

Mote Releases Katherine Harris vs. Her Detractors Sea Turtle

A rehabilitated green sea turtle was released this morning by Mote Marine Laboratory's Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Hospital. The turtle, nicknamed Willy, was tagged with a satellite-linked transmitter to help scientists learn about green turtle migrations and assess rehabilitation efforts.

The turtle was stranded on the bayside of Holmes Beach on Feb. 14. Suzi Fox with Anna Maria Island Turtle Patrol responded to the stranding. Anna Maria Island Turtle Patrol is a nonprofit organization of 105 volunteers that patrol Anna Maria Island beaches during turtle nesting season.

"When the call about Willy first came in, we actually believed we were responding to a dead turtle stranding," Fox said. "When we reached the turtle, it was completely covered with moss and algae and did not appear to be moving at all. A test, lightly touching the eye lid, was performed, and we were surprised with a slight movement, so the turtle was immediately rushed to Mote the hope that it could be rehabilitated."

Fox transported the turtle to Mote's Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Hospital where Dr. Charles Manire, Mote's chief veterinarian, performed the initial health assessment. The turtle was extremely cold and suffering from hypothermia upon arrival. Willy was started on antibiotics and slowly warmed up. The turtle was also treated for anemia for several months and was declared healthy and ready for release by Mote staff and state officials.

Over the past few months, Anna Maria Island Turtle Patrol organized a fundraiser for a satellite tag for Willy, raising over \$3,000 from concerned schools, residents and business.

Scientists in Mote's Sea Turtle Conservation and Research Program are in the second year of research using the satellite tag technology on loggerhead sea turtles. Eight female nesting loggerheads have been tagged on Casey Key this year to learn about sea turtle migrations to help understand and evaluate potential threats these animals face when they are far from nesting beaches.

Staff with the Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Hospital is excited with the opportunity to tag a rehabilitated turtle and specifically learn about the green sea turtle species.

"We put a great deal of time and effort into the rehabilitation of these animals and are typically very limited in the monitoring of that effort once the animals have been released," says Dr. Manire. "Thanks to the support of the many donors from Anna Maria Island we will be able to learn more about green sea turtles that are found in our area and better evaluate the success of the rehabilitation."

The tags transmit a signal to a satellite as a turtle surfaces for air and then the data is later transmitted to scientists via e-mail. Mote hopes to receive data from the transmitter for as long as six months. The general public will also be able to discover where Willy travels upon his release by visiting www.seaturtle.org. For more information on Mote's sea turtle rehabilitation, conservation, or research programs visit www.mote.org.

Turtle Update

Turtle nesting season is currently at the midway point. According to Mote Marine Senior Biologist Mario Mota, now the turtle watchers will be focusing on counting the number of crawls from the nests, which is the number of hatchlings making it to the ocean.

Mote said that tropical storm Alberto washed out a few of the turtle nests this year, but hopes there will not be any more storms this season that will hinder the hatching of the eggs. The beach renourishment project took about 14 months and also required the relocation of many nests so that the eggs would not be disturbed by the heavy machinery and sand placement.

The Florida Index Nesting Beach Survey Program administered by the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute has analyzed the nesting trends for the three types of sea turtles (leatherback, green turtles and loggerhead) that nest along Florida's coast. Research conducted between 1989 and 2005, shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of leatherbacks and green turtles nesting on Florida beaches, while there has been no statistically significant increase in the number of loggerheads. Leatherback turtle nesting has increased in the past 17 years from 27 nests to 357 nests. Green turtle nests have increased from 267 nests to 7,158 nests. Loggerhead nests increased from 29,547 nests to 59,918 nests.

Turtle season officially ends Oct. 31.

The Katherine Harris for Senate campaign has been plagued with problems ranging from questionable campaign donations to the turnover, including four different campaign managers, and the erosion of support from once-close allies. But one thing is certain: Harris is not backing out of the primary run. With the elections held in September, she and three other contenders are vying for the Republican slot to run against Democratic Senator Bill Nelson. The following is a look at how Harris has responded during her campaign to accusations of wrongdoing, and what others who know her have said about her.

Harris Said

"We'll win, so don't listen to the prognosticators, or the pollsters — you can make a poll say anything you want, don't be discouraged. We've done it before. We'll do it again." — Aug. 3, 2006 in response to Governor Jeb Bush and state Republican Party leadership who believe she cannot beat Democratic Senator Bill Nelson.

"No one unites our base like I do, I will not kowtow to the liberal media or the higher-ups in our own party." — Aug. 7, 2006 when speaking to Collier County Republicans about how she would be the state of Florida's next U.S. senator.

"We won't do anything to impede with what they're trying to accomplish. We want to do everything to help, and we have." — Said in early August regarding the federal investigation into her campaign funding.

"We need to become energy independent from oil altogether. It is a limited resource. So consequently, we should really focus on alternative energy resources. We also have enormous resources 235 miles off our coast in the Gulf. That is an enormous opportunity for us to drill that would help lower gas prices. I want to ensure that it's not going to damage not only our beautiful resources ecologically, but more importantly, financially, concerning our tourism-related industries." — Aug. 9, 2006 on how she would lower gasoline prices, if elected to the U.S. Senate.

