

TURTLE RESCUE

One of the major conservation projects at the Dolphin Discovery Centre is the rescue of stranded baby Loggerhead Turtles. Thriving in warmer waters, the newly hatched juveniles ride the warm ocean currents feeding on plankton. Along the west coast, this is known as the Leeuwin current and can extend a long way south and often close to the coast. Trouble strikes for the hatchlings when a number of cold fronts from the Antarctic blow them off course and into the colder waters of the SW region. Weak and unable to catch food, many little turtles become part of the food chain themselves, but some lucky turtles eventually wash ashore on the beaches where they are found and brought to the Dolphin Discovery Centre. They then require months of dedicated care to reach a satisfactory condition before they are returned back into the beautiful warm waters in the Northwest of WA.

Little Squirt was rescued from a beach near Albany in January 2012, cold, starving & dehydrated, with an injured front flipper, and weighing only 346 grams. After being stabilised in Albany for a few days Squirt came to the Dolphin Discovery Centre, complete with X-Rays of the flipper, to be lovingly cared for by our volunteers and staff. Then 18 months later, weighing a hefty 3.65 kilos, Squirt made a full recovery and was released on the 19th of July 2013. At the time Squirt was measured & and flown to Exmouth with another little Loggerhead Turtle, where they were both fitted with satellite transmitters prior to being set free into the beautiful warm Exmouth ocean.



We were then able to ride the waves of freedom with Squirt (for the life of the transmitter battery) as each time Squirt surfaced a signal was being beamed back. This successful rehabilitation is a great story and our little turtle was sorely missed, not just by Volunteers and Staff at the Dolphin Discovery Centre, but by the many visitors and school groups who squirt has helped educate about the plight of turtles and other endangered marine species. On day 34 after his realise, squirts tracker had indicated that he had travelled 2000km. Not bad for a turtle who once had an injured front flipper. The latest tracking information showed that Squirt had travelled a staggering 4248km.

This new Turtle Rehabilitation Room will allow us to look after any turtle found in the South-west and nurse them back to health ready for their return to the ocean, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors. A special thank you to Lottery West, Bendigo Bank, Bellfire and Bunbury City glass. The Dolphin Discovery Centre will now be able to continue their work with rehabilitating turtles and hopefully have many other success stories like the loggerhead turtle Squirt.