

# Sam flips for freedom

## Endangered turtle back in the deep

Peter Hall

A TURTLE painstakingly nursed back to health took off without so much as a thank-you when returned to the ocean, but his carers were far from offended.

Australia Zoo staff cheered as the sea survivor, whose ancestors date back 150 million years, surged into the blue near Mudjimba on the Sunshine Coast yesterday.

A team of four was required to lift the 120kg green sea turtle, named Sam, who proved much more sprightly than he looked.

"He raced away so quickly, he didn't even say goodbye," Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital veterinarian Dr Claude Lacasse said. "We didn't mind though ... it was encouraging to see how well he had recovered."

Aged between 30 and 50, Sam had been through a comprehensive rehabilitation process since being found almost lifeless near Bribie Island in July. He had been



**HOME AGAIN:** Sam is released into the open water by Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital staff.

Picture: Stuart Quinn

suffering from "floaters syndrome", a condition caused by disease or illness that makes it difficult for turtles to dive for food and more susceptible to boat strikes.

Dr Lacasse said there was very little known about the

syndrome but early intervention had been the key to Sam's survival.

"Early detection meant we were able to treat Sam's illness with antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medication," Dr Lacasse said.

The wildlife hospital has seven turtles in its care this week, with spring and summer the busiest times because that's when the endangered creatures and recreational boaties are more active.

Australia Zoo will join

wildlife conservation experts in Queen Street Mall today as part of National Threatened Species Day.

For more information on the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital visit [wildlifewarriors.org.au](http://wildlifewarriors.org.au)