

Save the Croatian turtle

Visitors to Croatia are asking you to help them save the loggerhead turtle living in dreadful conditions in the Dubrovnik Aquarium. The turtle – a fully grown adult female – has been kept for the past 40 years in a small concrete tank surrounded by coins thrown in by visitors. Barely able to move, its muscles had become severely atrophied.

In 2000 the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (UK) contacted MEDASSET about complaints received from a number of British tourists who had visited Croatia and were concerned at the poor living conditions of a captive loggerhead turtle at the Dubrovnik Aquarium. MEDASSET offered the Aquarium three possibilities to **end the turtle's suffering**: to re-house it in a larger tank, to send it to a recuperation centre or to relocate it to another aquarium with adequate facilities.



In 2001 MEDASSET began to make arrangements for its transfer to the Stazione Zoologica "Anton Dohrn" in Naples, Italy, where rehabilitation prior to release into the wild had been promised. In June 2002 an assistant from the Stazione went to collect the turtle, however the Aquarium refused to allow it to be taken, saying that they were due to renovate the Aquarium during winter 2002 and would build a new tank.

In September 2003, with no change having taken place, Dr Frank Zindel from the Turtle Foundation based in Germany who had received complaints from German visitors to the aquarium, attempted to contact the Aquarium in order to resolve the situation. He received no response and posted a request for help on the C-Turtle list server.

This saga has continued for over 7 years. We continue to campaign on behalf of the turtle and hope that working in partnership with the Turtle Foundation in Germany and Croatians this particular story will have a happy ending. And now we need your help.

Please send a polite letter to the director of the Aquarium. Tell him why you think it is important to help this turtle, to professionally rehabilitate it in the Stazione Zoologica in Italy and to prevent further muscle atrophy. State that the current conditions are insufficient and inhumane and urge the Director to relocate the turtle as soon as possible.

Address:

Dr. Nenad Jasprica
Director
University of Dubrovnik
Institute for Marine and Coastal Research
Kneza Damjana Jude 12,
PO Box 83,
HR-20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia

Letter writing tips

Official name
Full address

Your address
City, ZIP Code
Date

Salutation (Dear,)

Body: Your letter should have three parts: 1) Identification of the issue (briefly describe the case and say why it is important to you); 2) A request for action that you would like the official to take; and 3) Your “thank you” for the official’s time and a request for response to your letter. Please remember to be polite. Be sure to mention any positive environmental steps that may have been taken by the company or country.

Closing (Sincerely yours,)

Your name and age

For teachers

Taking part in action of turtle saving is an excellent practical supplement for your science, geography, language arts, and civic lessons. Use it for group discussion, reports, school newspaper articles, debates, public speaking and letter-writing exercises.

How this action can correspond with different subjects:

Science: Helps to understand how species depend on each other and on the environment for survival.

Language Arts: Allows demonstrating competence in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing. Student use style and structure appropriate for specific audiences and purposes, gather and use information for research purposes.

Geography: Explains how human actions modify environmental. Let to know location of places, geographical features and patterns of the environment.

Civics: Gives understanding how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals.

For students

- Encourage everyone in your family discuss the action and write letters.
- Form action discussion and letter-writing groups at your school. Post the information how the action is running with copies of your letters, articles and other information on a bulletin board.
- Send the information about the action to local organizations.
- Ask local environmental groups if you can make an action presentation to their members.
- Write a letter to the editor or an article for your school or community newspaper about the action.
- We are eager to hear from you. Send us copies of your letters, too.
Our address is:

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