

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Brevard Zoo Releasing Two Green Sea Turtles

MELBOURNE, Fla., December 26, 2023 — Brevard Zoo's Sea Turtle Healing Center will be sending two green sea turtle patients home to the ocean on Wednesday, December 27 at 11:30 a.m. at James H. Nance Park in Indialantic. This release is open to the public, rain or shine.

Thank you to the Sea Turtle Preservation Society, who brought green sea turtles Leli and Gucci to the Zoo's Sea Turtle Healing Center for care.

Leli was found by bystanders on November 26, 2022, trying to crawl over logs in a Palm Bay waterway and struggling to swim. This turtle was named after the two people who found them: Lee and Lisa. Leli had a severe fibropapillomatosis (FP) tumor load. This debilitating disease causes external and internal tumors to grow all over a turtle's body and can cause a host of issues for a turtle. In Leli's case, this sea turtle was anemic.

Leli received multiple staged surgeries to remove these tumors, which can impede a turtle's vision and mobility. This sea turtle was also treated with electrochemotherapy, an alternative treatment to traditional surgery for FP patients. A device called an electroporator delivers electrotherapy into FP tumors, making them more permeable and allowing them to absorb even more chemotherapy and eventually causing the tumors to become necrotic and fall off.

"Leli was a very good patient for all the surgeries they had to endure," said Sea Turtle Healing Center coordinator Jess Patterson. "It took them a very long time to start eating their veggies with us, but they eventually came around."

Gucci was found floating in the Sebastian Inlet State Park by park rangers on Oct. 10, 2023. This sea turtle had a hook in their esophagus.

Upon intake at the Zoo's Healing Center, Gucci was scoped, and the hook was removed from the esophagus through the mouth. The Healing Center team then learned through

fecal analysis that Gucci had caryospora, the protozoa that can cause colitis and enteritis. Gucci was successfully treated for this protozoa.

Gucci arrived at our Healing Center on National Handbag Day – hence the name.

“Gucci was a very curious turtle and was eager to greet volunteers in the morning and see what they were doing around their pool,” Jess said.

All media personnel are asked to RSVP to Communications Manager Lauren Delgado prior to the release and check in with Sea Turtle Healing Center staff or volunteers upon arrival.

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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 wellbeing, education and conservation. More information is available at www.brevardzoo.org.