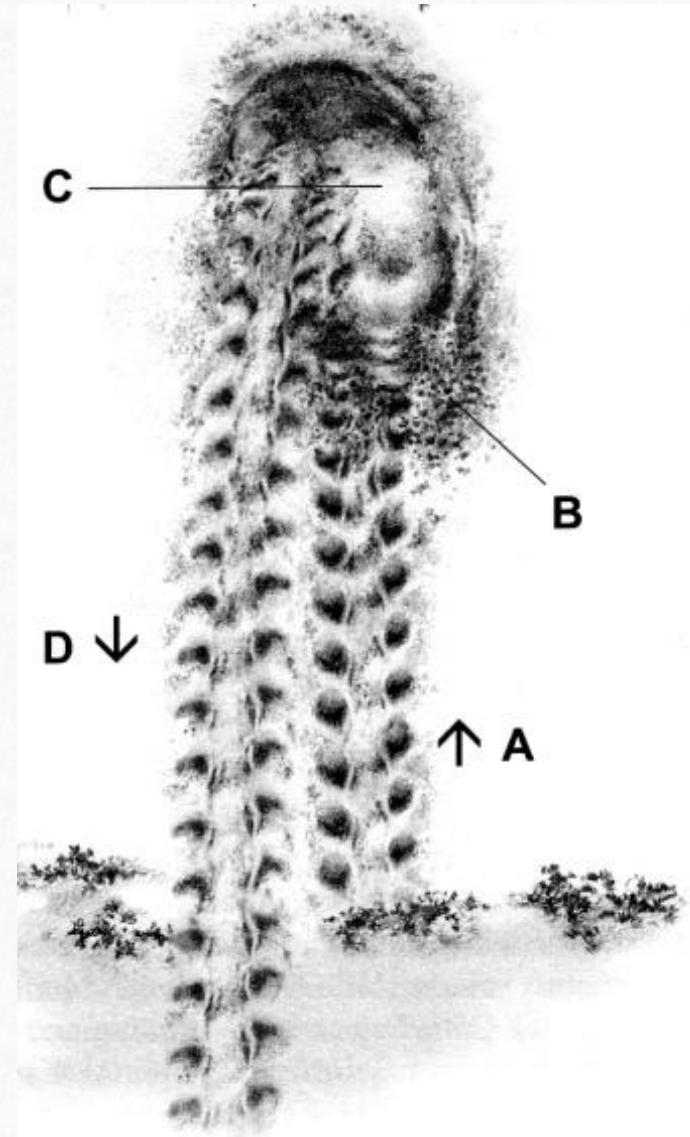
Patrol Swap / Subs

- **If you will be out on your patrol day, you *must* have a PISTP volunteer cover your zone.**
 - Communication with your patrol partner is important so they are aware of any changes/issues.
 - ✓ Your patrol partner may be able to help you find a sub.
 - No-shows with no communication are inconsiderate and unsafe for your partner (and can put your volunteer status at risk).
- **Patrol swaps must be documented in the Patrol Sub Request form.**
 - This form keeps up with all sub requests. It shows days/zones/contact info for the requester & the sub.
 - The form will be available on the login page of our website and will be linked on all patrol emails, so everyone has easy access to it at all times.
 - Once you have documented your sub request, keep an eye on the status. You can also reach out to other patrollers to help find your coverage.
 - If both patrollers for 1 zone will be out the same day and you are having trouble finding coverage, look at the folks on zones next to yours... maybe they could cover both zones that morning (yours and theirs).
 - If you have coverage, it still needs to be put on the sub request form, so we know who is on the beach.

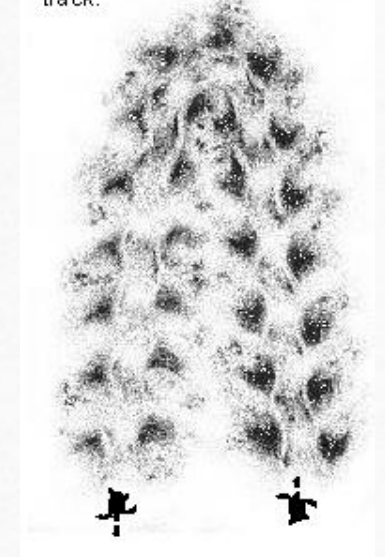
Identifying Crawls and Nests

You can distinguish between the arrival and departure crawl by looking for the direction that the sand is pushed in while the turtle was crawling (A and D). Also, examining the tracks and their relationship to the high tide line can help determine the arrival crawl. Once determined, follow the arrival crawl up to the area where the sand is disturbed.

