

Preparing for Turtle Season: Rules + Guidelines

Our beloved and endangered sea turtles that come onto our beaches to nest each year have been protected by federal law in Mexico since 1990. CEA would like to provide information of the laws and details to help everyone work towards the same goal of the protection and conservation of these beautiful creatures and ensure they come back every year.

Centro Ecológico Akumal (CEA) monitors Akumal's sea turtles, identifying and protecting nesting females, nests and hatchlings on the four beaches in Akumal—Half Moon Bay, Akumal Bay, Jade Bay and Akumal Sur. Two species come to ground here: the Loggerhead (*Caretta Caretta*) which will come early in the season and nest shallow and close to water's edge, and then the Green, or "Blanca" in Spanish (*Chelonia mydas*) will come later in season and go up high on the beach into your yards and hopefully not your pools.

The following guidelines, provided by CEA, and based on Federal laws, outline how you can help a successful nesting season. Realizing many of you will have renters here during the season—May to November, we will be providing updated information for your information packets in your homes. This is most important to share this information with your staff, property managers and on your websites.

Most infractions of the laws are from uneducated tourists, so please do your part to help educate them.

TURTLES ARE PROTECTED BY FEDERAL LAW

Rules listed below are from the legal document, "NORMA Oficial Mexicana, NOM 162 SEMARNAT 2013, which establishes the specifications for protection, recovery and management of the sea turtle populations in their nesting habitats. More information can be found here:

http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5286506&fecha=01/02/2013

Federal law states the following:

- It is a crime to bother, touch or interfere in any way with the natural processes of the adults' ascent onto the beach or depositing of eggs; and to interfere with the hatchlings' development in the nest, emergence from their eggs, or return to the sea.
- It is serious violation to offer or sell turtle eggs, meat or products made from their shell.
- When encountering trained, authorized technicians ("tortugeros") of CEA, follow their instructions. They are working under federal permit and they will alert authorities when infractions occur.



How Property Managers + Homeowners Can Help

RULES + GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW DURING TURTLE SEASON

Lighting

- Bright lights disturb nesting turtles and disorient hatchlings. Reducing the amount of light visible from a nesting beach is the first step. (See “Light Pollution” information below.)
- Do not use flashlights with white light—use red lights or a red filter cover in case of an emergency on the beach. (NOM 6.9.3.3)
- NO Flash photography (NOM 6.9.3.3)

On the beach

- Have staff move beach chairs and kayaks close as possible to your home at sunset so turtles do not get entangled, trapped or disoriented. (NOM 5.4.3)
- The best way to help the turtles is to keep the beaches dark, quiet and empty. Any movement or noise on the beaches between 9pm and 5am can impede or interfere with the nesting process. (NOM 5.4.6.)
- Only authorized personnel under the official SEMARNAT permit should be walking on the beaches during nesting activity. (NOM 6.9.2.2)
- Keep dogs on leashes and away from turtles and nests. At night, keep pets inside. (NOM 5.4.6.)
- If you do walk upon a turtle or have one in your yard—do not approach or try to assist. Note: if there is a CEA “tortugero” or a team member on the beach, alert them of the location. Or notify security who will call a CEA staff member.

In the home

- Noise from music, parties etc. should be kept to a minimum during the season.
- Encourage guests to close blinds/curtains after sunset.

Educate staff

- Please alert staff to leave any turtle tracks (from mommas or hatchlings) they find in the mornings and not to rake over the tracks. These tracks are very crucial part of the



FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS + HOME OWNERS

documentation of all nests and babies and where they are located so we can protect and document them.

- Zoning markers and/or nesting stakes should not be touched or removed.

Keep other critters and creatures at bay

- Wild animals are always a problem, they can attack or distract the nesting mother and they dig into nests to eat the eggs. Also, hatchlings in the night don't stand a chance with raccoons or tahones.
- Be sure trash is kept at a minimum around your home so as not to attract them close to the beach and keep trash cans covered.
- Do not leave pet food out at night.

Report Unusual Activity

- Report any unusual behavior seen on the beach day or night to CEA or Security.

Centro Ecológico Akumal

Evenings: tortugas1@ceakumal.org

Days: 984-875-9095 during office hours. (8am-5pm).

LIGHT POLLUTION

Light pollution is the number one problem for nesting season. Here are a few simple things you can do to protect the sea turtles:

- Review outside lighting before season starts. Identify what lights are visible from beach. If they are not necessary for safety, turn them off. If some lights cannot be left off, shield, redirect or lower height so they are not visible from the beach.
- For lights that must stay on replace with red or amber LED bulbs in shielded, downward mounting. Replace high pressure sodium vapor (HPS) lights with low pressure (LPS) bulbs.
- Apply window tint at a 15% light transmittance level or close opaque curtains or blinds after dark to reduce visible light on the beach.

Your help in protecting our beloved, endangered sea turtles is appreciated.

