

★ SHOW TURTLES ALOHA ★

PLEASE DO NOT FEED, HANDLE, CROWD, OR TEASE

# Critter Zone Green Sea Turtle

Animals, bugs, crawlers

and flyers, swimmers

and slitherers may

be found in the

Critter Zone!

Copied by:

Marine Turtle Research  
NOAA NMFS PIFSC  
2570 Dole St  
Honolulu, HI 96822

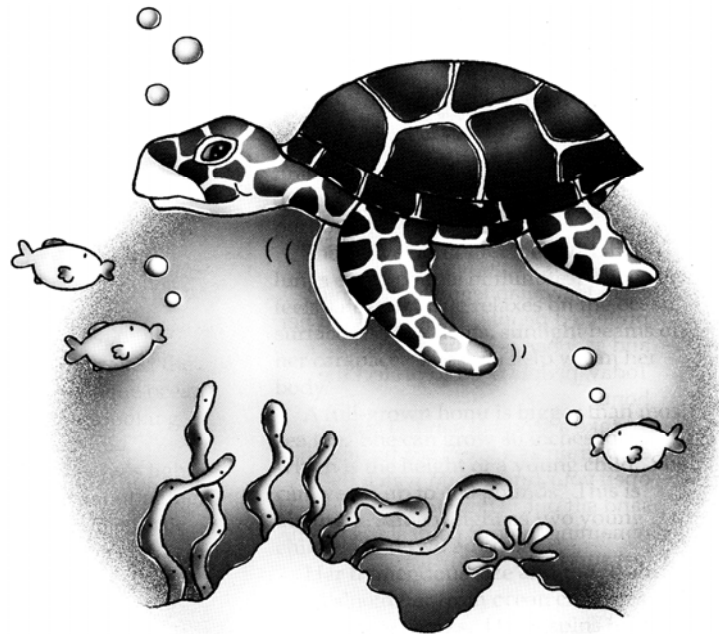
Poking through the waves, two black eyes peer from a scaly head, scan the horizon, and cry. A beak-like mouth inhales a deep breath. The head dips under the rippling ocean and disappears. She's a Hawaiian green sea turtle that isn't green. Her name comes from the color of fat in her flesh. The *honu*, as she is called in the Hawaiian language, is actually dark brown or black with olive or gold specks.

The honu is one species of sea turtle. Seven types of sea turtles roam United States oceanic waters. Five types live around the Hawaiian Islands. A sea turtle's skin and shell keep most sea water out. Salt water enters the body mainly through the mouth. Too much sea salt makes the honu sick. She sheds tears to cleanse it away.

As a hatchling she's barely the size of a silver dollar. The honu scurries from her sandy nest into the ocean with almost 100 brothers and sisters. She drifts on the high seas for several years. Then she finds a coastline where she lives and eats marine plants and seaweed. As an adult, she's a vegetarian. Almost 25 years can pass before she returns to the beach where she hatched. There she lays her eggs and continues the cycle of life.

From the air it's difficult to spot the sea turtle's dark oval top shell called the *carapace*. It blends with the opaque ocean bottom. Underwater creatures looking up are fooled by her light-colored underside. It blends with the sky's light on the ocean surface. This camouflaging, called *countershading*, protects the turtle from predators like some sea birds and sharks. Large scales called *scutes* are part of the carapace. The shell grows with her. It's made of keratin like human fingernails. The sea turtle can't remove or get out of her shell because it's a portion of her skeleton. The active honu breathes with

