

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Turtle Flown To U.S. After Being Rescued By Coral World Employees

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A turtle that was rescued by Coral World Ocean Park employees was flown to the U.S. on Tuesday with the help of American Airlines, Coral World said in a release on Thursday.

According to Coral World, on February 28, it received a call that a sea turtle was stranded at the bottom of the Bolongo Bay cliffs. Erica Palmer, Coral World veterinary technician, and Ryan Firment, an aquarist at the park, quickly responded. When they clambered down the cliff, they found a sub-adult, green sea turtle lying on its back.

"The wound to its right front flipper suggested an attack by a predator," Ms. Palmer said. "We transferred the turtle to Coral World where our dedicated staff has been providing supportive care, wound treatment, and nutritional therapy which allowed the turtle to stabilize and regain strength prior to transfer to an equipped surgical facility."

Thanks to the generous assistance of American Airlines, the turtle was flown to Miami on Tuesday, March 26 and taken to the Turtle Hospital in Marathon Key, Florida, where it will continue to receive supportive care and possible surgery, Coral World said.



“If the turtle is deemed releasable, it will be flown back to St. Thomas and will be released in the same area where it was rescued. If the turtle is deemed non-releasable, it will stay in the care of the Turtle Hospital in Florida,” Ms. Palmer said.

Coral World said all sea turtles are designated as either threatened or endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973. Violations can result in up to one year in prison, up to a \$100,000 fine, and the confiscation of any equipment used during the criminal act.

Coral World is the only approved Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Facility in the Virgin Islands and has been conducting and funding turtle rehabilitation since it reopened in 1997 as part of its mission to educate and inspire appreciation for the Caribbean marine environment as well as entertain, the release said. A portion of proceeds from every turtle encounter activity is allocated to turtle rescue and rehabilitation efforts.