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## Brevard reefs offer lots of green (turtles)

Researcher says coast is prime home

*BY GEORGE WHITE  
FLORIDA TODAY*

Most people know that Brevard County beaches are spots for sea-turtle nesting.

But they might be surprised that the rocky ledges from Patrick Air Force Base to Indian Harbour Beach are a prime habitat for endangered juvenile green turtles that feed on algae.

That's the topic of the Sea Turtle Preservation Society's speaker series discussion at 7 p.m. Nov. 6 at the Melbourne Beach Community Center by guest speaker Karen Holloway-Adkins of Indialantic.

Her presentation is titled "Coastal Waters and Reefs: Sea Turtle Foraging Habitat."

A Brevard resident since 1989, Holloway-Adkins saw her first sea turtle -- a loggerhead -- on the beach in Indialantic.

Later, she abandoned a career in computers and telecommunication to make sea turtles her area of study.

The computers and telecommunication field "was never what I wanted to do," she said.

She received a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science in biology at the University of Central Florida.

She is now a doctoral candidate at the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University in Fort Pierce.

Now a member of the nonprofit East Coast Biologists in Indialantic, Holloway-Adkins is involved in a study of the reefs in Brevard and how they support juvenile green turtles.

The research is funded by the Florida Sea Turtle License Plate Grants Program.

Using nets on calm days, she has captured 50 such turtles, and she has seen and documented many more, some of which are found in water just a couple of feet deep.

"Most people don't realize how much the reef offers this area. It's amazingly diverse," she said.

From what she has seen, the news is not all bad.

"The population there is unique, in that it doesn't have tumors," like many of those found in the Indian River Lagoon, she said.

"It's something that's still being researched, but it's important because we want to know what we are doing right."

And it appears that the green turtles are staying there over time, as the same turtles have been

captured more than once, she said.

"Most of them are very healthy and fat, but you don't know if you're seeing a trend. That's why it's important to study them," she said.

Holloway-Adkins also works at Dynamac Corp. as a wildlife biologist in the aquatics group.

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