



AUSTRALIAN SEABIRD RESCUE Inc.

ABN 51 972 455 398

WildlifeLink Sanctuary, 264 North Creek Road, Ballina NSW 2478.

Phone: (02) 66862852

Email: admin@seabirdrescue.org • Website: www.seabirdrescue.org

MEDIA RELEASE: TURTLE RELEASE FRIDAY 18TH DECEMBER 10:45AM The Pass Olivia the critically endangered Hawksbill Sea Turtle will be farewelled at the shoreline of The Pass at Byron Bay on Friday at 10:45am (weather dependant).

Olivia's release will be different to our usual turtle releases. Here is what will happen and why: Olivia was rescued at Boundary Creek at South Ballina back in February, 10 months ago. She was extremely underweight at 6kgs, exhausted and depressed. She was suffering from float syndrome. Olivia's float syndrome was caused from a lung infection and when we looked at a slide from her faeces under the microscope, she had lots of phytoplactic (small plastic particles) present as well.

After numerous courses of antibiotics and vitamins, Olivia was moved into the large tank but was still not gaining weight. We tried different medications and we knew that one treatment would possibly make her lose more weight but it was our last option. As expected she lost weight and got down to 5.3 kg. The medications eventually did the job and she was free of all parasites and infections. With lots of attention by many volunteers, she now weighs 8 kgs and is ready for release.

The dilemma we have faced over the past fortnight has been the fact that there are now trials of the drumlines off Ballina.

Drumlines in Queensland have caught and killed numerous turtles since the 1960's and Australian Seabird Rescue and all of our volunteers were not happy to hear that it would be trialled in Ballina, where we had planned to release Olivia.

Australian Seabird Rescue in no way supports or endorses the use of drumlines anywhere along the coast of Australia, especially near where we release critically endangered sea turtles in Ballina and surrounding areas. In the last 52 years in Queensland, 57,000 sharks of various species (most non-threatening to humans) have been caught in the shark control program. Close to 30,000 other marine animals have been caught as by-catch including whales, dolphins, dugongs, seals, rays and sea turtles.

Olivia has been eating dead food in a captive environment for 10 months while being rehabilitated and we believe she would be more inclined to be caught on a drumline due to her diet during rehabilitation more so than most turtles.

Olivia represents the extremely hard work that our volunteers do to rehabilitate these critically endangered ocean creatures. She has been the face of Australian Seabird Rescue, being a highlight for hundreds of people when they have visited us on our tours over the past 10 months.

We want to give her the best possible chance of survival and we think she has a better chance if we release her into the Cape Byron Marine Park where there will be plenty of live food for her to eat and other turtles too...away from any possible set drum lines.

We will take her out on a boat thanks to the support from Sundive Byron Bay and she will be released at Julian Rocks on Friday 18th December.

All media is welcome to attend her farewell on the shoreline.

For further enquiries please contact Kathrina Southwell on 66862852 between 8am-2pm.