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# Turtle set free ahead of clean-up

By **JOHN MCCUTCHEON**

IT WAS a very big day for Alicia the green turtle. If she knew what was about to happen, she probably would have been flipping and flapping all the way to the sea.

Alicia had spent 10 weeks at Sea Life's turtle treatment facility in Mooloolaba after being found stranded on a Sunshine Coast beach.

Sea Life general curator Aaron Sprowl was clearly excited about the release as the boat motored towards the Inner Gneerings Reef, about 3km off Mooloolaba yesterday morning.

"Her release is in honour of our beach clean-up this Saturday," Mr Sprowl said.

The Clean-up for the Hatchlings will be held at La Balsa Park, Point Cartwright, from 6.15am to 10am. The day includes prizes and a free barbecue.

It also involves more than just removing rubbish from the sand and dunes, with

some people going into the water with snorkels to pull rubbish from the water.

Anyone wanting to join the snorkel team should email [jodi@reefcheckaustralia.org](mailto:jodi@reefcheckaustralia.org).

Reef Check Australia community engagement officer Jodi Salmond and Turtle Care group conservation officer Kate Hofmeister joined forces two years ago after agreeing there was a problem with marine debris on the Sunshine Coast.

Ms Salmond said the first step to solving that problem was not just realising beach rubbish was an issue, but also taking ownership of it.

Collecting rubbish helped agencies such as Reef Check find the source of little problems and come up with ways to stop it happening in the first place.

"Last year we had over 350 people turn up on the day, so that is massive for a clean-up," Mrs Salmond said.

Turtle Care group conser-

vation officer Kate Hofmeister said there were about 70 loggerhead turtle nests

spread from North Bribie to Noosa's Sunshine Beach and Alexandria Bay.

"Our loggerhead turtle has recently been listed as internationally critically endangered ... and it's the genetic stock that nests here on the Sunshine Coast that has received that listing," Mrs Hofmeister said.

Aaron, Jodi and Kate are urging Coast residents to come to a Sunshine Coast beach and help make a difference. If Alicia could speak, she might well be championing the cause as well.



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**SET IT FREE:** Alicia the green turtle, pictured with Sea Life general curator Aaron Sprowl, Reef Check Australia community engagement officer Jodi Salmond and Turtle Care group conservation officer Kate Hofmeister. *PHOTOS: JOHN MCCUTCHEON*