



Two Oceans Aquarium
FOUNDATION

Turtle Tales

Our **Turtle Conservation Centre** is turtle-y busy, caring for loggerhead hatchlings and sub-adult green, hawksbill, and loggerhead turtles. Keep reading for some flipper-tastic news!

Help us save turtle hatchlings this stranding season

Turtle stranding season is coming up, and our **Turtle Conservation Centre** team is preparing to receive hundreds of tiny hatchlings for rehabilitation.

Every year from late February, baby turtles strand on beaches along the Western Cape coastline after hatching on the coast of northern KwaZulu-Natal. These patients are rescued by our incredible Turtle Rescue Network and brought to us for treatment.

Here's everything you need to know about stranding season and what you can do to help...



Why do turtles strand?

Loggerhead and leatherback turtles nest along the KwaZulu-Natal coastline between October and December. Afterwards, thousands of newly hatched turtles venture into the warm, fast Agulhas Current, which flows along South Africa's eastern coastline. As the current slows and turns at the Cape, many hatchlings are displaced into the colder coastal waters near the Benguela Current. In these icy, rough conditions, hatchlings become dehydrated and cold-stunned. When the little turtles become too exhausted to cope, they wash ashore along our Cape beaches. This marks the beginning of "**stranding season**" from late February/March into July.



The Turtle Rescue Network

While the **Turtle Conservation Centre** is dedicated to rescuing turtles, we cannot patrol every stretch of the coastline. Instead, we rely hugely on the eyes of our turtle community to find and report stranded turtles. This is why we established the Turtle Rescue Network: A collective of like-minded people and organisations along the Western Cape coastline dedicated to saving turtles.

With over 2 000 members, the Turtle Rescue Network covers the entire stretch of coast from Lambert's Bay to Gqeberha. If a member of the public finds a stranded turtle, all they need to do is call our Turtle Rescue Hotline on 083 300 1663. From there, the **Turtle Rescue Network** is activated to get the rescued turtle to the safety of our Turtle Conservation Centre. Many members of the Turtle Rescue Network provide collection points and stabilisation stations for stranded turtles.

We work closely with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE), National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI), SANPARKS, CapeNature, many more incredible organisations, community groups, and conservancies, and **YOU** to facilitate turtle rescues.



[Join the Turtle Rescue Network WhatsApp group](#)

How does the turtle team help?

Stranded hatchlings require lots of care and often medical intervention to save their lives. Upon arrival at the **Turtle Conservation Centre**, turtles receive a full medical assessment. Their body condition is evaluated, they are checked for possible injuries or barnacles, and their weight and measurements are taken.



They will also be given a freshwater bath to help them rehydrate and regain a stable body temperature. In this initial stabilisation period, the turtle team monitors the hatchlings' health incredibly closely.

Hatchlings are often found with physical injuries (such as partial flipper amputations), respiratory tract or ear infections, and hypothermia. The hatchlings typically stay at our Turtle Conservation Centre until winter is over. This allows them enough time to heal and grow before release in the following summer when the ocean is warm again.

Most of these stranded turtle hatchlings are victims of **plastic ingestion**. In this early phase of life, turtles are highly opportunistic feeders - they eat anything that floats past them as they swim with the current. Sadly, this often includes microplastics. For many, plastic ingestion may be a death sentence, but intervention from the Turtle Conservation Centre offers a helping hand and gives these turtles a second chance.



What if I find a stranded turtle?

Finding a stranded or injured turtle can be daunting when you aren't sure what to do, but we can help.

The most important thing to remember? **Don't put the turtle back into the water.** When a turtle washes ashore, it means that there is something wrong, and it needs our help. If they are put back into the ocean in this weak and distressed state, they may drown.

Next, **phone the Turtle Rescue Hotline on 083 300 1663.** Our Turtle Rescue Coordinator will talk you through the next steps and connect you with your closest Turtle Network Point.

It is vital to **stay with the stranded turtle and keep it out of the sun and wind.** If possible, place it on a dry towel in a sheltered, ventilated box for transport to the Turtle Conservation Centre.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A TURTLE HATCHLING

Don't put the turtle back in the water

Call the Turtle Rescue Hotline immediately

Transport in an open container with a dry towel if able

Keep out of direct sunlight and wind

Get it to the Turtle Network Point as quickly as possible

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WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A LARGE SEA TURTLE

Don't put the turtle back in the water

Call the Turtle Rescue Hotline immediately

If large/injured, get help and lift using a towel or a stretcher

Transport in an open container or just on a DRY towel with padding if possible

Get it to the Turtle Network Point as quickly as possible

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SAVING STRANDED SEA TURTLES

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HELP

For stranded turtles, call our
**RESCUE HOTLINE:
083 300 1663**
Please do not put the turtles back in the water.

[Download this poster](#)

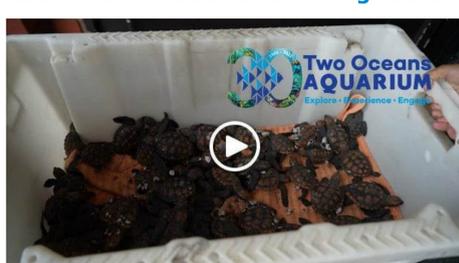
If you live along the coast from Plettenberg Bay to False Bay, please keep a lookout for stranded and hatchlings this season - they typically wash up along the high-tide line and are often covered in barnacles and algae, making them tricky to spot.

During **stranding season**, we must all work together to ensure that as many turtles as possible are rescued and brought safely to the Turtle Conservation Centre. By knowing how to react when encountering a stranded turtle, you can have an incredible impact on that turtle's **road to recovery**.



[Join the Turtle Rescue Network](#)

Look back on 2024's stranding season



Stay in the loop with our turtles!

Turtle Tales is a regular mailer from the **Turtle Conservation Centre**, packed with tons of turtle news, information, and fun! If you want to be a part of our turtle community, this is the space for you.

[Sign up here](#)