

The SEE Foundation collaborated with multiple departments to promote marine protection, and 160 sea turtles were released into the sea

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On March 25, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other departments jointly launched the 2021 Sea Turtle Release in Xisha Sea on Yongxing Island, Sansha City, Hainan Province, and released 160 confiscated sea turtles into the sea.



▲ 160 sea turtles were released into the sea in Xisha waters.

The turtles released this time were seized by the Jiangsu Provincial Procuratorate. After being rescued and rewilded by the fishery authorities, they all have the ability to survive in the wild. **Each turtle is equipped with a special identification to reduce the risk of being illegally caught and traded again.**

It is understood that sea turtles in my country's waters, including green turtles, Pacific turtles, hawksbill turtles and other species, are my country's flagship species for aquatic wildlife protection and have extremely high ecological, scientific research and cultural value. In the newly revised list of national key protected wild animals in 2021, the protection level of sea turtles distributed in our country has **been upgraded from the national second-level key protected wild animals to the first level .**



▲ Turtles about to be released into the sea

In recent years, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has conscientiously implemented the decisions and arrangements of the Party Central Committee, the National People's Congress, and the State Council on combating illegal trade in wild animals, actively taken effective measures to increase the protection of aquatic wild animals, submitted to the State Council for approval and issued the "List of National Key Protected Wild Animals" 》 , 302

species of aquatic wild animals such as sea turtles are listed as national key protected wild animals, and the protection action plans for 7 key species including sea turtles, harbor seals, and Chinese white dolphins have been promulgated and implemented, and the proliferation and release of aquatic wild animals have been increased. The public security, customs, market supervision, China Coast Guard, Forestry and Grassland and other departments have carried out special law enforcement operations nationwide such as "China Fisheries Sword" and "Qingfeng" to severely crack down on illegal trade in various types of aquatic wildlife and have achieved good results.

Turtle survival is threatened

As creatures that have existed for 200 million years, there are currently 7 species of sea turtles in the world, 5 of which are distributed in my country: green sea turtles, hawksbill sea turtles, loggerhead sea turtles, Pacific turtles, and leatherback sea turtles. They are distributed from the Bohai Sea to the South China Sea, but are mainly distributed in the southwest Zhongsha Islands and surrounding waters. These seven species of sea turtles are now considered critically endangered and endangered by the IUCN.

In recent years, the surrounding coastal resources have been continuously developed, further squeezing the living space of sea turtles, and the main egg-laying habitats have shrunk seriously, resulting in continued decline of sea turtle resources and a significant decline in population numbers.

Not only that, human activities also threaten the survival of sea turtles. Accidental ingestion of marine debris and entanglement in abandoned fishing gear have led to the death of a large number of sea turtles, especially small ones. Bycatch and illegal fishing also seriously affect the living conditions of sea turtles.

▲ A sea turtle entangled in an abandoned fishing net ©NOAA

we are in action

The SEE Foundation (Beijing Entrepreneur Environmental Protection Foundation) has always been concerned about marine protection . Sun Lili, president of the Alxa SEE Ecological Association, director Ye Ming, and Zhang Li, secretary-general of the SEE Foundation, also participated in this release event. The release sites are located at Qilian Island and Ganquan Island in Xisha District, Sansha City. They are currently the largest sea turtle spawning grounds in China. This year, the SEE Foundation 's goal is to work with partners to rescue and release 100 sea turtles. The 160 animals released this time also mean that the goal has been achieved ahead of schedule.

▲ Sun Lili, president of Alxa SEE Ecological Association, director Ye Ming, and Zhang Li, secretary-general of SEE Foundation, participated in the release event.

The SEE Foundation has long-term supported and promoted the work of the China Sea Turtle Conservation Alliance, from scientific monitoring, positioning and tracking, to sea turtle rescue and public advocacy to combat illegal trade, to promoting the construction of key sea turtle habitats and protected areas, etc... These actions have achieved initial results. Effectiveness.

▲ The site of the 2020 reintroduction event

In August 2020, the SEE Foundation teamed up with the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the China Sea Turtle Conservation Alliance and other departments and agencies to release 99 rescued sea turtles. Satellite positioning devices were installed on 10 sea turtles to understand their living habits and habitat ecological environment, and to accumulate more scientific research data for sea turtle protection, so as to better carry out sea turtle protection work.

▲ (Left) Turtle rescue training © Li Xiaofei, (right) Partners visit homes in fishermen's communities to recycle abandoned fishing gear

In addition, the SEE Foundation has also joined forces with the China Sea Turtle Conservation Alliance, GEI and other organizations, and with the strong support of the Hainan government,

to carry out a local sea turtle protection community co-construction pilot project. Improve fishermen's awareness of ecological protection through cooperation with fishermen communities, rescue training, etc., and explore community co-management; help fishermen develop sustainable livelihoods, improve fishery operations, and reduce by-catch by fishermen; explore a pilot model for recycling abandoned fishing gear to reduce the impact of marine debris on Threats to sea turtles, better protect sea turtles and maintain the balance of marine ecology.

In the future, the SEE Foundation will continue to carry out sea turtle protection action plans, such as releasing and rescuing sea turtles, satellite positioning and tracking, carrying out public education and publicity activities, and promoting the construction of sea turtle protected areas.