

## press release

### S.E.A. Aquarium's Two Rescued Sea Turtles Return to the Wild after Specialised Care and Rehabilitation

*With the support of the National Parks Board, S.E.A. Aquarium released Hawke the hawksbill turtle and Louie the green sea turtle into the sea as part of conservation efforts to increase wild populations*



S.E.A. Aquarium this morning released a hawksbill turtle (left) and a green sea turtle (right) into the waters around Singapore in hopes that they breed and increase their populations in the wild. PHOTO CREDITS: RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

**SINGAPORE, 19 June 2018** – After more than two years of rehabilitation under the care of the curatorial and animal health teams of S.E.A. Aquarium at Resorts World Sentosa, the aquarium this morning released two rescued sea turtles into the waters around Singapore in hopes that they breed and increase their populations in the wild. With support and assistance from the National Parks Board (NParks), aquarists from S.E.A. Aquarium released two threatened marine species – “Hawke” the hawksbill turtle returned to the waters of Sisters’ Islands Marine Park while “Louie” the green sea turtle to the waters of Pulau Semakau.

Hawke and Louie were tagged and microchipped so they can be identified should they return to Singapore’s shores in the future. Both species are native to Singapore and are listed as “Critically Endangered” and “Endangered” respectively in the IUCN\* Red List of Threatened Species.

Kenneth Kwang Keng Hei, Aquarist at S.E.A. Aquarium, said: “It is an emotional moment for our team today to see Hawke and Louie return to the ocean, but our end goal has always been to nurse these turtles back to health and release them back into their natural environment. Our team has spent more than two

exciting years caring for them like our babies and it is an aquarist's dream to see our animals grow healthy after rehabilitation and return to the wild so they can contribute to the overall marine ecosystem."

Hawke and Louie was released from a boat at about 10.50am and 12.05pm respectively. Both started swimming immediately in the water and disappeared from sight within seconds. Following the release, Louie was later spotted swimming near the same boat with its head out of the water, as though it was bidding farewell to its caretakers. The waters of Sisters' Islands Marine Park and Pulau Semakau were chosen in consultation with NParks.

To prepare the turtles for their wild journey, Hawke and Louie were gradually moved from back-of-house areas to larger habitats in S.E.A. Aquarium to encourage exploration and interaction with other compatible marine life. These included the Shipwreck Habitat that is home to the pompano, shark ray and a wide variety of snappers. In addition, the aquarists have been feeding the turtles a diet similar to those found in the wild such as sea jellies, squids and prawns. Prior to their release, S.E.A. Aquarium's animal health team conducted a thorough veterinary examination which included a full blood profile, weight and length measurement – all of which indicated they were healthy and suitable for release.

Hawke and Louie made their official debut during World Turtle Day last year, and were the first sea turtles to join S.E.A. Aquarium's marine life collection. During their stay at the aquarium, both turtles have brought great joy to guests and were excellent animal ambassadors, helping to shed light on the plight of their wild population.

Louie, the green sea turtle, was only one week old when it was handed over to S.E.A. Aquarium on 28 September 2015 with the permission of the authorities from the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA). It was found by a member of the public in a drain. Weighing only 20 grammes when it first arrived at the aquarium, Louie has since grown to approximately 61 centimetres in length and weighs 21.5 kilogrammes.

Hawke, the male hawksbill turtle, weighed 800 grammes when it first arrived at the aquarium and now measures 59 centimetres and weighs 23 kilogrammes. He spots a slightly pyramided carapace – a shell deformity likely attributed to poor nutrition and care during his early years – and is believed to be kept illegally as a pet.

In addition to bringing the turtles closer to guests for public education, the aquarium's conservation group, Guardians of the S.E.A.A., recently conducted a sharing session by turtle specialist Mark Hamann as part of its speaker series for members. Hamann is part of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Marine Turtle Specialist Group – the global authority on marine turtle research and conservation. He shared findings on the biological status of marine turtles, and how technology can advance conservation initiatives.

There are seven different species of sea turtles: green, hawksbill, Kemp's ridley, olive ridley, leatherback, loggerhead and flatback. Of the seven species, six\*\* are considered threatened according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Worldwide, sea turtles face many threats, primarily from humans, including injuries from boat propellers, entanglement in fishing nets, plastic pollution and poaching for eggs, meat, skin and shells.

