

## Practical considerations for night vigils

Vigils are between about 2030 – 0600 the following morning. There should be at least two people on the beach. Try to arrive before dusk as this makes it easier to find the nest and settle in. If there are any major obstacles such as driftwood or large rocks between the nest and the sea, clear them away, but there is no need to go overboard on this as the hatchlings are pretty resourceful. Arrange who will sleep when and who will watch.

### Essential items you will need:

- A small torch each with a red filter (pink/red plastic bag from a kiosk, folded many times and held with an elastic band is fine).
- Lounger, Lilo, mat or chair.
- Sleeping bag, blanket and pillow and extra clothes (do not underestimate the cold and damp!!).
- Insect repellent (remember the sand fly season).
- Flask, drinks, snacks.
- Pad and pencil.
- MOBILE PHONE (fully charged) - ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.

### Should turtles emerge, be organised:

- One person should sit by the nest with a red torch counting hatchlings and noting time onto the pad. Another should monitor hatchling progress to the sea (red torch). Do all this swiftly and avoid moving around once the process is in motion. Hatchlings tend to emerge in batches so don't leave the nest!
- Hatchlings look exactly like pebbles in the dark and are very easily stepped on. If you lose track of a hatchling it is very unlikely that you'll find him again so do not move around trying; he will find the sea without you.
- Do not handle hatchlings. Their unhindered crawl to the sea is thought to be a valuable part of their natal bonding. They will go off in all directions at first; just give them a minute and keep an eye on them.
- Please resist the temptation to take flash photos.
- The cage should not be moved.
- Noise, light and movement should be kept to a minimum but do discourage any predators such as foxes and dogs.
- If the hatchlings seem to be attracted to your torch (even though it is red) switch it off.

- A white light, shone towards the nest from the water's edge, will help hatchlings to orientate towards the sea if they are being distracted by lights on or near the beach.

Remember that adult turtles may still be looking for a place to nest. They are very easily deterred and this is why you should keep movement, noise and light to an absolute minimum. If you are lucky enough to have an adult come ashore, here is what to do:

- Stay still and observe the turtle to determine what she is doing. If she appears to be looking for a nest site or digging a nest chamber, DO NOT MOVE, as she is easily disturbed at this stage. Do not worry about any emerging hatchlings - they will generally be OK.
- Once she has started laying use only a minimal amount of red torch light to observe the activity.
- Flash photography will deter other turtles attempting to come ashore – this is why it is to be avoided.
- Make a note of the position of the nest and report the details to the coordinator.

The SBA Police will be aware of all the vigils that are taking place in the SBA. If you see anything that concerns you, do not take any direct action just call the SBA Police on 2596 7262.

On completion of the vigil, gather everything up and leave the site as you found it, and call the coordinator.