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Eric and Joey Wylie,

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We look forward to swinging a hammer with you on the Campos/Ruiz Family Home job site!



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to July 15, which is the Kemp's ridley nesting season, said Christopher Marshall, director of the Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Research.

"They are the most critically endangered sea turtles in the world," Marshall said.

Volunteers are trained by the National Park Service to look for sea turtle tracks. If they spot them, they call the Upper Texas Coast Sea Turtle Patrol biologists and protect the tracks while the professionals travel to the scene, Marshall said.

The responders excavate all the eggs into a cooler and replicate the natural nest inside, he said. Then, the eggs travel to the facility at Padre Island National Seashore, where they are incubated at proper temperatures to create female hatchlings, Marshall said.

"A cool thing about sea turtles is that nest temperatures determine the sex," he said.

There is a spike in temperature when the eggs are about to hatch, so they take the cooler of eggs to the beach and let the turtle hatchlings walk across the sand into the water, Marshall said.

Walking in the sand helps them imprint and return to that area, he said. If they were to leave nests on the beach in this area, they'd likely be run over by cars, disturbed by high tides or eaten by predators, he said.

Taking them down south ensures an 85% to 95% hatching success rate, Marshall said.

to protect the area while they measure the tracks and perform research, she said. That crowding around a nest is a great time to educate other people about Kemp's ridley turtles, Winkelhake said.

Also during their patrols, volunteers are trained to call the correct people if they find any type of injured or sick wildlife, she said.

It's rewarding even on the days she finds nothing, because she's making a small contribution to the environment, Winkelhake said, adding she couldn't think of anything a more rewarding way to spend her time.

Sea turtles are important to protect because they've existed for millions of years, Marshall said. They're also important to the environment, he said, adding anyone who enjoys fishing should have an interest in protecting sea turtles.

"It's a community effort, we really rely on people," Steinhaus said. "Without our volunteers this project wouldn't be possible."

Those who can't volunteer can still help preserve the sea turtle population by being good stewards of the environment, Marshall said.

"One of the most basic things people can do is pick up their trash on the beach and take their canopies and barbecues with them when they leave," Marshall said.

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