

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Brevard Zoo Set to Release Two Sea Turtles**

MELBOURNE, Fla., December 12, 2023 — Brevard Zoo will be releasing two sea turtle patients back to the ocean at 10 a.m. Wednesday, December 13 at Lori Wilson Park in Cocoa Beach. This release will be open to the public and take place rain or shine.

Juvenile green sea turtles Gorp and Peter Pan will be heading home to the ocean after several months of rehabilitation at the Zoo's Sea Turtle Healing Center for fishing-related injuries.

Gorp came to the Healing Center on August 31 after being found in Port Canaveral with fishing line wrapped around their neck, front flippers and back right flipper.

"Fishing line entanglement and ingestion is one of the worst things that a sea turtle or any wild animal can go through," said Jess Patterson, Sea Turtle Healing Center coordinator. "It's painful and it's a slow death if they can't get help."

The damage done to the left front flipper was so traumatic that the limb had to be amputated. Luckily, sea turtles can do very well in the ocean with only three flippers. Five-pound Gorp has a lot of growing to do as well, and the turtle's body will learn to compensate more for the missing limb.

Gorp's back flipper had areas of tissue that had begun to die off after being wrapped in fishing line. Our Healing Center team worked hard to ensure Gorp was able to keep that flipper. A fish skin graft was applied to the area to help it heal – and although Gorp still has some scar tissue on that flipper, the limb is otherwise healthy and usable. Within a week, the necrosis had stopped.

In addition to giving Gorp wound care and antibiotics, our team also monitored Gorp for a few weeks after their arrival to make sure this little turtle hadn't eaten some fishing line as well.

Our team will remember Gorp as a typical green sea turtle – curious about everything around them. The sea turtle spent a lot of time using our specially made "itchies" or objects for sea turtles to scratch their carapaces, or top shell, on.

Gorp's name was inspired by the date they arrived at our Healing Center – National Trail Mix Day. GORP is an acronym for "good ol' raisins and peanuts," another term for trail mix.

Green sea turtle Peter Pan was found in Jetty Park, Port Canaveral on October 24 floating and struggling at the water's surface by a bystander. Thanks to the Sea Turtle Preservation Society and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for netting this turtle and bringing Peter Pan to us for care.

Peter Pan had three hooks in their front flippers, one of which still had a lure on it. The other two were older and rusted fragments, so our Healing Center team could tell that this turtle frequented the pier, probably looking for an easy snack.

Once the hooks were removed, Peter Pan received broad spectrum antibiotics, x-rays to make sure they did not eat any hooks, and frequent cleanings of the sites where the hooks were removed.

Peter Pan lived in a habitat with our resident green sea turtle McNubbins during rehabilitation. Peter Pan was initially a very picky eater, but McNubbins worked her "Menturt" (turtle mentor) magic and Peter Pan started eating everything offered. Peter Pan quickly became McNubbins little shadow and was very interested in whatever she was doing.

This sea turtle's name was inspired by the classic children's story character.

"Peter Pan was a character who was in an endless battle with a villain named Hook," Jess said. "I would say this Peter Pan has had plenty of interactions with such a villain in the ocean."

All media personnel are asked to RSVP to Communications Manager Lauren Delgado prior to the event and check in with the Zoo's communications team upon arrival. Flippers will be in the water at 10 a.m.; media personnel are advised to arrive early.

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*Brevard Zoo is home to more than 900 animals representing 195 species from all over the world. As a not-for-profit organization, it is a leader in the fields of animal wellness, education and conservation. More information is available at [www.brevardzoo.org](http://www.brevardzoo.org).*