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NOV 17 2009
Outer Banks Group

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November 17, 2009

Mike Murray, Superintendent
National Park Service
1401 National Park Drive
Manteo, NC 27954

Dear Mike,

In early September I asked my older son, Chris, who lives in Palm Beach, Florida, to visit some beaches and try and find out how sea turtle nests are treated. I have enclosed a CD with photographs and pamphlets from Florida regarding sea turtles. The east coast of Florida hosts 90% of the Loggerhead nesting in the US (some 64,000 nests last year) and thus Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina represent the remaining 10%. Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, with our 100 nests, has just over 10% of the North Carolina sea turtle nests. From the way USF&W and NCWRC would like us to treat nesting here, one would think that we, and not Florida, were the epicenter of sea turtle nesting.

Based on what Chris found at three beaches (two State Parks and one County beach) near his home, we must be dealing with a different Loggerhead Recovery Plan and Sandy Macpherson either has no influence in Florida, does not know how turtles are treated there, or she chose not to share this information with us. I understand that Matthew Godfrey was surprised to find out how nests were treated at these beaches in Florida.

At two of the beaches in question pedestrians can walk, sit and stand right on top of nests and at the third, walk sit or stand within a foot of a nest, yet our visitors get fined \$150.00 if they walk even below the high tide line a hundred feet from a nest. On two of these Florida beaches, visitors can pound a beach umbrella a foot into the sand and possibly impale hatchlings ready to emerge. I find this disparity in sea turtle management to be outrageous.

Are our visitors second rate citizens? Are tourist dollars more important in Florida than North Carolina? Are our 100 nests more valuable to the recovery of the species than the 64,000 in Florida? Are pedestrian footprints in the sand of North Carolina more hazardous to hatchlings than in Florida? Why are citizens fined here for walking within a hundred feet of a nest and in Florida welcomed and not fined? Should not Federal Loggerhead Recovery Plan guidelines apply uniformly throughout the entire nesting area? The citizen visitors to the Outer Banks are the same as citizens that visit Florida.

Night lighting restrictions in Florida are sporadic, and yet there is a push for light restrictions to cover the entire coast of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. There should be no night light restrictions at the spits and at Cape Point since these are not beaches conducive to successful nesting. Common sense would call for discouraging nesting on beaches where there is little chance of success (like Cape Point and the spits) and to do so would even allow sea turtles to save the energy wasted when they false crawl on these beaches. Night lighting restrictions in the seven ocean front villages on these islands is of very questionable value as there is no evidence of increased false crawls on the beaches in front of villages. Nesting does take place on village beaches without night light restrictions. If the NPS shows a willingness to work with the public regarding access, the public will be more than willing to support a program, like that at Pea Island, to watch emerging nests and thus address the concerns over hatchling disorientation due to village lights. Conversely, public awareness of the sea turtle protection disparities between the two coastal areas could make a strict local NPS policy indefensible.

Please view the enclosed CD and pamphlets before finalizing any sea turtle management plan for Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area.

Thank you,


Larry Hardham

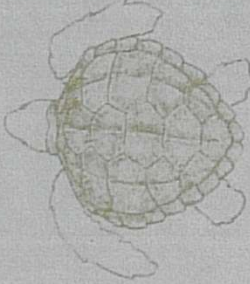
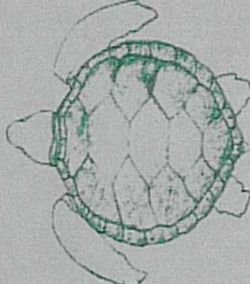
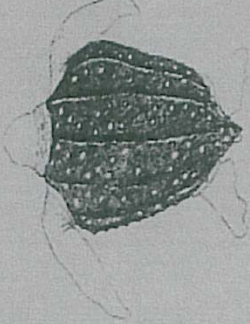


Loggerhead Sea Turtles

- **Several examples of sea turtle nest treatment in Florida where 90% of loggerhead sea turtle nesting takes place.**

John D. MacArthur Beach State Park is “**nearly two miles of beach**” with **846 sea turtle nests** (as of 8/6/09) in northern Palm Beach County Florida. Open to the public 365 days a year from 8:00AM until sunset.

Nests are not even marked as there would then be “not much space for tourists” according to the park nature center staff.

