

Johnny Morris'
WONDERS OF WILDLIFE
NATIONAL
MUSEUM & AQUARIUM

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**Wonders of Wildlife partners with fellow
AZA-accredited facilities in nationwide
sea turtle rehabilitation effort**



More than 500 cold-stunned sea turtles were flown to 12 AZA facilities across the country for critical care and rehabilitation this year.

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – As part of a nationwide commitment to conservation, 12 Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) facilities have teamed up this year to

rescue and rehabilitate 518 cold-stunned sea turtles off the coast of New England.

Participating in this global effort are some of the nation's top wildlife conservation and education destinations, including the world-renowned and award-winning [Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium](#) (WOW), New England Aquarium, Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, Florida Aquarium, Georgia Aquarium, Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium, Mystic Aquarium, National Aquarium, North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, SEA LIFE Grapevine Aquarium, SeaWorld Orlando, and South Carolina Aquarium.

In the last decade, more than 10,000 sea turtles have required rescue along the U.S. Atlantic Coast due to cold-stunning. This life-threatening condition occurs when water temperatures rapidly decline, and sea turtles are unable to move to warmer waters or fend for themselves. Like all reptiles, sea turtles are ectothermic (cold-blooded) and cannot regulate their body temperature. If water temperatures drop below approximately 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius), sea turtles become lethargic and are unable to swim, forage for food and defend themselves from predators. The number of cold-stunned sea turtles varies from year to year based on migratory habits and the severity of winter storm conditions in the area. This season, more than 1,000 turtles washed ashore, making it the third-largest cold-stunning event on record out of the Northeastern United States.



*Cold-stunned sea turtles being rescued off the beaches of Cape Cod.
Photo Courtesy to Andrew Spence.*

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are two key governmental agencies dedicated to conserving and managing marine ecosystems. These organizations oversee sea turtle rescue efforts and facilitate transport from the beaches to the New England Aquarium's Sea Turtle Hospital, where the turtles receive initial assessments and urgent care year after year. As the hospital fills up, the nonprofit group Turtles Fly Too then helps transport many of the animals across the country to AZA-accredited institutions.



Turtles Fly Too helps transport sea turtles from the New England Aquarium to other AZA facilities nationwide for rehabilitation.

All seven sea turtle species are on the endangered species list, making the work of these facilities even more important. With the complexity of their life cycle, only 1 in 1,000 hatchlings that make it to the ocean will survive to adulthood. It is vital to the future of the species to return as many sea turtles as possible back to the wild population. They are an essential part of marine ecosystems worldwide and are at great risk due to water temperature changes and other environmental factors.

“With hundreds of turtles stranding each year on the shores of Cape Cod, it takes a vast partnership of organizations across the country to ensure these animals

can be rehabilitated and returned to their ocean home,” said Adam Kennedy, Director of Rescue and Rehabilitation at the New England Aquarium. “As the New England Aquarium continues to provide long-term care for dozens of sea turtles, many of them critically endangered, we’re grateful to all the facilities that have stepped up to ensure each season is a conservation success.”



*Sea turtle rehabilitation at the New England Aquarium.
Photo courtesy of Vanessa Kahn/New England Aquarium.*

This is the third consecutive year that Wonders of Wildlife has partnered with the New England Aquarium. In early January, 10 of the rescued loggerhead turtles arrived safely at Wonders of Wildlife for expert care. WOW's Life Sciences and Veterinary teams immediately began their

work by developing custom treatment plans for each turtle based on its needs. Key components of rehabilitation include gradually warming the animals back to a stable body temperature and ensuring they can eat and swim normally. Each animal was monitored around the clock and carefully fed, measured, and assessed. After four months of rehabilitation, the turtles were cleared for release.

On May 1, the loggerhead sea turtles and a team from Wonders of Wildlife flew to Beaufort, North Carolina with the help of Turtles Fly Too and U.S. Fish and Wildlife. All 10 rehabilitated sea turtles were released back into the wild at Fort Macon State Park.



Sea turtle release at Fort Macon State Park in Beaufort, NC. Photo courtesy of Dylan Ray.

“For our team to act as a steward for the preservation and conservation of wildlife is what WOW is all about,” WOW Director of Animal Care Mike Daniel said. “Working with our partners to ensure the safe release back into the wild of these animals means so much to us. We want to do everything we can to preserve this species and make sure that we don’t lose these amazing animals from the world’s oceans!”

Alongside WOW, each of the other AZA facilities has played a critical role by providing services that are advancing animal welfare, public engagement, and the conservation of wildlife. This global effort demonstrates the immense value of partnership in conservation and cements the commitment to preserving endangered species and conserving precious ecosystems. Wonders of Wildlife is honored to partner with these top wildlife conservation and education destinations.

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About Johnny Morris’ Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium

Johnny Morris’ Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium consists of an all-new 1.5-million gallon Aquarium Adventure showcasing 35,000 live fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds, and immersive Wildlife Galleries that bring visitors eye-to-eye with the

greatest collection of record-setting game animals ever assembled. Created by noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris, the 350,000-square-foot experience celebrates those who hunt, fish, and act as stewards of the land and water. Located next to Bass Pro Shops National Headquarters in Springfield, Missouri the campus is a centerpiece of America's Conservation Capital in Missouri's Ozark Mountains. Wonders of Wildlife has been voted "Best New Attraction in America" and "America's Best Aquarium" by the readers of *USA TODAY*, and in 2022 received its AZA accreditation. For more information, visit www.wondersofwildlife.org.