

# GEORGE'S EPIC SWIM

Story: Ben Gibson Image: Ian Kerr



Exciting news has come in from the wild, via new satellite maps tracking the remarkable 4,655 kilometre journey of George the juvenile Loggerhead Turtle.

Young George was tagged and released in January this year at Lord Howe Island after being rehabilitated at the Taronga Wildlife Hospital. In 242 days, he has travelled as far south as Tasmania before heading towards the northern tip of New Zealand.

Researchers at Taronga Zoo in partnership with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Hawaii also tracked another young Loggerhead in 2010. They wanted to uncover the secret of where Loggerhead Turtles go once they hatch until they return to the same beach to breed decades later, a time often referred to as the turtle 'lost years'.

The two turtles can help us understand the migratory habits of Loggerheads born on the north-east coast of Australia. Both were released from the same location at the same time of year. Both remained in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand, within the latitudes of 30–45S, during their independent journeys through the open waters of the Tasman Sea and eventually, both wound up in the north of New Zealand. Information about turtles' migratory habits can be used to help us protect them in the future.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Loggerhead Turtles are named for their large heads and thick, muscular jaws

He's African born, a natural blonde and a bit of a jetsetter. His name is Lazarus and staff at Taronga Western Plains Zoo are hoping he's going to father – if not be – the pride of the place.

Pride of Lions that is, as a mate to Kora, a true-blue Aussie lioness who arrived from Mogo Zoo a few months ago.

Lazarus, who is already a father to six cubs at Auckland Zoo, made the trans-Tasman trip in a Boeing 757 freighter, without sedation and with his Auckland keeper David Crimp to keep him company, then transferred to a special crate for the six-hour trip to Dubbo. David says Lazarus travelled quietly, although the 199 kilogram lion usually acts the dominant male, "strutting around and showing off".

Ten-year-old Lazarus has racked up quite a few frequent flyer points, having previously transferred from his birthplace in the Kalahari Desert to Kruger National Park and Cango Wildlife Ranch in South Africa before settling in New Zealand for four years.

Taronga keeper Carolene Magner says the two lions are well matched in temperament. "Lazarus and Kora are both motivated by food," she laughs.

Lions in zoos can live up to 24 years of age, so there's plenty of time for the two to start a new family at Taronga Western Plains Zoo – where the spectacular sunrises and vivid sunsets might just remind Lazarus of his home in Africa.



Image: Auckland Zoo

## LONG-HAUL LAZARUS TOUCHES DOWN

Story: Darill Clements

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