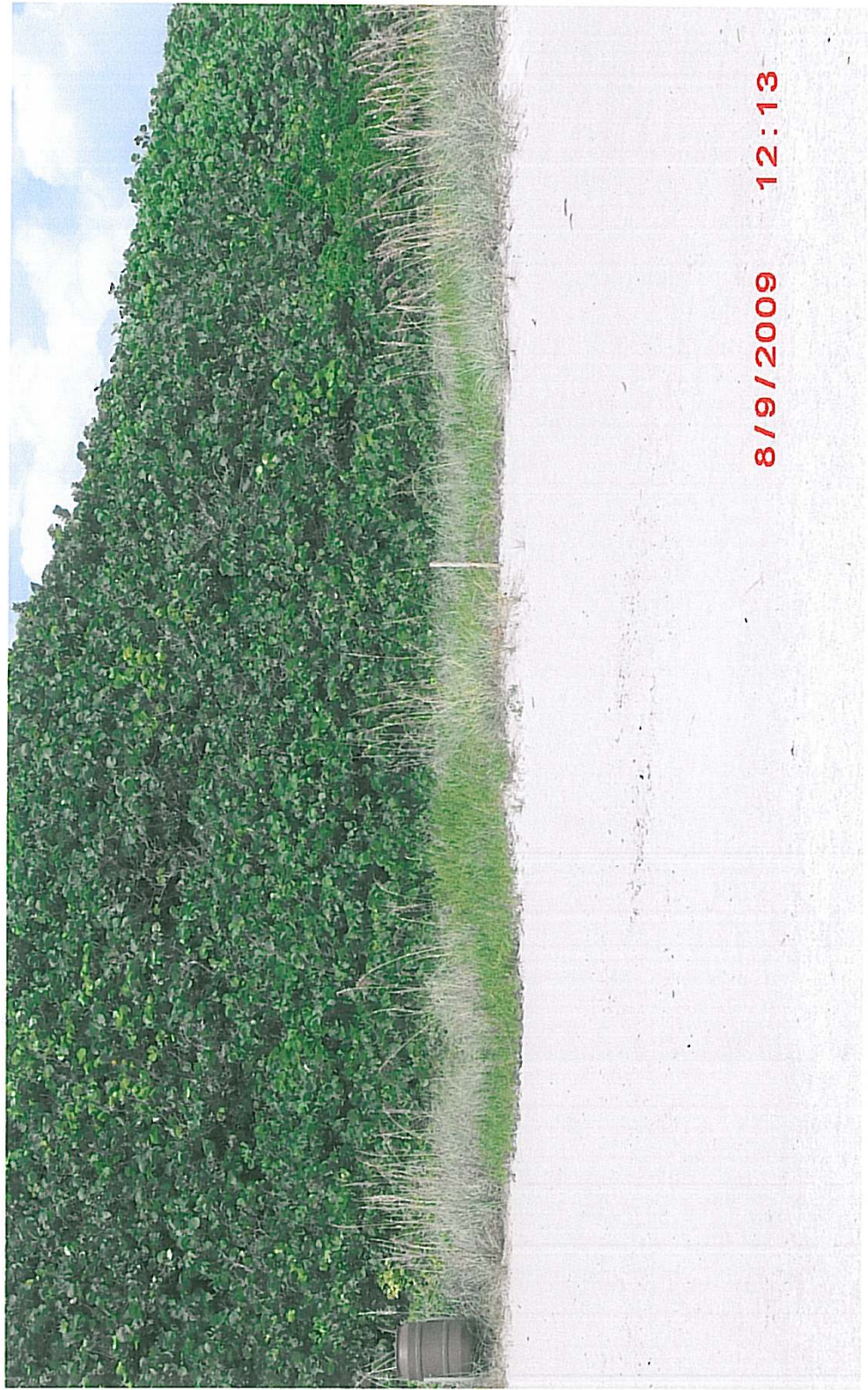
John D. MacArthur Beach State Park
SEA TURTLE NESTS
Updated August 6, 2009

		
Loggerhead <i>Caretta caretta</i>	Green <i>Chelonia mydas</i>	Leatherback <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
666	132	48
		
		New Record!

