

Life's a beach for people and wildlife

Life's a beach at many Pinellas County parks and preserves. Pinellas County officials remind beachgoers to keep a few things in mind to make the experience safe and fun for themselves and the wildlife along the Gulf of Mexico.

- **Stingrays are common** in the shallow waters of the Pinellas County coastline. These fish typically spend time along the sea floor, sometimes partially covered by sand. While they are not aggressive, stingrays will sting with their tail when stepped on.
 - To avoid a sting, beachgoers are urged to do the stingray shuffle, which simply involves shuffling feet and kicking up sand when wading into coastal waters, rather than taking full steps.
 - Practicing the stingray shuffle at local beaches can prevent injuries to people and to the stingrays that live along Pinellas County waters.
- Another animal that lives in the Gulf, appearing around area beaches is the **sea turtle**. Sea turtles typically nest along the Pinellas County coastline from May to October, and hatchlings face many obstacles to survive.
 - When nesting, an adult female sea turtle comes ashore, digs a hole in the sand and lays about 100 to 150 eggs, covering them before returning to the water. Over the next couple of months, these eggs hatch, and the tiny hatchlings make their way across the beach into the sea.
 - Sea turtle nests are marked by trained monitors with wooden stakes and yellow ribbon. Disturbing the nests or the sea turtles themselves is against the law.
 - If beachgoers come across a nesting sea turtle, hatchlings or a nest, they should keep a safe distance and avoid getting between the turtles and the water, as this may prevent them from reaching the Gulf. Other obstacles include chairs, umbrellas and other debris left along the beach. Beachgoers should remove these items after each visit to keep the path clear for nesting sea turtles and hatchlings.
 - Artificial light can also disrupt the nesting process, disorienting hatchlings and leading them away from the ocean. Many beachfront municipalities in Pinellas County have passed lighting ordinances. Beachgoers and property owners along the water should minimize artificial lights that shine directly on the beach to give hatchlings a better chance at survival. These simple steps will help make nesting season successful.
- Nesting animals of the winged variety can also be found in some of Pinellas County's parks and preserves, and they too are best viewed from a distance. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, people should avoid entering areas with posted shorebird/seabird signs, keep dogs on a leash and away from nesting areas, properly dispose of trash to keep predators away and avoid flying kites near nesting areas. When the birds become aggravated, people are too close.

[Videos about parks and preserves](#) can be found on Pinellas County Government's YouTube channel (PCCTV1).

Visit the website for more information on [Pinellas County Parks and Preserves](#).

