



MEDIA RELEASE

Flatback Turtle Release at Casuarina Coastal Reserve

A Top End tradition continued in Darwin last night with the release of baby flatback turtles into the Arafura Sea off Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife senior wildlife officer Ray Chatto said the annual event was the first for 2006 and a treat for the 50 or so Darwin Junior Rangers and their parents who attended.

“The release of baby flatback turtles is a highlight on the Junior Rangers calendar and something the children thoroughly enjoy,” Mr Chatto said.

“While the general public can continue to register and take part in another 10 or so turtle hatchling releases scheduled for 2006, we set the first one for this season to fit in with the Junior Ranger program.

“Not only is the experience about getting close and personal with baby marine turtles, the junior rangers also learn about our management program for marine turtle nesting in Darwin and develop an understanding why taking care of these baby turtles is so important.”

Flatback turtles, which breed only in Australia, are classified as a Threatened Species.

Mr Chatto said Darwin is the only capital city in the world to have flatback turtles nesting on its city beaches.

“This year’s cooler than average dry season has seen a later than normal start to marine turtle nesting on Casuarina beach but they are getting stuck into it now, and is shaping up as the most nesting recorded in the 10 years or more that we have been monitoring it,” Mr Chatto said.

“It may be that our nest monitoring efforts of 10 to 15 years ago when there appeared less nesting are starting to pay off with young born on the beach then starting to come back to nest as adults.

“We had around 50 hatchlings hatch on Monday before they were released last night.

“We like to keep groups of people involved in the release to a size relative to the number of hatchlings but we don’t tend to go above 250 people maximum because the more people we have, the harder it is to manage, and the last thing we want is for people stepping on the baby turtles.”

People wanting to register their interest to be part of future baby flatback turtle releases are urged to call 8999 4555.

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Ray Chatto on 0401 110 205

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