Juno Beach in Jupiter Florida on 5.5 miles of beach as of 8/9/2009 had 3616 sea turtle nests or some 657 nests per mile. At Cape Hatteras, in our best year, we had only 1.7 nests per mile. A handout from the “Loggerhead Marinelifelife Center” of Juno Beach boasts that “the beaches adjacent to the center host up to 1,000 sea turtle nests per mile each season”.



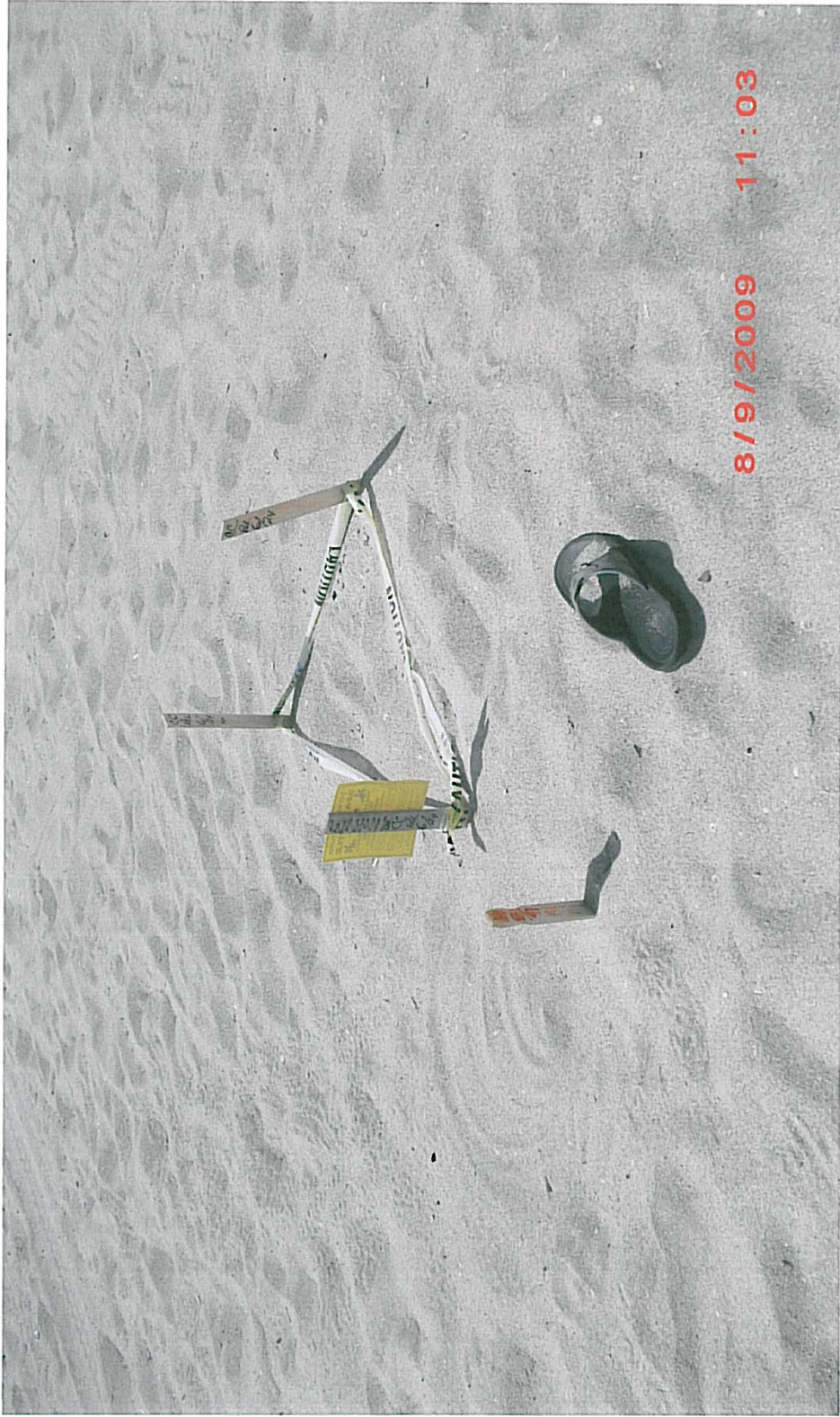
Juno Beach Florida marks sea turtle nests with a single stake and no protective closures. My son saw two men pitching golf balls at a nest stake to see who could get their ball closest to stake. No \$150.00 fines either!



