

SeaWorld sea turtle throat surgery

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A SeaWorld Orlando medical team performed emergency throat surgery on an endangered sea turtle to remove a pair of fishing hooks, the marine park announced Friday afternoon.

The Sea Turtle Preservation Society rescued the animal, an 11-pound juvenile, near Cape Canaveral and it arrived at SeaWorld on Wednesday. Following x-rays and blood tests, a park veterinarian removed one hook from the turtle's esophagus and another from its cloaca during surgery on Friday morning.

"The turtle is doing well following the procedure, and his health will continue to be monitored over the next several weeks by the Aquarium department at SeaWorld Orlando," the park said.

It is the 59th sea turtle that SeaWorld says it has rescued so far this year. The park said it intends to release the animal back into the wild once it has fully recovered.

Orlando-based SeaWorld Entertainment Inc. has made a concerted effort to better promote its wildlife rescue and conservation work in recent years, an attempt to buttress itself against criticism from the anti-captivity movement. That criticism was amplified Thursday night during the CNN broadcast of the documentary film "Blackfish," which challenges SeaWorld's captive killer-whale program.

Supporters of SeaWorld and other aquariums and zoos led a social media campaign to push back against the film while it aired. A host of facilities publicly announced their support of SeaWorld, from the African Safari Wildlife Park in Port Clinton, Ohio, to the Los Angeles Zoo. Sanford's Central Florida Zoo even proclaimed itself on "Team SeaWorld" during the broadcast.

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