

Rookery Bay Sea Turtle Program Internship Posting 2026

About: Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is 110,000 acres of primarily coastal and estuarine habitats, stretching from downtown Naples to the greater Ten Thousand Islands. The Reserve provides a basis for informed stewardship of estuaries in Southwest Florida through research and education. The Reserve is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Coastal Office in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Florida International University. Additional support is provided by the non-profit Friends of Rookery Bay.

Description: Rookery Bay Research Reserve is a foraging ground to three listed species of sea turtles, the Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), Atlantic green (*Chelonia mydas*), and the loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*). The loggerhead is the most common species of sea turtle that nests along Reserve beaches. Rookery Bay Research Reserve staff, interns and volunteers conduct morning nest surveys along barrier island beaches to locate and cage nests, protecting them from predation by raccoons and other species. They then document the number of hatched eggs to get a better understanding of nesting success.

Friends of Rookery Bay is seeking interns to assist Rookery Bay Research Reserve staff to monitor nesting activity and hatching success along the Cape Romano Complex and the Ten Thousand Islands, contributing to a multi-year data set. The interns will be responsible for safe boating practices while accessing remote barrier islands to conduct morning nesting surveys five days a week. They will be responsible for scheduling and supervising volunteers. The interns will also work closely with Friends of Rookery Bay to assist with the Adopt-A-Nest program. The interns will also present the results of the 2026 nest monitoring efforts at the Rookery Bay NERR Environmental Learning Center for the staff, volunteers, and donors.

Qualifications:

- Recent graduates or graduating seniors with a bachelor's degree in an environmental science related field
- Ability to operate boats in coastal/estuarine environments is preferred but not required
- Prior experience conducting fieldwork
- Strong communication skills
- Ability to engage professionally with the public
- GIS/GPS skills are preferred but not required
- Ability to work in hot, humid, rainy, and buggy conditions
- Must possess a valid U.S. Driver's License

Internship Dates: Preferred start date is April 15th with some flexibility. Candidates must include their available start date in the cover letter. Interns are expected to stay through September 30th with the understanding that the internship could end early or be extended into October. This is dependent on nesting activity and tropical storm system activity.

Internship Schedule: Tuesday – Saturday 7AM - 3PM. Times may vary depending on weather and nesting conditions. Hours will vary between 30-40 hours per week depending on workload. Interns must be flexible and be able to adjust as needed.

Number of Intern Positions: 3 to 4

Compensation: \$390/week and complimentary shared dormitory accommodations

Last date to Apply: January 16th

How to apply: Send a resume, cover letter, and contact information for three professional references to Jenna.Flickinger@FloridaDEP.gov with subject line: Rookery Bay Sea Turtle Program Internship - [last name].