

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 1, 2023

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Brevard Zoo Releasing Green Sea Turtle After 14-Month Stay

MELBOURNE, Fla., May 1, 2023 — After an intense 14-month stay at Brevard Zoo’s Sea Turtle Healing Center, juvenile green sea turtle Banana is set to be sent home to the water on Tuesday, May 2.

Banana will be released at 10:30 a.m. at Hightower Beach Park, 815 Highway A1A in Satellite Beach. In honor of Banana, we ask that release attendees wear something yellow. 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 10:30 a.m.; media personnel are advised to arrive early.

Banana was found floating in the Indian River Lagoon near the Main Street Boat Ramp in Sebastian in March 2022. When Banana arrived at our Healing Center, the sea turtle was extremely thin, and covered in organisms, including leeches and fibropapillomatosis (FP) tumors.

FP is a virus that causes external and internal tumors to grow all over a turtle’s body. Depending on their location and size, these tumors can affect organs, impede a sea turtle’s ability to swim, lower their ability to fight off parasites, and more. In Banana’s case, a golf ball sized tumor was covering their left eye and impeding their vision – in addition to a number of tumors throughout the outside of their body.

The Healing Center team sought the help of Dr. Matthew Fife, an Orlando-based veterinary ophthalmologist, to remove the tumor over Banana’s eye. Banana proved to be a difficult case, however, as the sea turtle had an issue that affected the way their blood clots, so they would lose more blood than the average patient.

Unfortunately, Banana’s bleeding condition made it difficult to stop the bleeding from surgical sites. Banana’s eye was removed to successfully stop the bleeding.

“Sea turtles can live a long, normal life with one eye, and this does not stop them from being releasable,” said Jess Patterson, Healing Center coordinator and veterinary nurse.

Once Banana was ready health-wise, they began to undergo the process of cutting off the FP tumors using a CO2 laser. The team had to nurse Banana back out of anemia after each surgery, a process that could take months. There were several surgeries as only small patches of tumors could be removed at a time.

For Banana's last FP tumor area, our team decided to use an innovative treatment called electrochemotherapy. This treatment uses an [electroporator](#) to deliver electrotherapy into tumors, making them more permeable and better able to absorb chemotherapy.

"Electrochemotherapy worked wonderfully for Banana," Jess said. "After a couple treatments, Banana's tumors started to regress and even fall off."

The Healing Center will remember Banana as being a skeptical turtle. If Banana spotted a team member, they would keep their one good eye on them – even if they were enjoying enrichments.

Named after National Banana Day (the day of their arrival) and in honor of the minions from the Despicable Me franchise, Banana leaves the Healing Center with a variety of nicknames: Banana Nut, Nanners, Nan, to name a few.

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About Brevard Zoo

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.

Treetop Trek features five aerial obstacle courses that whisk guests above parts of the Zoo and through lush Florida landscapes. More information is available at www.treetoptrek.com.