



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Loggerhead Sea Turtle Released Off San Diego Coast Following Months of Rehabilitation

Multiple organizations collaborate to protect endangered species and preserve marine life

San Diego, California (October 24, 2024)– The Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue Society (VAMMR), SeaWorld San Diego Rescue and Turtles Fly Too worked together recently to transfer rescued loggerhead sea turtle, Moira. Found cold stunned in British Columbia, Moira was transported to the warm waters of San Diego where she has now been returned to the wild. Since her rescue in February 2024, VAMMR and the Vancouver Aquarium have been working tirelessly to bring Moira back to health.

Moira was rescued on February 4 in Pedder Bay, British Columbia. The VAMMR team stabilized the severely hypothermic sea turtle whose core temperature was only 8 degrees Celsius (46.4 degrees Fahrenheit) when she was admitted. Moira is estimated to be 15 to 20 years old. At the time of her rescue, she was the second reported sighting of a loggerhead sea turtle in British Columbia. Loggerhead turtles are typically found in tropical and subtropical regions of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The rescue would not have been possible without permission from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Local marine biologist Dr. Anna Hall was first to respond to this rescue. VAMMR is the only facility in Western Canada that can provide the unique care that this animal required. Moira has been fitted with a satellite tracker, allowing her care team to follow her journey and monitor her movements.

“This has been a remarkable story for Moira. I am very proud of the vital role that VAMMR and Vancouver Aquarium staff have played in getting her ready to be released by SeaWorld and Turtles Fly Too,” said VAMMR Executive Director Dr. Martin Haulena.

Upon her arrival to SeaWorld San Diego, the veterinary and rescue teams assessed Moira’s readiness for return, utilizing their extensive knowledge in the care of loggerhead turtles. Moira acclimated well to her new environment, swimming beautifully in larger, deeper pools. Her impressive diving abilities during the evaluation along with a healthy blood sample demonstrated that she was fully prepared to return to her natural habitat in the ocean this week.

The effort to transport a single sea turtle took the efforts of multiple organizations because it is crucial to return her to the wild, especially given the endangered status of loggerhead turtles in the North Pacific. With their population dwindling, each turtle—particularly females, who are

essential to the species' reproductive capacity—plays a vital role in their survival. Protecting these turtles is not only about saving an individual but also about preserving marine life and maintaining the health of the broader marine ecosystem.

“Maira’s journey showcases the collaborative efforts of our rescue team at SeaWorld, alongside partners from the Vancouver Aquarium, the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue Society and Turtles Fly Too,” said Jeni Smith, Curator of Rescue at SeaWorld San Diego. “This case stands out for its multi-agency approach, with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and international customs all playing crucial roles in ensuring her safe transfer. Preparing for her return to the wild is a testament to the hard work and commitment of everyone involved in her rescue, rehabilitation and return.”

The president of Turtles Fly Too (TF2), Leslie Weinstein, also acknowledged the successful cooperation among all organizations involved with the transport, saying, “Our efforts to rescue even one sea turtle like Maira underscores the essential role of TF2’s medevac flights in protecting endangered marine wildlife. This successful loggerhead airlift shows how coordinated medevac flights can truly make a difference. When organizations unite in conservation we’re not just saving an individual—we’re committing to biodiversity and contributing to the survival of a species.”

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Video and photos [here](#).

*In the U.S., all assets must include the following language on the asset or included in photo/video description.

“Activities conducted under the Stranding Agreement between NMFS and SeaWorld California under the Authority of the MMPA”

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[About Vancouver Aquarium](#)

Since opening in 1956, the Vancouver Aquarium has connected more than 50 million people from around the world to our oceans and inspired them to take action to address key threats. Located in Stanley Park, the Vancouver Aquarium is home to hundreds of incredible species. The Vancouver Aquarium is a fully accredited member of Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA), Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA), and Humane Conservation Certified by American Humane.

About Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue Society

The Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue Society ("VAMMR") runs Canada's only dedicated marine mammal rescue facility. Each year the team responds to over 300 marine animal emergencies, including the rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured, or orphaned animals and the disentanglement of sea lions trapped by marine debris. Hundreds of marine mammals (from seals, sea lions, and sea otters to small cetaceans) have been given a second chance at life thanks to VAMMR.

VAMMR is an independent registered charity proud to be working in partnership with the Vancouver Aquarium. Donations will go directly to VAMMR and help rescue, rehabilitate, and release marine mammals in distress. You can provide your support by donating today at www.vammr.org.

About SeaWorld

SeaWorld is a leading marine life theme park and accredited zoo and aquarium that provides experiences that matter while educating and inspiring guests of all ages to care about marine life. Welcoming millions of guests every year, the parks offer fun and enriching experiences from up-close animal encounters and year-round educational programs to award-winning marine-life-themed rides and attractions, special events, and exciting entertainment. For more than 60 years SeaWorld has advanced the conservation of marine life in and outside its parks through science, education, and exceptional animal care that is Humane Certified by American Humane and accredited by the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. SeaWorld is one of the largest marine animal rescue organizations in the world, helping more than 41,000 animals to date. The SeaWorld Conservation Fund, a non-profit foundation established in 2003, has provided more than \$20 million to nearly 1,400 organizations to advance critical research on every continent. A portion of park proceeds goes toward supporting these longstanding conservation commitments. SeaWorld parks are in Orlando, San Antonio, San Diego, and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). SeaWorld is part of the United Parks & Resorts Inc. (NYSE:PRKS) portfolio of theme park brands. For more information, visit us at SeaWorld.com.

About Turtles Fly Too

Turtles Fly Too, (TF2) is a US-based nonprofit NGO that utilizes a network of volunteer general aviation pilots to provide medevac flights like the one that transported Moira. To date, they have helped rescue more than 4,500 critically endangered wildlife species. Join this flight for a cause and support future medevac airlifts: <https://www.turtlesflytoo.org/donate>.