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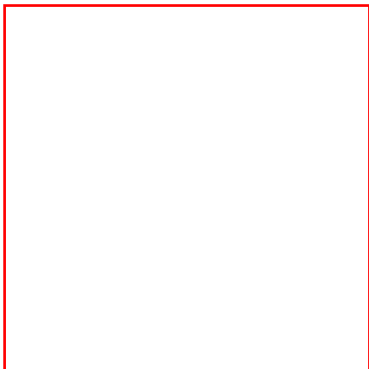
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450 sea turtles released into Gulf of Mexico

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PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE - They face a hard time at sea, but there is hope for the world's most endangered sea turtles. 450 Kemp's Ridley hatchlings were released into the Gulf of Mexico Friday.

They're desperately trying to reach the water before being whisked away by a hungry seagull. They struggle in the sand, slowly making their way to water, so the surf can snatch them up and taking them into a new world at sea.

"Having them swept into the water and seeing their noses poke up out of the water was just incredible. I've never seen anything like it," said Janet Beeler.

Of these 450 Kemp's Ridley hatchlings the ones that survive will return in 15 years to nest. This has been a record-setting year

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with some 51 Kemp's Ridley nests found on the Texas gulf coast.

"I've been working since 1980 to try to reestablish a nesting colony of Kemp's Ridley turtles here at Padre Island National Seashore," said Seashore Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery Chief, Dr. Donna Shaver. "Today is just a real celebration of how we're moving in the right direction." Nature tells the turtles which direction to go - right toward the water.



"I love nature. I love these little creatures. We need to do something for them," said Roberto Mendoza a tourist from El Paso. As exciting as it is to watch - reality is reality. The odds are not in favor of these little creatures. Dr. Shaver said only about ten of the 450 will survive as adult sea turtles. Hurricane or no hurricane they always have a real struggle at sea.

If you happen to run across a sea turtle or a nest on the beach, call 361.949.8173, extension 226 or 0. Marine experts recommend you stay at the site if possible. Please do not touch or take the sea turtles, their eggs or their eggshells into possession -since they are protected by federal and state law.

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