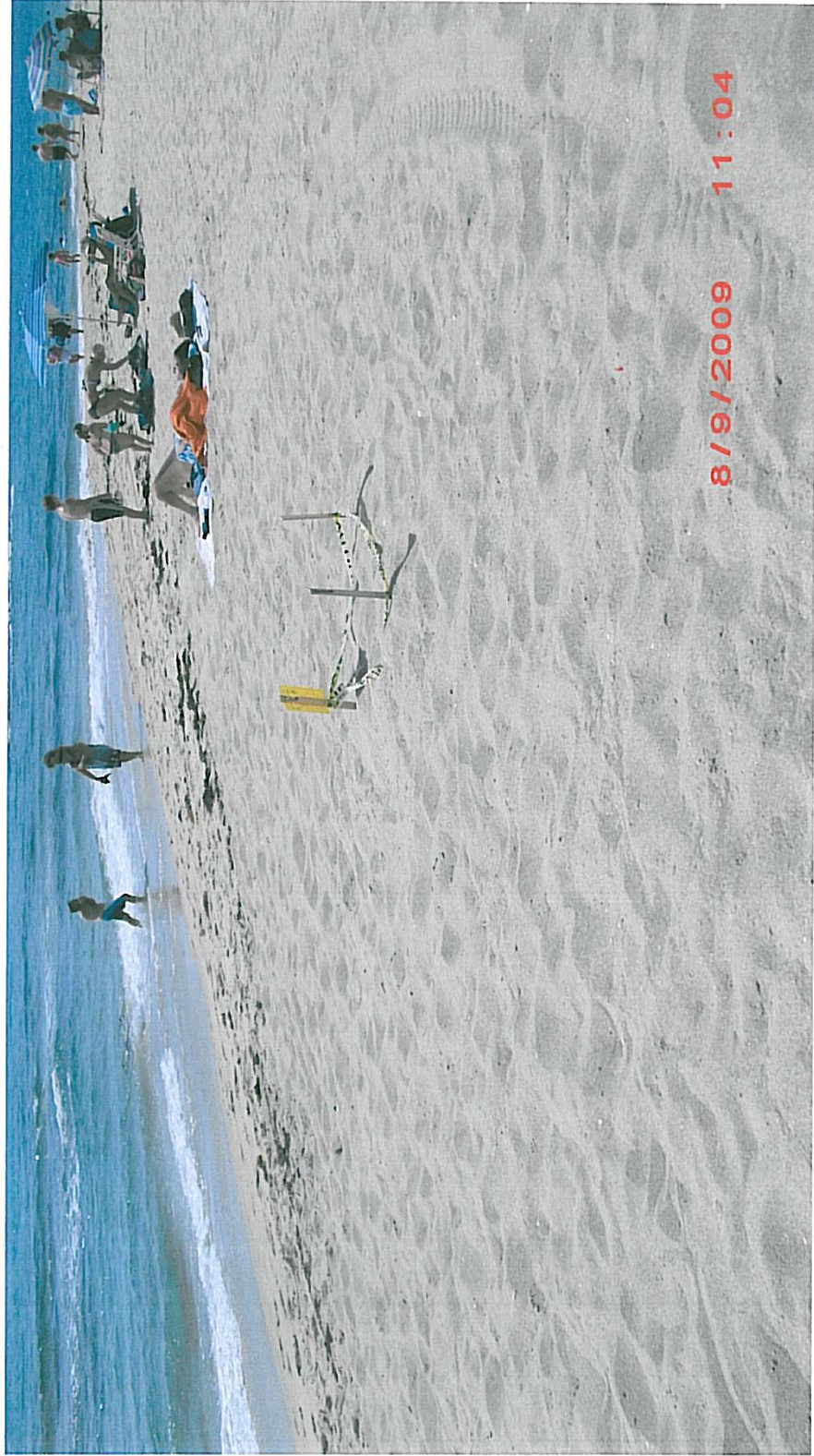
This is Ocean Reef County Park (a public beach), on Singer Island, Florida (just north of Palm Beach) where sea turtle nests are marked with three stakes and a sign.



