



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Buck Island National
Monument
www.nps.gov

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Buck Island National Monument News Release

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2018 Buck Island Sea Turtle Nesting Season Has Started!

CHRISTIANSTED - The National Park Service celebrates its thirty-first year of research on the sea turtles nesting at Buck Island Reef National Monument. The National Park Service along with our partner agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USVI DPNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, VICZM St. Croix East End Marine Park, and The Nature Conservancy) would like to take this opportunity to inform the public about sea turtles and the special consideration we need to give them while they are here in our islands to nest on our beaches.

The nesting season for Virgin Island sea turtles (leatherback, green, loggerhead, and hawksbill) begins in March and continues through December of each year. There are several key nesting areas on St. Croix including Buck Island Reef NM, USFWS Sandy Point NWR, St. Croix's East End Beaches – Jack's, Issac's, and East End Beaches, Southgate, Coakley Bay, and Hay Penney Beach on the south shore.

Nearly ALL beaches, however, on St. Croix are utilized by nesting sea turtles!

Beaches on Buck Island Reef NM will be patrolled nightly to protect nesting turtles and to continue long- term research on these endangered sea turtles in the US Virgin Islands beginning July 21st and will last into October. As a reminder Buck Island Reef NM beaches are closed to visitors after sunset till sunrise. All boats overnighing at West Beach Anchorage will have to confirm overnight permit with NPS Law Enforcement prior to stay. Please contact 340-773-1460 or 340-277-6794.

If you encounter turtles nesting or hatchlings on **ANY St. Croix beach**, it is important to remember the following:

1. **Protected** - all sea turtles are protected throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Beach users need to closely follow all regulations, especially pertaining to beach fires, dogs, no digging in dry sand and never use tent stakes. Violations are subject to prosecution under civil and criminal laws and charged heavy penalties.



2. **Drive Slow** - boat operators should drive cautiously; sea turtles rise slowly to the surface to breathe, and it takes them several seconds to dive to safety when they hear an approaching motor boat.
3. **Shield Lights** - bright lights along beaches will disorient nesting adult sea turtles and hatchlings. Coastal property owners are encouraged to modify/shield or discontinue use of outdoor lights.
4. **Keep your distance** –do not interfere with nesting or hatchling sea turtles; observe from a distance. Do not use flashlights or flash photography.
5. **How to help** - if you find an adult or nest or hatchling sea turtle in distress please contact one of the following parties:

At Buck Island Reef National Monument

NPS Resource Management 24 hour: (340) 277-6794

NPS Headquarters Christiansted: (340) 773-1460 (8:30 am to 4:30 pm)

Sea Turtle Assistance and Rescue Network (STAR)

24-hr hotline: 340-690-0474

At Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge

USFWS: (340) 773-4554 or (340) 690-9451

All other locations

VI DPNR Enforcement: 340-244-9066

VI DPNR Division of Fish & Wildlife: 340-773-1082

The National Park Service thanks all of our community members and friends for 50 years of support for Buck Island and look forward to an exciting year of events celebrating our unique Virgin Islands' resources.

www.nps.gov/BUIS

Learn about the NPS Mission at Buck Island Reef NM watch [Caribbean Gem](#) on YouTube.

About the National Park Service: More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 407 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities.

