

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Brevard Zoo Set to Release Green Sea Turtle Opal

MELBOURNE, Fla., July 18, 2023 — Brevard Zoo is set to release a 7-pound juvenile green sea turtle named Opal back to the ocean at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, July 19 at Lori Wilson Park in Cocoa Beach.

This release is open to the public. Please note that this release will happen rain or shine.

Opal arrived at the Zoo's Sea Turtle Healing Center on Dec. 7, 2022, after being found floating in a construction zone with a heavy epibiota load, including algae and barnacles. Thanks to the Sea Turtle Preservation Society, Opal was brought from Port Canaveral to us for care. Our Healing Center staff found that Opal had caryospora, a parasitic protozoan, and was anemic and hypoglycemic.

During their 7-month stay with us, Opal was treated with rest, an e-tube to provide nutrition, an anti-parasitic medicine to eliminate the caryospora, and a nebulizer for pneumonia. Thanks to Rockledge Regional Medical Center, Opal had multiple CT scans to check on their condition. A lung lavage was later performed to assess further care and found that the pneumonia had cleared up.

A previous Healing Center patient named Pearl inspired Opal's name. Opal's size and "baby sea turtle attitude" reminded Healing Center staff of Pearl, who was released in July 2021. So, Opal was named to continue a legacy of gemstone-themed names, said Healing Center manager Shanon Gann.

"Opal, much like her predecessor Pearl, has captured the hearts of staff and volunteers who care for them," Gann said.

Healing Center staff and volunteers will remember Opal as a fun little turtle who loved to hide under their itchy in their tank but also would sleep on top of the itchy, too.

Once Opal was eating on their own and enjoying their diet prepared by our commissary staff, the little sea turtle began to gain weight and grow strong. Opal enjoys fish, clam,

shrimp, lettuce, bell pepper and zucchini. Opal's lowest weight was 3.7 pounds, and now their weight is around 7.3 pounds.

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 11 a.m.; media personnel are advised to arrive early.

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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.