

NEWS RELEASE

717 General Booth Blvd. Virginia Beach, VA 23451



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Kristina Scott | KScott@VirginiaAquarium.com

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Virginia Aquarium Responded to 63 Hooked Sea Turtles in 2023

The naming theme for hooked sea turtle season honored the City of Virginia Beach's 60th year

Virginia Beach, VA – The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center's Stranding Response Team responded to another high number of sea turtles hooked on fishing lines in 2023, nearly matching last year's record-breaking season. 'Hooked sea turtle season' is the Aquarium's coined term used to refer to the time of year when sea turtles are incidentally caught by hooks on recreational fishing lines. This year, the naming theme honored Virginia Beach's 60th anniversary, designating the admitted sea turtles with names of districts, landmarks, and waterways in Virginia Beach. In 2023, the Aquarium team received 62 reports of hooked turtles in Virginia with the addition of one turtle that was transferred from Delaware for hook removal and rehab, making the count 63 total. This season is just under last year's record-breaking number of 71 reported interactions and 60 admitted patients.

Of the 63 sea turtles, 56 were retrieved from the incident location and admitted for rehabilitation at the Aquarium's Darden Marine Animal Conservation Center (DMACC). The remaining seven were unable to be retrieved either because the Aquarium was notified after the interaction occurred or because the fishing line broke during retrieval and the sea turtle swam away.

46 sea turtles have been successfully rehabbed and released back into the ocean. Rehab can include testing bloodwork, treatment, and hook removal. The eight sea turtles remaining are still receiving care; six are currently recovering at the DMACC and two were transferred to other facilities when the DMACC was at capacity and are recovering at those facilities.

The first hooked sea turtle of the season was a Kemp's ridley, a critically endangered species, that was named Neptune. After that, admitted sea turtles were named a variety of iconic Virginia Beach names and locations, such as Oceana, Back Bay, Mount Trashmore, Hilltop, ViBe, and more. The majority of admitted turtles were Kemp's ridley except for three loggerheads.

With winter upon us and water temperatures dropping, sea turtles will migrate to warmer waters. The Aquarium Stranding Response team prepares for the next sea turtle rehab season called cold stun season. If a beachgoer or a member of the public sees a sea turtle or marine mammal on the beach or in distress, they can call the Aquarium's Stranding hotline at 757-385-7575, available 24/7.

[Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center](#)

The [Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center's](#) mission is to connect people to the marine environment, inspiring a more sustainable future. The Aquarium aspires to be a driver in conservation, education, tourism, and sustainability, leading the charge to save wildlife and their ecosystems. Owned by the City of Virginia Beach, the Aquarium operates as a city department in partnership with the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation. The Aquarium is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, supports the work of the Virginia Aquarium. The Foundation procures and maintains the Aquarium's exhibits, including the animals and habitats. It is also responsible for annual and capital fundraising, administration and funding for the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program, conservation and scientific research efforts, and the Aquarium's mission-related education programs. You can be a part of our mission by making a [tax-deductible donation](#) to support our programming.

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