

How you can help

Join your neighbors in making our beaches safe for turtles. In addition to reducing beachfront lighting:

- If you see a nesting turtle remain quiet and stay at a distance. Flashlights, loud noises, or getting too close might cause the turtle to abandon her nesting attempt.
- Remove obstacles such as beach chairs from the beach at night.
- Protect beach vegetation. Vegetation blocks light from buildings, stabilizes the beach, and encourages turtles to nest.
- Vehicles can crush turtle nests. Do not drive on the beach and contact DoE before using beach cleaning machines or heavy equipment.
- Pick up fishing line and plastic bags and do not release helium balloons. Garbage can choke or tangle turtles.
- Do not have bonfires on the beach in the summer – use a designated BBQ pit.
- Do not cover or rake turtle tracks. Department of Environment staff use the tracks to find and protect nests.
- Call Department of Environment if you find a turtle nest or hatchlings.
- If you see anyone harming a turtle or disturbing a nest call Department of Environment or 911.
- Volunteer! Contact us for information on our programs for students and adults.



Turtle nest and track. Photo: Monica Fowlds

If you find hatchlings

Always notify Department of Environment when you find lost hatchlings. Then:

- **At night:** put the hatchlings at the high tide line on a dark part of the beach and allow them to crawl into the sea. To protect the hatchlings' eyes, use a red filter on your flashlight and do not take flash photos.
- **During the day:** put hatchlings in a bucket or cooler of slightly damp sand. Cover the container with a towel and place it in the shade and out of reach of children and pets. Release the hatchlings at least an hour after sunset.



Baby turtles rescued during the day. Photos: Janice Blumenthal and Pedrin Lopez

Department of Environment

Department of Environment (DoE) staff survey Cayman's beaches four days per week from May to September. When a potential nest is located, we examine tracks in the sand to determine the species of turtle, confirm the presence of eggs, and mark the location of the nest. This allows us to evaluate abundance and distribution of turtle nesting in the Cayman Islands and protect nests when they are due to hatch.

For more information contact us:



Box 486 Grand Cayman KY1-1106
Email: DoE@gov.ky
Phone: (345) 949-8469
24-hour hotline: 938-NEST (6378)
Emergency: 916-4271 or 911



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT



Turtles and lights

Photo: Mark Orr

Turtles and lights

The problem

Beachfront lighting is one of the most serious threats to sea turtles. Baby turtles (called “hatchlings”) find the ocean by heading toward the brightest light near their nest. This should be the moon and stars reflecting off the ocean’s surface but artificial lights are much brighter and can lead the little hatchlings away from the sea. Every year, many hatchlings are killed when they follow lights into parking lots and roads.

The solution

Make sure lighting on your beachfront property is “turtle-friendly.” The Department of Environment (DoE) is committed to finding lighting solutions that work for people and turtles. See the suggestions opposite and contact us for more information.

Did you know?

A single light can kill hundreds of hatchlings.

Even if hatchlings reach the sea, bright lights may cause them to linger near shore, where they are easy prey for predatory fish, instead of swimming off into deeper and safer waters.

Please do your part to keep our beaches “turtle-friendly.”



Nesting green turtle, Boggy Sand Road. Photo: Mark Orr

Lighting management

Controlling lights near the beach can save thousands of baby turtles. Here’s what you can do:

Turn off lights

- Keep outdoor lights switched off during the turtle nesting season. Nesting turtles prefer dark beaches and this is safest for hatchlings.
- Put essential safety and security lights on motion sensors so they switch on only when needed. This will preserve nesting habitat, protect hatchlings, and result in energy savings.

Control lights

- Redirect, shield, or reposition lights so they illuminate your property, not the beach.
- Plant vegetation between buildings and the beach.
- Minimize the number and wattage of outdoor lights.
- Minimize the visibility of interior lights with shades and blinds.

Replace lights

- Low Pressure Sodium lights are the least disruptive to sea turtles.
- Other options include red, orange or amber LED lights and yellow-tinted “bug lights.” Cost effective hardware options are available locally—contact us for information.
- Remember: while turtles are less attracted long-wavelength red and yellow lights, these lights can still disorient hatchlings – use them in conjunction with the beach-darkening techniques described above.

If you would like us to evaluate lights at your property and make suggestions, give us a call.

Are lights too bright?

- Any *direct* light source (light bulb etc) that is visible from the beach can misorient hatchlings.
- *Indirect* light (reflected glow from lights near the beach) can also misorient hatchlings, particularly if the light is bright enough for objects to cast a shadow.
- If you can see a light or reflected glow, this may affect hatchlings. There is no way to be sure the light won’t cause a problem.

Cayman Islands

Turtle nesting populations in the Cayman Islands are at critically low levels—so every nest counts! Most residents recognize the importance of protecting turtle populations by turning off lights. However, if even a few do not participate this reduces suitable turtle nesting habitat and threatens thousands of hatchlings.

Join your neighbors in helping endangered sea turtles survive.



A baby green turtle reaches the ocean. Photo: Mark Orr