

Freedom for Bob the Green Turtle after 8 years

After eight years of rehabilitation at the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town, Bob the Green Turtle has been returned to the open ocean off the KwaZulu-Natal coast.



Bob the Green Turtle shuffling his way down to the water - © Linda Ness Photography

Volunteer conservation pilots, The Bateleurs, flew Bob to Durban, where the Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation's Turtle Conservation Centre team, with the help of the South African Association for Marine Biological Research (SAAMBR), transported Bob from uShaka Marine World up the KZN's North Coast for a beach release. Bob's VIP treatment continued as he was released on a private beach at Umvoti Beach House-Olwandle Estate, alongside the Hlimbitwa river mouth.

The morning of his release was filled with excitement and apprehension. His carers did their final well-being check, fed him, and attached two tags to his front flippers. Once they were satisfied and the team was briefed, Bob was moved into a comfortable, padded wooden box for transport to the release site.

Upon arrival, the team assessed the beach and took a moment to ready themselves for the big "Bob-Voyage" moment. With the help of two compassionate Sharks rugby team players, Boeta Chamberlain and Tinotenda Mavesere, the Two Oceans

Aquarium Foundation and SAAMBR turtle teams carried Bob in his box to the water's edge. At first, Bob needed a nudge along the sand, until instincts finally kicked in and he pulled himself into the surf. Everyone on the beach held their breath as he explored the shallows before quickly finding the rip into deeper water and finally swimming off.

Talitha Noble, conservation manager at the Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation, reflected on the day: "Bob's release experience was tremendously special. Everyone there had a deep respect for Bob, and he was ushered home with the most spectacular love."

Watch Bob's release - video courtesy of Two Oceans Aquarium

Bob's release was a remarkable achievement for the Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation team and the entire aquarium staff. However, the excitement for Bob's return to the ocean is mixed with concern for his well-being.

As an ambassador for turtles, Bob will continue to inspire campaigns against plastic pollution, as the Aquarium community follows his journey. Thanks to the three tags fitted to his back, the Turtle Conservation Centre will closely follow his progress, allaying their concerns and providing important research data.



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Keep an eye on the Two Oceans Aquarium and Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation social media platforms for Bob's updates over the next few weeks and months. "We have already seen that Bob has moved north, an area abundant with seagrass, and where SAAMBR are currently tracking a few turtles," said Noble.

"The Two Oceans Aquarium wishes to thank our generous sponsors, Ardagh Glass Packaging - Africa (AGP – Africa, formerly Consol Glass) as well as Karoline Hanks, who singlehandedly raised funds for Bob's Fastlock GPS tag by running the 13 Peaks in Cape Town."