Ocean Reef County Park, Florida
Note size of staked off area (flip flop is approx. one foot long)

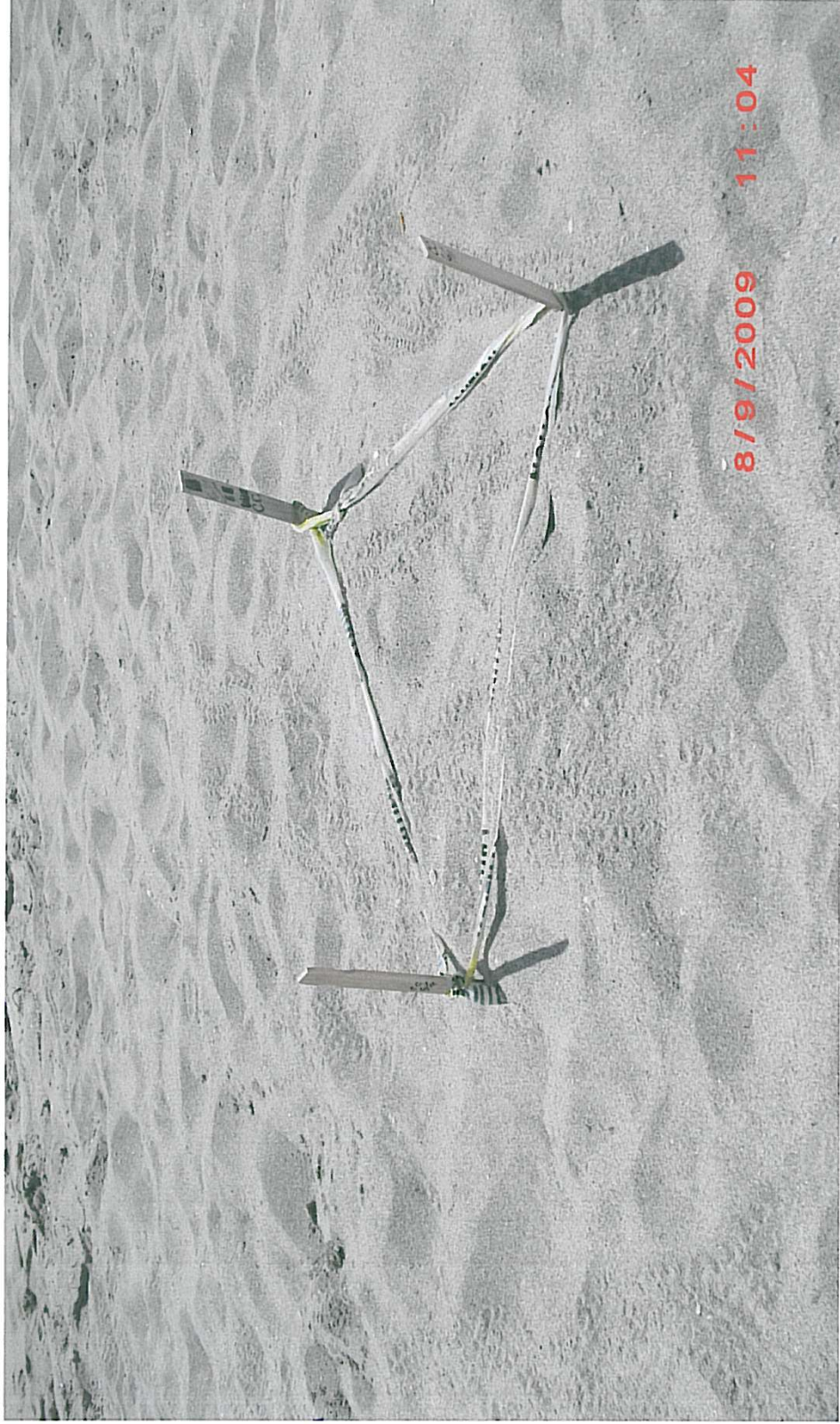


Ocean Reef County Park, Florida
Unrestricted public use all around nest sites.



Ocean Reef County Park, Florida

Note hatchling tracks from night before and beach is open to public use all around nest. Human footprints in Florida apparently are not the death trap to hatchlings that they are in North Carolina. This nest does not even have a sign!



A “Caribbean Conservation Corporation Sea Turtle Survival League” handout entitled “Facts About Sea Turtles and Raccoons” says:

- “Along some stretches of Florida’s most important sea turtle nesting beaches, raccoons dig up and destroy over 75% of the nests.”
- And we are told that our predation rates are too high at Cape Hatteras!