

Loggerhead sea turtle released after rehabbing in Florida

February 15 2023, by CODY JACKSON and FREIDA FRISARO



A loggerhead sea turtle named Rocky was released into the Atlantic Ocean on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023 in Juno Beach, Fla after spending six weeks rehabbing at Loggerhead Marinelife Center. Wednesday morning's event marked the first public sea turtle release from the Juno Beach center since 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Cody Jackson

A loggerhead sea turtle named Rocky paused briefly on the sand Wednesday morning before slowly crawling into the Atlantic Ocean

after spending six weeks rehabbing at Florida's [Loggerhead Marinelife Center](#).

Turtle hospital staff and volunteers cheered as the turtle made its way down the beach, which is directly across the street from the center. Rocky was equipped with a blue tracking device on its back, which allows the staff to continue monitoring the large turtle.

[Rocky, a 220-pound \(100-kilograms\) female turtle](#), was found floating off North Hutchinson Island on Dec. 29 with a tear in the lung caused by a boat strike, Andy Dehart, the center's president and CEO, said Wednesday.

The turtle "had a perforation in the lung, so was trapping air in the body cavity, which was making it essentially be what's called a floater," Dehart said. "It couldn't dive. It couldn't get underwater."

The center's goal is to rehab the turtles and get them back into their natural habitat.

"So, every one of these animals that goes back is critical to the survival of the sea turtle populations, especially a large breeding female like Rocky," he said. "Seeing that return to nature is truly something magical."

Juno Beach is north of West Palm Beach on Florida's Atlantic Coast.

Last year, the center monitored some 18,000 turtle nests along a 10-mile (16-kilometer) stretch of beach. Most of the nests were comprised of loggerhead turtles, along with leatherbacks and green sea turtles, which are all endangered species. Nesting season runs from March 1 to the end of October.



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