\*IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature

\*\*Flatbacks are currently not listed as threatened in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species due to insufficient data collection

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### ABOUT S.E.A. AQUARIUM

Opened in November 2012, S.E.A. Aquarium at Resorts World Sentosa is one of the world's largest aquariums home to more than 100,000 marine animals from across 1,000 species. Featuring more than 50 diverse habitats, S.E.A. Aquarium exhibits close to 80 threatened species including the manta ray, Clarion angelfish and a variety of beautiful corals that mirror a pristine aquatic environment. Through interactive programmes, up-close animal encounters and immersive learning journeys, S.E.A. Aquarium aims to inspire visitors to protect the world's oceans.

S.E.A. Aquarium collaborates with local and regional partners in marine conservation projects and is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

### ABOUT RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA

Resorts World Sentosa (RWS), Asia's premium lifestyle destination resort, is located on Singapore's resort island of Sentosa. Spanning 49 hectares, RWS is home to world-class attractions including Universal Studios Singapore, S.E.A. Aquarium, the Maritime Experiential Museum, Dolphin Island and Adventure Cove Waterpark. Other attractions include the Asian flagship of a world-renowned destination spa, a casino, six unique hotels and the Resorts World Convention Centre. With the most number of Michelin stars in one destination, RWS offers award-winning dining experiences at renowned celebrity chef restaurants, establishing itself as a key player in Singapore's vibrant and diverse dining scene. The integrated resort also offers world-class entertainment, from original resident productions to concerts and public shows such as the Crane Dance and the Lake of Dreams. RWS has been named "Best Integrated Resort" since 2011 for seven consecutive years at the TTG Travel Awards which recognises the best of Asia-Pacific's travel industry.

RWS is wholly owned by Genting Singapore, a company of the Genting Group. For more information, please visit [www.rwsentosa.com](http://www.rwsentosa.com).

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**Note to Editors**

1. Photos and video of the sea turtles can be downloaded from <https://app.box.com/v/seaturtlrelease>
2. All photos and video are to be attributed to **Resorts World Sentosa**



(Left) Aquarists Kenneth Kwang and James Hong from S.E.A. Aquarium preparing Louie the green sea turtle for its return to the ocean. (Right) Aquarist Kenneth Kwang releasing Hawk the hawksbill turtle to the waters of Sisters' Islands Marine Park.



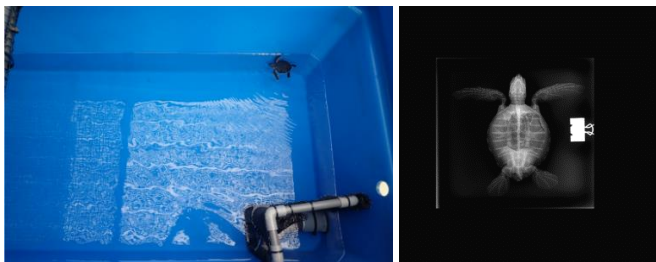
Louie the green sea turtle (pictured in both images) swam immediately in the waters of Pulau Semakau after its release. Both Hawke and Louie were tagged and microchipped so they can be identified should they return to Singapore's shores in the future.



Prior to their release, S.E.A. Aquarium's animal health team conducted a thorough veterinary examination which included a full blood profile, weight and length measurement (pictured left with Hawke) – all of which indicated they were healthy and suitable for release.



Aquarists at S.E.A. Aquarium carries out “positive reinforcement operant conditioning” with Louie the green sea turtle. They start by teaching Louie to ‘target’ or touch the striped end of a PVC pipe by placing it in front of him and rewarding him with food once he touches it. Over time, Louie has been conditioned to associate the pipe with food and swims to it easily. This conditioned behaviour makes it easier for aquarists and vets to conduct physical and/or veterinary checks when necessary.



Louie, the green sea turtle, was only one-week old and weighed 20 grammes when it was over handed to S.E.A. Aquarium on 28 September 2015. It was found by a member of the public in a drain.