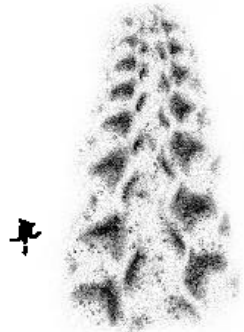
In the disturbed sand area (B and C), there may be two “body pits” or differentiated areas of digging. The primary body pit is the larger of the two (C) and usually the turtle makes this just before digging the nest chamber. The smaller chamber (B) is made after nesting, when the turtle covers and camouflages the site. False crawls with disturbed sand usually will not have a well-defined secondary body pit.



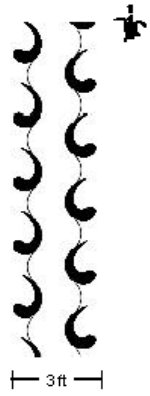
A **loggerhead false crawl** showing no evidence of disturbed sand other than the track.



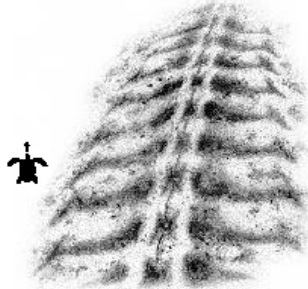
LOGGERHEAD



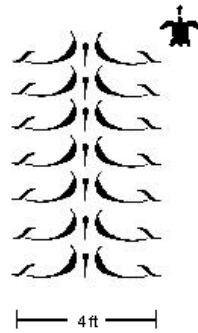
- A. Alternating comma-shaped flipper marks
- B. Wavy and smoothed track center with no thin, straight, and well-defined tail-drag mark
- C. No regular marking from front flippers at the margins of the track



GREENTURTLETRACK



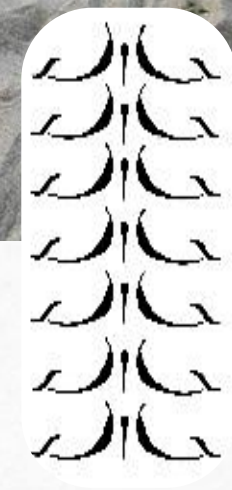
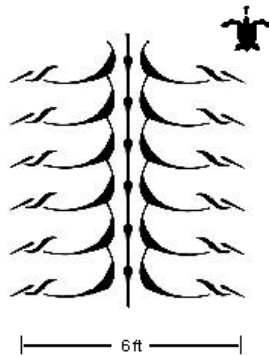
- A. Parallel flipper marks as from a "butterfly-stroke" crawling pattern
- B. Ridged track center with a thin, straight, and well-defined tail-drag mark that is punctuated by tail-point marks
- C. Regular marking from front flippers at the margins of the track



LEATHERBACK



- A. Parallel flipper marks as from a "butterfly-stroke" crawling pattern
- B. Ridged track center with a thin, straight, and well-defined tail-drag mark that is punctuated by tail-point marks
- C. Extensive marking from front flippers at the margins of the track And extending the total track width to 6 - 7 feet



When you find a crawl, take a picture of the crawl **and** body pit,
and text it to: Jennifer 910-622-6259



Please **do not touch** the crawl or body pit area... these give us clues to help determine where the eggs are hidden (so we don't spend all morning digging for them).



Pictures of nest locations are **NOT** to be shared outside of PISTP. If you want to share pictures with others, you must crop out landmarks.

You will also need to text us the address of your exact location...

(Google Maps is an easy app on your phone)

- You should be able to see the physical address if you zoom in as close as you can on your map and touch the house you are in front of. (it should drop a pin 📍)
- You can also just walk up to the street to get the house number & description.



When the permit holder and nest leaders arrive, everyone gets to help locate the egg chamber!



Ok, lots of info, we know... but patrol is one of the most rewarding and fun things you can do. The sunrises are breathtaking, and you get to enjoy the beach before the crowds!

So, here is the summary for those of you who want to be on the patrol team...

- *Choose what days you want to patrol and honor that commitment.*
- *Meet up with your patrol partner on the beach by sunrise, no later than 6am.*
- *Walk low (tide line) one direction, and high (dunes) on the way back.*
- *If you find a crawl, text pictures of the tracks, body-pit, and location to Jennifer.*
- *Jump around with glee because OMG you found a sea turtle nest!*
- *Get to help dig for eggs and stake up the nest for protection.*
- *Tell the story for years to come!* 🐢 😲 😄 🥳 🎉