



AS IT IS

## In Dubai, Sea Turtles Get a Helping Hand

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A program of Abu Dhabi's environment agency is rescuing sea turtles and returning them to the Persian Gulf.

Members of the program have released a total of about 500 sea turtles that were rescued and **rehabilitated**. Abu Dhabi is one of the United Arab Emirates. The environment agency launched the program three years ago to help turtles struggling to survive.

The latest release took place in early June. Members of the agency's Wildlife Rescue Program brought about 80 turtles to the water and released them. Members of the community joined in. Scientists placed satellite equipment on the turtles to better understand where they go. The information will inform scientists about the success of rehabilitation methods.

Turtles have historically been hunted for their meat and eggs. Their shells have been used in jewelry. But other causes have decreased the numbers of all seven **species** of sea turtles.

Hind al-Ameri is a scientist at the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi. She said that problems like plastic pollution, ship strikes, and fishing equipment are harming sea turtles. She added that coastal development reduces the amount of space the turtles have to lay eggs.

Warming oceans can harm **coral reefs**, which turtles need to survive. Changing ocean currents can bring turtles closer to animals that hunt them. And rising sea levels might harm coastal areas where the turtles lay their eggs.

Abu Dhabi's environment agency is not the only group in the United Arab Emirates helping sea turtles. The non-profit group Emirates Nature-WWF began two programs more than 10 years ago. The group studies the behavior of two species of turtles in the area: the hawksbill and green turtles.

The Dubai Turtles Rehabilitation Project is another effort that has been helping sick and injured sea turtles for nearly 20 years. It has rehabilitated and returned more than 2,000 turtles to the Persian Gulf over the years.

## Climate change

Scientists say they see evidence that the sea turtles are **adapting** to changes in the weather.

The sex of baby turtles is influenced by the temperature at which the eggs develop. Warmer temperatures produce higher numbers of female turtles. Al-Ameri said conditions in the United Arab Emirates have become so warm that male population numbers should be greatly reduced. However, she said the turtle groups are healthy and reproducing.

“It’s driving us to understand why our species are adapting the way they are,” she said.

She said the team’s efforts are leading to an understanding of whether turtles will adapt to climate change in the future or not.

The United Nations will hold its next big meeting on climate known as COP28 in Dubai from November 30 to December 12. Leaders are expected to discuss ways to prevent Earth’s temperature from rising by limiting the release of carbon gases.

I’m Gregory Stachel.

*Malak Harb reported this story for Reuters. Gregory Stachel adapted it for VOA Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**rehabilitate** – *v.* to bring (someone or something) back to a normal, healthy condition after an illness, injury, or drug problem

**species** – *n.* a group of animals or plants that are similar and can produce young animals or plants

**coral reef** – *n.* a long line of coral that lies in warm, shallow water

**adapt** – *v.* to change your behavior so that it is easier to live in a particular place or situation

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