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East Coast Zoological Foundation Releasing Two Sea Turtles

MELBOURNE, Fla., October 7, 2026 — Two sea turtles are heading home to the ocean following intensive stays at East Coast Zoological Foundation's Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Center at Brevard Zoo. Sub-adult loggerhead sea turtle Falafel and juvenile green sea turtle Julian will be released on Thursday, October 8, at 12:30 p.m. from Howard E. Futch Memorial Park at Paradise Beach, 2301 Jimmy Buffett Memorial Highway in Melbourne.

The public is invited to this sea turtle release, which will be held rain or shine. The release may be canceled or delayed if there is lightning in the area.

Julian the green sea turtle was brought to the Rehabilitation Center by the Sea Turtle Preservation Society in October 2025 after being found stranded on Satellite Beach. The Zoo's veterinary team soon learned that Julian was dealing with a host of health issues, including pneumonia, gastrointestinal parasites, minor wounds along their carapace (a.k.a. their shell) and osteomyelitis, a serious bone infection that caused their left flipper to swell up. An initial exam also revealed Julian had low glucose levels, leading to hypoglycemia, and high phosphate levels in their blood, leading to hyperphosphatemia—both of which prevent the turtle's body from functioning properly.

Thanks to close medical care, balanced nutrition, and rest, Julian is now ready to journey home to the ocean.

Falafel the loggerhead sea turtle was brought to the Rehabilitation Center by Coastal Connections, Inc., in June 2026. This sub-adult was found with a line from a recreational cast net wrapped tightly around their left front flipper. As the turtle tried to swim, the weight of the net pulled the line so tight that it restricted blood flow to the flipper. This "ghost gear" or abandoned fishing equipment severely damaged the tissue of the flipper. Unfortunately, the flipper had to be surgically removed due to infection.

The Zoo's veterinary team is confident Falafel will continue to thrive in their ocean home with just three flippers - it's a well-documented occurrence.

Still, the Rehabilitation Center team would like to note that this turtle was in great health before accidentally becoming bound up in a cast net. Derelict fishing gear is one of the

biggest threats facing sea turtles today. Make sure to always retrieve your gear from the water and please leave the pier, beach, or river cleaner than you found it.

Also, be aware of sea turtles that are hanging out nearby. If you see a turtle that frequents your pier, consider not fishing while the turtle is in the area. Likewise, if you see an injured sea turtle or one struggling with fishing gear entanglement, please report it to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or the Sea Turtle Preservation Society. Do not touch the turtle, as you may do more harm than good.

Falafel and Julian will go on to play an important role in the ocean ecosystem. Sea turtles are a keystone species, meaning their removal from an ecosystem can have major damaging effects. Their role includes everything from maintaining healthy seagrass beds to acting as prey for certain species.

All media personnel are asked to RSVP to Senior 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 12:30 p.m.; media personnel are advised to arrive early.

For photos, please visit this Dropbox folder.

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About East Coast Zoological Foundation
Driven by a mission to answer the call, East Coast Zoological Foundation (ECZF) is focused on educating, engaging and empowering the community to take action for conservation. The 501c(3) nonprofit located in Melbourne, Fla., includes Brevard Zoo and Bowen Aquarium campuses. ECZF works directly with Florida species and the community to develop programs and workshops to make a difference locally and around the world. From sea turtle rehabilitations and releases, building living shorelines along the Indian River Lagoon, providing scholarships and grants to the community and more, the Foundation creates opportunities for guests to connect with nature and make an impact in conservation and education. Founded in 1986, ECZF is governed by a volunteer board of directors and receives no recurring operating funds from any city, county or state government, relying on donations from people and companies to continue answering the call for wildlife and the environment along Florida's Space Coast and beyond. To learn more, visit OurLegacyCampaign.org.