Wildlife clinic confirms turtle rescued by tourist on Sanibel suffers from red tide poisoning

Kinfay Moroti, Fort Myers News-Press  Published 5:58 p.m. ET Aug. 20, 2018 | Updated 6:25 p.m. ET Aug. 20, 2018

Nylah Rampersad rescues a sea turtle on Saturday during a red tide outbreak on Sanibel Island, Fla. Rampersad saw the turtle laboring near shore. Kinfay Moroti, news-press.com

A juvenile sea turtle that was rescued Saturday on Sanibel Island by a tourist is in guarded condition at the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife.

Robin Bast, a veterinarian at CROW, confirmed the turtle is suffering from red tide poisoning, signs of which include labored breathing, lack of coordination, muscle twitching, extreme lethargy and being unable to dive.

The turtle was rescued by Nylah Rampersad who was visiting Sanibel from Orlando. “We have to go out there and get her,” Rampersad told a friend when they saw the turtle floating near the Sanibel Causeway shore.

More:  Strong red tide may leave lasting impression on turtle populations

Where do all the fish go?:  Millions of pounds of dead fish have washed up on our beaches. This is what happens to them next

“I didn’t feel comfortable leaving her because she looked already on the brink of death and I felt if we had left, she wouldn’t have made it,” Rampersad said.

Once in the water, Rampersad kept the turtle afloat by gently supporting its neck and body. The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation aided in the rescue and took it to CROW for treatment.

After the first 24 hours of treatment, the turtle was moved to a shallow tank for monitoring. It can take anywhere from three weeks to three months for sea turtles and other marine animals to recover from red tide poisoning.
Florida algae crisis: Turtle rescued in Sanibel was suffering from red tide

"The turtle is doing better but is not out of the woods yet," said Brian Bohlman, CROW's marketing director.

More: Is red tide getting better? Not so much

The latest: Is it safe to visit?