



TURTLE TRACKS

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES COUNCIL

FALL 2013

Sandy heads back to Sea!

On a warm Friday afternoon at the Center, summer campers gathered to give a final farewell to Sandy the loggerhead sea turtle as he was released into the Indian River Lagoon north of the St. Lucie inlet. Sandy was the resident sea turtle at the Center for the past two years.

This little loggerhead was originally left on the doorstep of Florida Oceanographic Society's Coastal Center on Hutchinson Island in January 2011. A note stated that he was found as a hatchling and taken home and reared in an aquarium until taken to the Coastal Center. Unfortunately, this meant Sandy had lost the natural fear of humans and ability to forage for food, drastically decreasing his odds of survival in the wild. Such actions are illegal since loggerhead sea turtles are a threatened species and all sea turtles are protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act. They are also protected under the Florida Marine Turtle Protection Act, which prohibits taking, disturbing, and harassment of any sea turtle

species, eggs, or nests.

Since arriving at the ESC in August 2011, Sandy's caretakers have helped the turtle to learn to forage for live prey and prepare it for a life in the open ocean. In

two years, Sandy's shell has grown from 7 inches to 19 inches long and the turtle has gained over 30lbs. The turtle's behavior and ability to find its own food give Sandy a great chance to now thrive in the wild.

Sandy was fitted with a Wildlife Computers SPOT-287C satellite transmitter, programmed to transmit data every other day. The transmitter was applied by Dean Bagley, biologist with Inwater Research Group, Inc. Inwater Research Group also provided funding for the project. Never having lived in the open ocean, Sandy was released with the satellite transmitter in order to understand how the little loggerhead will respond to its new environment. It will also provide a wonderful opportunity for the thousands of school children who have known Sandy for the last two years to be able to watch and learn from Sandy's "travels." You can track Sandy's travels online at www.seaturtle.org!

And visitors to the Center need not worry, the Sea Turtle Tank was not empty for long! Only a week after Sandy's release, a new juvenile Loggerhead Sea Turtle arrived at the Center in July. The turtle was born in the FAU Lab at Gumbo Limbo Nature Center on October 7, 2012. As part of the FAU research project, the gender of this little turtle was determined...It's A Boy! He measures 16.6 cm. and weighs 606 g. Next year's kindergarten class will have the exciting task of naming this little guy!

Learn more about the sea turtles of the Center and our Sea Turtle Tank improvements at www.escmc.org.



Please consider leaving a legacy by naming the Environmental Studies Council in your estate plans.



The Environmental Studies Council, Inc.

2900 NE Indian River Drive
Jensen Beach, FL 34957
Council Office: (772) 334-4643
Center Office: (772) 219-1887

Mission Statement

To protect and enhance the education programs of the Environmental Studies Center and to promote and extend environmental awareness through community education.

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Many thanks to  for printing Turtle Tracks and using green ink! 

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From the desk of the President

School is back in session and so many new and exciting things are happening at the Environmental Studies Center!

This summer, we said goodbye to the Center's resident sea turtle, Sandy, as he took his new voyage back into the sea! He has traveled North and is currently spending time off the coast of Georgia. As we excitedly track his journey, we get to say hello to a new sea turtle, a male juvenile Loggerhead who will be named by this year's kindergarten class. The new turtle arrived from Gumbo Limbo and will be residing at the Center until he is able to be released.

Also new at the Center is an enhanced Coral Reef Tank, which will represent the coral reef habitats off of Florida's Coast. This year, students will be able to explore the coral reef tank in the Wet Lab, viewing species they don't normally have the opportunity to see up close.

And, of course, we're also looking forward to construction of a new turtle tank exhibit at the Center! The new tank will offer a more natural environment for our resident sea turtles, a better viewing opportunity for students and visitors, and enhanced educational displays. Plans for the new tank will be on display at our Open House on October 5, and I invite you to stop by and take a look! There are many sponsorship and naming opportunities for the new exhibit, and with your help, we can make this project a reality. You can visit the Council's website at www.escmc.org to learn more about the project and how you can get involved. We also plan to kick off the turtle tank campaign with several special events, so stay tuned to our facebook page and website for more updates!

I wish each and every one of you a happy and successful 2013-2014 school year. We look forward to seeing you at the Center!

Sincerely,
Kelly Bond Pelletier

Did Your Membership Expire?

Have you renewed your membership to the Environmental Studies Council? These year-long memberships cost just \$25 for an individual, \$50 for a family and \$100 for a business. Funding everything from critter food to the salary of a certified teacher, memberships directly support the educational experience presented for free for ALL Martin County students.

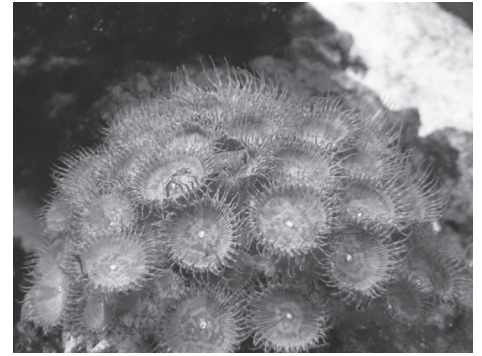
We need your support!

