



## Release a Green Sea Turtle – Set it free!

(*Chelonia mydas*) Cayman's Turtle Release program is run in partnership with the Cayman Turtle Farm, Rogest and Divetech. The partners in this initiative have gotten together to allow sponsors at home or visitors to the island to adopt a green sea turtle and set it free into the wild! The goal of the program is to allow individuals or corporations to become involved and take ownership of being a steward of the marine environment, in this case, support of the repopulation of green sea turtles into the waters of Grand Cayman.



**History:** The people of the Cayman Islands have a history tied to the turtle. In the 1600 and 1700's the Cayman Islands became a provisioning stop for vessels sailing the Caribbean because of an abundance of green sea turtles, which could be caught and kept alive on board as a source of fresh meat. Permanent settlements developed on the Cayman Islands in the seventeenth century and turtling became a means of income as well as providing a local source of food. The Cayman Turtle Farm was established in 1968 as Mariculture Ltd. and was purchased by the Cayman Islands Government in 1983. Between 1980 and the end of November 2006, Cayman Turtle Farm had released 30,900 turtles around these islands. Many had been released prior to 1980 but records are not readily available. These turtles have adapted



well and have been found through out the Western Caribbean from Cuba to as far away as Venezuela. They have also been found in Florida. Turtles released as "head-started" and turtles released as hatchlings have returned to nest on Grand Cayman. Much research, which could not have been conducted on wild turtles, has been made possible at the farm. Cayman Turtle Farm's policy is to provide turtles and facilities to research projects that could benefit turtle farming technology or be of a conservation benefit to sea turtles.



**Tagging Process:** Yearling turtles are tagged with a titanium flipper tag on their fore-flipper which identifies an individual animal. The titanium tag provides information that enables individuals finding these animals in areas away from the Cayman Islands to return captured information to the Farm. The majority of tag returns have come from Cuba, with returns also from Honduras, Venezuela, the United States, Panama, Belize, Nicaragua, and Mexico. Information thus far correlated suggests that the turtles adapt well to natural conditions when released as yearlings, and that their release site in the Cayman Islands dictates whether or not they migrate away from the Islands or stay in Cayman waters. Significantly, the release program of the Farm has demonstrated that "head-started" turtles do assimilate into a natural environment.



**Monitoring:** Because of observed dog and crab predation and increased public use of all beaches, reported nests are relocated to the Cayman Turtle Farm's hatchery for incubation. All hatchlings are then returned to the collection beach for release. A tag-recapture program is ongoing which allows for the collection of data regarding survival and growth of the turtles released.



**How you can participate:** The release a turtle program has 2 participation levels to choose from. Your turtle will be a healthy, tagged 1 year old. At this age, the sex of the turtle cannot be determined.

### **Minimum 30 day advance notice is required**

### **Sponsor a turtle from your home or business \$1550. US**

Send in your application form with payment and you will be notified of receipt and the date of release for your turtle. Staff from Divetech will pick your turtle up from the Cayman Turtle Farm after it has been tagged and release it at Turtle Reef for you. You will receive:

- Personalized adoption certificate
- Photo of your turtle being released
- Turtle Print by Rogest (See below photo)
- Satisfaction that you have set a turtle free from the farm ☺



### **Sponsor a turtle while visiting and set it free \$1650. US**

- Send in your application form with payment and preferred release date and you will receive confirmation on the scheduling of your release. You will receive:
- Personalized adoption certificate
- Photo of your turtle being released
- Turtle Print by Rogest
- Satisfaction that you have set a turtle free from the farm ☺
- Tour of the Cayman Turtle Farm (Add \$40. per person for friends accompanying you)
- Selection of your turtle
- Snorkle excursion including a guide and equipment, from shore, to set your turtle free ☺



*"As an artist I love to paint , when I paint I am always learning by what I have done in the past. For me it is the same with the environment and all that inhabit it, we can learn from our past and strive to be better ambassadors of the planet and all of nature's inhabitants in the future. Let's give a little back, back to the ocean, give it a turtle. Join me and support the cause of freedom, compassion, caring and responsibility that we all must share as humans, set a turtle free. Rogest"*

**To adopt a turtle contact [divetech@candw.ky](mailto:divetech@candw.ky)  
(345 946-5658)  
[www.rogest.com](http://www.rogest.com) or [www.divetech.com](http://www.divetech.com)**