



**Sea Turtle
FOUNDATION**
www.seaturtlefoundation.org



TOWNSVILLE TO HOST NATIONAL TURTLE SYMPOSIUM

Wednesday, 17th July 2013

Experts from around the country are gathering in Townsville today to lead discussions about the rising number of sick and dying turtles on the Great Barrier Reef.

For the past three years, there have been record numbers of turtle strandings on North Queensland beaches, highlighting concerns for the health of turtle populations right across Australia.

Dr Ellen Ariel from James Cook University said this week's Turtle Health Forum, the only one of its kind in Australia, will unite more than 100 people from different professional and geographical backgrounds for a common cause.

"There'll be a wide range of experts attending the forum - from vets and scientists to rangers, Traditional Owner groups and volunteers. Some have come from as far as New Zealand and the United States to participate," Dr Ariel said.

"We are really hoping to combine all this knowledge and experience to improve the way we assess, treat and assist these threatened animals," she said.

"James Cook University is also pleased to announce the Sea Turtle Health Research Facility will start operating at the end of this year. This will be the only facility of its kind in Australia."

Julie Traweek from the Sea Turtle Foundation said participants will not only be learning from other people's experience but receiving hands-on advice about how to handle stranded and nesting turtles, with the 3-day workshop culminating in a field trip to Cleveland Bay and Magnetic Island.

"This is a great opportunity to learn more about what's working, what's not working and what we need to focus on in the future to ensure we give our turtles a fighting chance."

WWF-Australia Spokesperson, Christine Hof, said knowledge of turtle health is limited.

"There's a lot we don't know about turtles but we do know they're dying in record numbers. We need to find out what's causing so many deaths then do something about it - and soon," Ms Hof said.

The Sea Turtle Health and Rehabilitation Workshop is hosted by James Cook University and Sea Turtle Foundation, with collaborative efforts by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Reef HQ Aquarium Turtle Hospital, WWF-Australia, Department of Environment and Heritage, Threatened Species Unit, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, local indigenous groups from the Girringun, Wulgurukaba and Gudjuda communities, Magnetic Island Network for Turtles and Sealink.

Media Opportunities: Please contact us in advance to organise attendance.

Wednesday, 17th July

- Turtle Triage Workshop on the Strand.
- Research tour at Reef HQ Aquarium Turtle Hospital.

Thursday, 18th July: - Turtle Rodeo in Cleveland Bay/Magnetic Island. Media are invited onboard the research boat from 8:30-1:30 for vision and interview opportunities. The turtle rodeo involves researchers catching and tagging turtles in Cleveland Bay and is weather-dependent.

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