

## ILLEGAL TURTLE ON SALE HERE

In spite of existing federal and state laws, several restaurants located both on Oahu and the neighbor islands have continued to sell turtle steak and soup. These items do not always appear on the regular menu, but rather may be offered as the "special of the day," either verbally or with a clip-on card. There are really only three explanations that can account for the meat products being offered by these establishments.

That is:

- 1) The meat was illegally imported into Hawaii directly from a foreign country after May 1979, or illegally transported to Hawaii from another state after September 1979, the dates when the shipment bans went into effect;
- 2) The meat was obtained from our Hawaiian turtles which were illegally killed;
- 3) The meat was brought to Hawaii prior to the shipment bans, and therefore has been stored in a freezer for a minimum of 12 months before being thawed and served.



An adult olive ridley, ripe with eggs, being gutted at the factory in Oaxaca, Mexico (in September 1979). Much illegal meat comes from this source.

None of these possibilities are palatable. If turtle meat older than 12 months is indeed being served, certainly it would have degraded to the point of being unwholesome, and possibly even unhealthy. If the restaurants in question are selling illegally imported meat, or are somehow involved in the killing of Hawaiian turtles, then wildlife officers need to vigorously pursue the offenders. Regardless of which is the case, conservation ethics and good sense make it advisable for the public to avoid restaurants still serving turtle. Furthermore, when suspect restaurants are encountered, it would be worthwhile to notify the Enforcement Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by telephoning 546-5602 or writing to P. O. Box 50223, Honolulu, HI 96850.

Recent investigations in Florida and Texas have resulted in federal indictments against six individuals and eight corporations for illegal activities involving 106,000 pounds of sea turtle meat. The indictments include conspiracy, transporting turtle meat with fraudulent documents, and importing in violation of the U.S. Endangered Species Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. In a separate case earlier this year, the crewman of a shrimp trawler that had intentionally killed a sea turtle was assessed a \$5,000 fine and one year's prison sentence, suspended for three years.

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