

# Israeli conservationists release endangered hawksbill turtles into the Red Sea

Shortly after swimming away from Eilat's shore, one of the turtles was spotted stopping by a coral reef, possibly looking for a snack.

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Israeli conservationists handle a hawksbill turtle before they release three of them into the Red Sea, in an effort to rehabilitate the population of the critically endangered species in the wild, in Eilat in southern Israel, in this handout picture from October 30, 2024. (photo credit: Erez Erlichman/Israel Nature and Parks Authority/Handout via Reuters)

Israeli conservationists released three hawksbill turtles into the Red Sea in an effort to rehabilitate the population of the critically endangered species in the wild, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority said on Thursday.

The three females were raised for more than two decades at an underwater observatory on the shore of Eilat and were set free after reaching maturity.

Each turtle was fitted with a satellite transmitter on their shell so their movements can be tracked and viewed by the public on the website, Wildlife Computers.

## How will the turtles fare in nature?

Shortly after swimming away from shore, one of the turtles was spotted stopping by a coral reef, possibly looking for a snack. They are omnivorous with a penchant for eating soft coral and sea sponges, according to the nature and parks authority.

"One of the things that we need to know - is a turtle that has lived all its life in captivity, how and will he survive in nature?" said Aviv Levy of Eilat's Underwater Observatory Marine Park.



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Hawksbill turtles are classified as "critically endangered" by the [World Wildlife Fund](#). They help maintain healthy coral reefs by removing prey, like sponges, from the reef's surface and providing better access for fish to feed, it says.

However, encounters with sea vessels and entanglements in fishing nets have brought the species to the edge of extinction. They have also been hunted for their shells.

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