



Museum of Discovery & Science Wished a “Bon Voyage” to Loggerhead Sea Turtle Hatchling, Gigi, and Released Her into the Wild

Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (October 31, 2022) – The Museum of Discovery & Science (MODS), in partnership with Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, released its Loggerhead sea turtle ambassador, Georgia (aka Gigi), into the wild last week. Named in memory of generous Museum supporter, George Batchelor and The Batchelor Foundation, Gigi resided in the Sea Turtle habitat at MODS since she arrived in fall of 2020.

“Our sea turtle initiative has been an essential part of the Museum’s DNA since opening, and we have released dozens of rehabilitated sea turtles. Our mission is connecting people to inspiring science, and for thousands of MODS’ guests and community members who encountered Gigi in our sea turtle observation exhibit, it was a truly meaningful experience,” said **Joseph P. Cox, president & CEO of MODS**. “With the goal of ocean release, the life sciences team at MODS worked diligently to help Gigi sharpen her natural instincts by replicating experiences she will encounter in open waters. Now that she has achieved optimal growth, releasing her into the ocean is conservation in action for all to see.”

On July 2, 2020, Gigi was hatched at Gumbo Limbo Nature Center as part of a study on how climate change affects the endangered sea turtle population. On October 21, 2020, Gigi came to the Museum weighing 195 g (0.4 lbs) with a carapace (hard upper shell) length of 11 cm. For nearly two years, Gigi munched on daily buffets of shrimp, crab and herring. She honed her swimming skills while keeping plenty of snappiness for a turtle. Now Gigi, at 14.7 pounds with a carapace length of 37.9 cm, is big and strong enough to journey into the wild. On October 25, 2022, Gigi was transported to Gumbo Limbo and will board a boat to be returned to the open water. Bon Voyage, Gigi!

Facts about sea turtles from MODS’ Life Science Department:

- The Loggerhead is one of seven different species of sea turtles. Six of the species — Green (*Chelonia mydas*), Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricate*), Kemp’s Ridley (*Lepidochelys kemp*), Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) and Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) — can be found throughout the ocean, in both warm and cool water. The seventh species, the Flatback (*Natator depressus*), lives only in Australia.
- The Loggerhead and Green sea turtles are listed as threatened. The Leatherback, Hawksbill and Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle species are listed as endangered everywhere due to human actions and lifestyles.
- Accidental capture by fishing gear, which often results in death, is the greatest threat to most sea turtles. Climate change also impacts sea turtle nesting beaches and eggs.
- Sea turtle populations are slowly recovering thanks to the collaborative effort of scientists, non-profits, universities, grassroots organizations and many dedicated people.

The Museum has a permit from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) that allows it to hold one loggerhead turtle for educational purposes. The FWC is responsible for matching rescue turtles with educational centers. The release location is determined based on where the turtles were originally found and the conditions of the waters around Florida. While Loggerhead nests are the most common type of nest found in Florida, the species is still considered threatened in the state and endangered around the world.

Humans pose a big threat to the species, and Gigi helped educate visitors on how to make an impact with sea turtles. Simple ideas like picking up trash so it doesn’t end up in a turtle’s belly and avoiding single-use plastic like straws and plastic bags, which can look like food to a hungry sea turtle, can make a big difference.

“Special thanks to The Batchelor Foundation, a private Florida foundation focused on grant-making to support children, animals, and the natural environment in south Florida, and Gumbo Limbo Nature Center for collaborating on this critical environmental initiative,” **said Cox.**

Stay tuned! MODS expects a new Loggerhead hatchling for care and growing bigger soon! Visit and support MODS, join a discussion at the Museum’s Turtle Talks or take a turtle walk with MODS next summer.

Photos and B-roll of Gigi’s Release can be viewed here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/2a9e8ndq9gdtxrpa747l3/h?dl=0&rlkey=7mu1vnccirvn4cbaysm0b1brh>

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About the Museum of Discovery and Science:

Founded in 1976 as the Discovery Center, today the Museum of Discovery and Science (MODS) is at the forefront of science education, innovation and exploration. MODS connects people to inspiring science, providing STEM education and cultural experiences for 450,000+ visitors annually in the 150,000 sq. ft. facility. MODS is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization that has been accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) for three decades (only 3% of science museums are accredited for excellence and leadership in the field). In the past year, MODS has added to that distinction by being named *Broward's Hub for Resilience Education* by the Board of the Community Foundation of Broward, selected by the LEGO Foundation as one of only 12 museums nationwide to join the *Playful Learning Museum Network* and was selected as one of 15 finalists for the prestigious *2022 IMLS National Medal for Museum Service*.

The Museum celebrates diversity and welcomes visitors from all walks of life. The Museum hours are Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. MODS is located downtown at 401 SW Second Street, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312. For more information about the Museum, please visit [mods.org](https://www.mods.org) or call 954.467.MODS (6637).

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About Gumbo Limbo Nature Center:

Founded in 1984, Gumbo Limbo Nature Center is a unique cooperative project of the City of Boca Raton, the Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District, Florida Atlantic University, and Friends of Gumbo Limbo.

Last year, more than 200,000 visitors took a break from the city bustle to enjoy a walk on our boardwalk, count the thousands of tropical fish in our aquariums, relax in our butterfly garden, or check on the patients in our sea turtle rehabilitation facility.

As a beacon for environmental education, research, and conservation, Gumbo Limbo's 20 acres on the protected barrier island provide refuge to many varieties of plants and animals - some rare or endangered. It also represents a commitment to protect our natural resources by staff, volunteers and the organizations that comprise the Center. Follow on social media [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/modsftl), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/modsftl) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/modsftl).

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