"I'm sorry that Mr. McBride was hurt by all that. I thought it was an appalling question, but the campaign did not ask her to ask it, so you can't issue an apology for that." — Aug. 8, 2006 in response to a request for an apology by William McBride, a challenger of Harris' for Republican Party primary, who said one of her supporters wearing a Harris sticker asked him why he changed his name from Rodriguez to McBride; in his opinion an attempt to embarrass him regarding his Hispanic heritage.



They Said

"I believe the reason she's running are two; she doesn't believe ever that she has done anything wrong, and she has an ego that's so outsized it won't allow her to think in a reasonable manner." — Aug. 3, 2006 former campaign manager Jim Dornan, regarding Harris continuing to run for the Senate despite all of the questions surrounding her campaign.

"Thank God for Bill Nelson, because we'd have another crook in the United States Senate if it weren't for him. He is going to beat the pants off Katherine Harris. She doesn't understand that it's ... improper to be chairman of a campaign and count the votes at the same time. This is not Russia and she is not Stalin." — July 27, 2006, Democratic leader Howard Dean regarding who will win the election for the Senate.

"We used to call her 'The Hurricane,' because she would spin completely out of control over the smallest things." — August 2006, Jim Dornan former Harris campaign manager, pertaining to what type of person Harris was to work for.

"[The Republican Party is] going to wait until September and hope we have a candidate. [Harris] has obviously had some issues and they keep cropping back up. The high staff turnover definitely affects her ability to gain any traction or momentum." — July 13, 2006, Republican Party of Florida spokesman Jeff Sadosky, speaking his opinion of what is going wrong in the Harris campaign.

"Katherine, though it causes us much anguish, we have determined that your campaign faces irreparable damage. We feel that we have no other choice but to revoke our support. The polls tell us that no matter how you run this race, you will not be successful in beating Bill Nelson, who would otherwise be a vulnerable incumbent if forced to face a stronger candidate." — May 7 letter to Harris by Republican Party chairman, Carole Jean Jordan, and national committee members Sharon Day and Paul Senft, when the state Republican Party declined to support Harris' run for the Senate.

FDOT Weighs in on Bridge Safety

Blinking neon signs alert motorists at several locations on either end of Longboat Key to cross if you have a heavy load.

Residents can rest assured that the message to not cross the bridge is probably not aimed at them, and may continue merrily on their way.

The Florida Department of Transportation has issued the warnings for only about 1% of vehicles used on Florida highways.

People driving cars, sport utility vehicles, trucks, vans, school and general transportation buses, garbage trucks, ambulances, fire trucks and legally-loaded commercial vehicles can breathe a sigh of relief and continue on their way.

However, if you are a driver of an overweight truck heed the signs, and contact FDOT for your special requirements. There are also phone numbers posted on the blinking portable signs, so that drivers can phone at the bridge if need be.

Eventually, permanent signs will be erected. This is not a temporary situation. It is all part of the Weight Enforcement program of Motor Carrier Compliance initiated by FDOT.

They say that the primary purpose of the weight enforcement program is "to protect highway system pavement and bridges from excessive damage due to overweight and oversize vehicles."

A commercial truck must be permitted if it is oversize or overweight. There are blanket and one-trip only permits issued by FDOT.

Their agency established weight and size limitations, and these are enforced.

No permits are needed if the maximum gross weight for vehicles having five weight-bearing axles with outer bridge spans of not less than 40-feet, but less than 51-feet, should not exceed 90,000 pounds; or, if the vehicle has outer bridge spans of more than 51-feet, the maxi-

mum gross weight should not exceed 95,000 pounds; or, if the vehicle is equipped with outer bridge spans of less than 40-feet, the maximum gross weight should not be more than 80,000 pounds.

All straight trucks should have a maximum gross weight of not more than 80,000 pounds.

The maximum dimensions should not exceed 14-feet, six-inches wide and high, and 95-feet long.

If there is an emergency — for instance, a hurricane — a truck may request a temporary road use permit during that time period. There was a temporary road use permit issued on June 12 of this year during the Tropical Storm Alberto watch it case it was needed for bringing in emergency equipment or supplies, clearing storm wreckage or debris, livestock, food and timber transfer.

When traveling, you may have seen "fixed static weighing facilities and state-of-the-art "weigh in motion" facilities alongside major highways for trucks. A truck pulls in and is weighed, or can be weighed traveling at no more than 45 mph on the weigh in motion scale.

Police officers patrol state highways and use portable scales that do not pass fixed scale facilities.

Weight restrictions are occurring on these bridges in Manatee County: the Anna Maria Drawbridge between Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key Island, and the Cortez Drawbridge between Anna Maria Island and the mainland.

Weight restrictions are occurring on these bridges in Sarasota County directly impacting Longboat Key: the Longboat Key Drawbridge and the Little Ringling Bridges between St. Armand's Key and the Mainland. Other bridges in the county include: State Road 72 and bridges at Cow Pen Slough, Myakka River Overflow, Myakka River Relief, Myakka River Bridge, and over Deer Prairie Slough.

Contact the FDOT public information office for more information by calling 863-519-2362.