To sign up, log on to www.escmc.org/membership or call (772) 334-4643.

New reef tank at the Center!

Thanks to a grant from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation and the help of CTE Aquarium Services, the Center is well on its way to successfully converting one of the 200-gallon aquariums into a living coral reef! The tank has been up and running since April and will soon be ready to house live corals. The tank already boasts some interesting animals, such as Gorgonians and Zoanthids which are close relatives of corals. These colorful filter-feeders look like little flowers that open during the day to feed and get energy from the light, and then close up at night. Another fascinating critter is the Lettuce Slug, which consumes algae and uses the photosynthetic pigments to create its own energy from sunlight. It's a solar-powered slug! The tank is also stocked with fish, snails, and crabs, and even a large Deer Cowrie.

A permit application has been submitted to NOAA to collect Atlantic/Caribbean corals from a nursery within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, managed by the Mote Marine Laboratory on Summerland Key. This is a great opportunity to provide an example of the coral reefs we are most familiar with, and highlight the perils that our Atlantic and Caribbean corals face, such as increasing temperatures and pollution.



NIGHT HIKE

Join us for a nighttime sensory journey at Jonathan Dickinson State Park for our annual Night Hike. Guests will take a walk into the past as they explore the rich history of the Loxahatchee River at dark and learn about the creatures of the night.

The Hike includes a live animal talk with the Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge, an owl pellet dissection, exploration of the forrest, and music around the campfire. Guests will also chew on mints that show bioluminescence in nature.

The hike is family friendly for children ages 4 and up.

When: Friday, November 15 from 5:00pm - 9:00pm

Where: Loxahatchee pavilion at Jonathan Dickinson State Park

Reservations: Call (772) 334-4643 to reserve your spot today - seats are limited! Reservations are required. \$10 per person.



Hot dogs and chips will be available for \$1. Wear closed toed shoes and bring bug spray/mosquito repellent.

RIVER IN CRISIS

With discharges from Lake Okeechobee causing high bacteria levels in our local estuaries, the Center's field investigation programs have had to adjust to avoid the unsafe water. Center staff has formulated a tiered approach. Water quality assessments by the Martin County Health Department are monitored daily. If advisories are issued for a particular area, we will avoid those areas completely.

Tier 1: We will continue to do our field studies with seining, mangrove walks, water quality testing, shore digs for worms and amphipods and Beach Walks in areas rated Good by the Health Department.

Tier 2: If the areas usually selected for our studies are not good, other venues will be used. For example, instead of having 6th graders board the River Scout at Sandsprit Park, they are boarding at the Jensen Beach Boat Ramp.

Tier 3: If local water access areas are not safe for student use, instructional programs will be provided at the Center.

Tier 4: As the last resort, classes will be cancelled. Due to the full schedule for the school year, there are no days available to re-schedule so this option will be used only if absolutely necessary for the safety of our students and staff.

Staff will continue to monitor the safety of the water at our shoreline, and as always, no student is required to go into the water when they participate in activities in our lessons.

Did you know?

Since 1972, the Environmental Studies Center has incorporated innovative teaching methods that are field oriented, with hands on investigation. The curriculum at the center meets Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, Common Core State Standards, and reflects real-world application of scientific processes.

What would you learn in kindergarden? Students compare and contrast characteristics and habitats of the sea turtle, freshwater turtles, and gopher tortoises. A tour of the Center and a visit to a marked turtle nest on a local beach are part of the program.

Speaker's Bureau

Every Martin County student knows about their exciting, hands-on environmental education experience at the Environmental Studies Center -- but do YOU? We're reaching out to homeowner's groups and civic organizations with the hope of sharing with our neighbors how this premier environmental agency is making a long-term impact on Martin County. Our Council is willing to present anywhere from formal meeting sessions to evening cocktail hours. If you'd like to learn more, call our offices at (772) 334-4643 today!



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2900 NE Indian River Drive
Jensen Beach, FL 34957

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2013 Open House

You are cordially invited to join us at the 2013 Environmental Studies Center Open House! This year's Open House will be held on Saturday, October 5th from 10am-2pm.

Throughout the school year, students in the Martin County School District enjoy the environmental learning opportunities provided each year at the center, and at the Annual Open House, families can partake in the fun as well!

This year, guests will enjoy crafts, interactive activities, refreshments, entertainment, and sign-ups for the year's many special events including a Night Hike at Jonathan Dickinson State Park. They will also have an opportunity to tour the wet labs, butterfly gardens, and native plant hammock, view the campus improvements that took place over the last year, and visit the Center's resident loggerhead sea turtle and "Joey" the alligator.

Also, a 3D model of the new sea turtle exhibit will be on display so you can be among the first to see the exciting things planned at the Center!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**Saturday, October 5th
10:00 am - 2:00 pm
2900 NE Indian River
Drive, Jensen Beach**

FREE!

*Arts & Crafts
Center Tours
Entertainment*

GO GREEN! JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST! FIND US ON FACEBOOK !

<http://www.facebook.com/escmc>