



# News from...

# Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

## Least terns nesting near Cape Romano

Summer is here, and so are the least terns. Every year these migratory birds returning from wintering grounds in Central and South America scout local coastal areas and select a location that best meets their nesting needs. Least terns are a Threatened species.

Tides and currents have helped re-form an emergent sand bar within the reserve near Cape Romano. This sand bar, also known as "Second Chance," now serves as nesting habitat for the largest beach-nesting least tern colony in south Florida.



The sand bar has been posted with signs and string with flagging and is monitored by reserve staff and Team OCEAN volunteers. This is one of the few locations in the region that provides protection from landbased predators and easy access to food items such as bay anchovies (glass minnows).

Biologists estimate there are about 400 pairs of least terns with nests underway. These birds lay their tiny, well-camouflaged eggs directly on the sand, and young are mobile within a few hours of hatching. Adult birds are the eggs' and young's only protection against the elements and predators.

Because of its distance from the mainland the site receives minimal human disturbance, which is crucial for the success of this species.

Nesting least terns are easily disturbed by people (on foot or aboard approaching vessels) and dogs, and will dive bomb perceived predators that get too close to their nests. **Boaters are urged to avoid accessing or approaching this important habitat until nesting season ends in mid-August.**

Whenever you visit the beach, and especially during summer nesting season, do your part to share the shore with wildlife:

- Respect posted areas
- Keep your distance from resting or nesting birds: if they take flight you are too close
- Use a high-powered spotting scope to get the best view from a reasonable distance
- Keep pets on a leash, on your boat, or leave them at home
- Don't leave any litter behind
- Never deploy fireworks at or near an active nesting area

## Box Jelly in Henderson Creek

This tiny box jelly (*Tripedalia cystophora*), only a few centimeters in length, was spotted from the floating dock behind the Learning Center and carefully brought inside for a photo session with a macro lens (not a microscope) before being released. It has clusters of three "pedalia" (tentacles) at each corner of its box-shaped body, and complex eyes which appear as small dark spots. Unlike its potentially lethal Australian cousins, this species is harmless to humans, and thrives in mangrove fringed waters of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea.



## Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center July 2011 Events

### Special Deals!

From Memorial Day through Labor Day, enjoy \$1 off with valid Florida driver's license or "buy one, get one free" with valid Collier County driver's license. Max 4 per offer, excludes events.

### Thursdays (9 to 11 a.m.)

**Guided Kayak Tours.** Pre-registration required.

### Kids Free Fridays!

Enjoy crafts, storytelling and shark-related activities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Kids ages 6-12 get in free with paid adult. Food vendor on site.

Weekly themes:

**July 1 – Guitarfish, July 8 - Hammerhead  
July 15 - Megalodon, July 22 - Nurse Shark  
July 28 - Sawfish**

### July 18 – 21

#### Summer of Sharks Art Classes for Kids

Two half-day workshops offered to ages 12-16 with world-renowned marine dot artist Rogest. \$100, pre-registration required.

#### Summer of Sharks Lecture Series (5 to 7 p.m.)

\$10 (\$5 members) includes light refreshments. Pre-registration recommended.

**July 20: Dr. Jose Castro**, published author and NOAA scientist at Mote Marine Laboratory, will present "The Perfect Predator."

**July 27: Stan Waterman**, scuba diving pioneer, will share an eight-minute excerpt from the 1971 documentary film "Blue Water, White Death."

### July 21 (6 to 8:30 p.m.)

**EcoTour Training Series:** Eco-Research in Southwest Florida: Sea Turtles & Coyotes. FREE

**Pre-register for events at [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org)**

Summer hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Admission: \$5 adults, \$3 kids 6-12, under 6 FREE.  
Daily programs offered at 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.

Rookery Bay Reserve, located in southwest Florida, is recognized as one of the few remaining pristine, mangrove-forested estuaries in the U.S. The Reserve is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). As one of 28 sites within NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System, Rookery Bay serves as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for students and scientists from around the world. (239) 417-6310, 300 Tower Rd., Naples, FL 34113 (located off Collier Blvd. 1 mile south of U.S. 41/East Tamiami Trail). [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org), [facebook.com/friendsfrookerybay](https://www.facebook.com/friendsfrookerybay)