by Craig Stevens

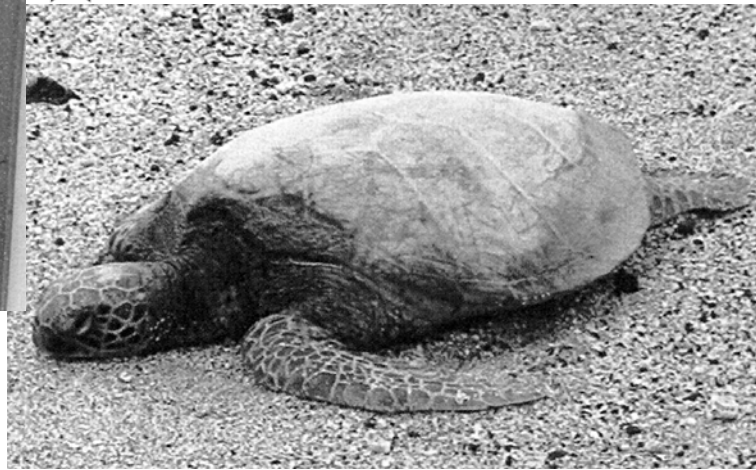


her lungs every couple of minutes. When she feels safe, the turtle relaxes on the ocean surface. As she floats, sunlight beams on her carapace. The rays help warm her body.

A full-grown honu is bigger than most sea life. She can grow 40 inches long, which is the height of a young child. She can weigh up to 400 pounds. This is about the same weight as two young children and two adults. Her tremendous size and tough shell often shield her from ocean creatures except large sharks. Honu spins herself so that an oncoming tiger shark bites her shell. He leaves teeth marks on the shell. A tired or sick honu can't turn quickly enough to avoid the shark.

★ **BASKING HAWAIIAN  
SEA TURTLES** ★

Green turtles (honu) are native to Hawai'i and can be found in shallow coastal waters of our islands. The turtles commonly come to shore to feed on seaweed (limu) growing on the bottom. During recent years, green turtles have begun to crawl out on the sand and rocks to bask and rest. This basking is a natural behavior special to Hawaiian green turtles.



## Quiz & Word Scramble

Choose the correct answer from the word list below to fill in the blanks. Then unscramble the boxed letters to find the hidden phrase that describes Hawaiian green sea turtles. Answers are on page 49.

Sea turtles are

\_\_\_ [ ] \_\_\_ [ ] [ ]

Sea turtles breathe with \_\_\_ [ ] [ ]

Sea turtles lay eggs \_\_\_ [ ] \_\_\_ [ ] [ ]

Green sea turtle in the Hawaiian language is

\_\_\_ [ ] \_\_\_

Adult green sea turtles are

\_\_\_ [ ] \_\_\_ [ ] \_\_\_\_\_

Green sea turtles are almost

[ ] \_\_\_\_\_

Sea turtles swim \_\_\_ [ ] [ ] \_\_\_\_\_

Like our fingernails, a sea turtle shell's outer layer has \_\_\_ [ ] [ ] \_\_\_\_\_

Sea turtles are a symbol of

\_\_\_ [ ] \_\_\_\_\_

Hidden Phrase

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### Word List

mammals	in ocean	honu
lungs	polish	extinct
gills	reptiles	carnivore
quickly	good luck	keratin
vegetarian	on land	

Unlike land or freshwater turtles, the sea turtle cannot pull in her head, flippers, or tail. Survival requires alertness. Her keen sense of smell warns her of predators. She spies a shark from long distances. The honu evades him by hiding in a coral reef, under a ledge, or in a sea cave. She can stay in a sea cave for one or two hours.

The honu also utilizes her strong swimming skills. Using her flippers like paddles, she propels herself through the water and reaches speeds of almost 20 miles per hour. She maintains this speed for short periods of time.

Turtles are the oldest of all living reptiles. They first lived around 100 million years ago with the dinosaurs. Commercial hunters, fishing nets, construction, viral disease, pollution, and plastics reduced their numbers. In Hawaii, green sea turtles are a threatened species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

In Hawaiian legend, the honu protected people. They respected her and saw her as a sign of good luck. Today, people need to protect the honu.

Take a scoop of sand. Think of each grain as a green sea turtle. Then open your fingers and watch the sand sift out. Those few grains remaining in your palm stand for the last surviving sea turtles.

**SEA TURTLES IN TROUBLE?  
STRANDED ASHORE SICK OR INJURED?**  
Report cases to NOAA/NMFS (808) 983-5730  
Authorized Federal Agency  
See <http://www.turtles.org/nmfs>  
Request Literature: (808) 983-5730

★ **RESPECT THE TURTLES** ★  
**PLEASE DO NOT FEED, HANDLE, CROWD, OR TEASE**