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NATIONAL AQUARIUM IN BALTIMORE RELEASES TWO ENDANGERED KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLES

Satellite tag allows scientists, public to follow turtle's movement via www.aqua.org/animaltracking/

Baltimore, August 26, 2005 –The National Aquarium in Baltimore's Marine Animal Rescue Program released two rehabilitated Kemp's ridley sea turtles into waters off Assateague Island, Md. this week. The turtles stranded in New England last winter and were stabilized at the New England Aquarium before moving to Baltimore to continue their rehabilitation in April.

One of the turtles was fitted with a satellite tag shortly before its release. It is the smallest animal the Aquarium has ever tracked. Both turtles are juveniles, about as large as dinner plates and weigh about 18 pounds. They also have microchips implanted under their skin that help scientists know more about their history in the event that they ever re-strand or go ashore to lay eggs.

Both animals were cold stunned, a condition similar to hypothermia, and had pneumonia. Approximately half of the animals cared for by the Aquarium's rescue program have been hurt by human interaction, and these animals were no exception - both had shell injuries, likely caused by boat strikes. One was hurt so badly that its lung tissue was visible.

"Sea turtles must surface in order to breathe, often placing them directly in the path of boats. We receive more than a dozen calls each year about injured turtles in the Bay. Unfortunately, so far this year none of the turtles injured locally have survived," said Cindi Perry, the Aquarium's stranding coordinator. "We encourage boaters to stay on the lookout for them and to call authorities for help if they see any injured marine animal."

Aquarium officials estimate that 15,000 sea turtles enter the Chesapeake Bay each summer. Over the next few months the turtles should begin migrating south to stay in warm waters.

Kemp's ridley sea turtles are the world's most endangered sea turtle, partially because they nest on only one beach in the world, making them easy targets for poachers.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, a non-profit organization, is Maryland's most exciting and popular cultural attraction, as well as one of the region's leading conservation and education resources, hosting more than 1.6 million visitors per year. The Aquarium's mission is to connect people with aquatic life in order to create a better world for both. It is dedicated to education and conservation through more than a dozen programs that serve the environment and the community.

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