



VIEW

from Eva Parker Woods Cottage

Hui Kuapā, Mauna Lani's Cultural Department
Kalāhuipua'a Fishponds, Mauna Lani Resort, Big Island of Hawai'i

Kaniela Akaka, Director

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In 1989 Mauna Lani began a close, enduring relationship with *honu* (Hawaiian green turtle, *Chelonia mydas*) when the Mauna Lani Honu Program was developed with Sea Life Park Hawaii (SLPH) and with guidance from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) turtle researcher George Balazs.

Some might say Mauna Lani adopted the honu as an 'aumākua (personal or special family guardian), but I prefer to think the honu adopted us, by revealing themselves to us as our 'aumākua. According to Hawaiian tradition, 'aumākua often chose individuals deemed worthy of its guidance and protection.

Hawaiians have personal, intimate relationships with their 'aumākua. They are similar to guardian angels of the Christian world, but they're also like grandparents who monitor your behavior, and keep you on the "straight and narrow," too!

The honu link us to our cultural past; they're a symbol of longevity, the ultimate navigators, and return to the sands of their birth — all things we aspire to.

The "satellite honu" will allow us to gain insights into their travels and help us regain a deep appreciation and respect for their ancient wisdom.

Check out our culture website at www.maunalaniculture.org for the latest updates on Mauna Lani Honu. The website debuts July 4th.



Honu: Where do they go from here?



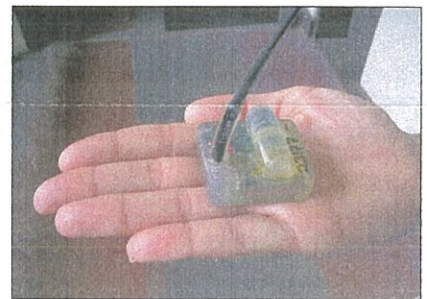
Honu waits its turn at the pre-release veterinary check. Photo: Leilani Hino Below, this tiny transmitter will send data via satellite and through computers as the honu travel in pelagic waters. The battery-run transmitters should function for three months or more. Photo courtesy of George Balazs

Since 1990, July 4th has been Turtle Independence Day at Mauna Lani Resort. "But we've never really been certain where the honu went after we released them," Mauna Lani honu administrator Sandie Patton said.

"Of course, we get documented reports of Mauna Lani honu in our waters after their release. But do they just stay after we release them, or do they go somewhere then come back?"

This year three or four of the released turtles will carry UHF satellite transmitters which will relay tracking and other data to turtle researcher George Balazs with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center in Honolulu.

"The main scientific purpose of putting satellite tags [transmitters] on

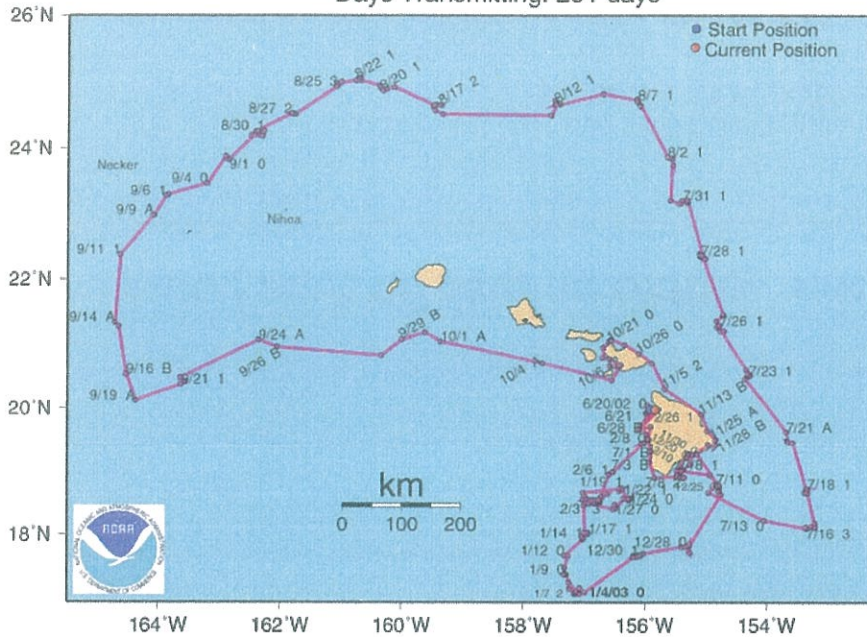


the turtles is to study the 'pelagic ecology' of them," Balazs said. "Where they travel to and how they live with relation to ocean currents and other features such as temperature, winds, productivity," he explained. Pelagic refers to the high seas away from shore. *Related story on page 2.*

See **HONU**
Page 2

Satellite Honu: a window to the pelagic ecology of sea turtles

2002-2003 Movement of Mauna Lani Juvenile Green Turtle 22270
 Duty Cycle: 12 hr on, 48 hr off SCL: 45.5 cm
 Days Transmitting: 251 days



GMT Map by Denise Parker 02/27/03

On June 20, 2002 Mauna Lani Juvenile Green Turtle #22270 was quietly released five miles offshore Mauna Lani with a UHF transmitter on its back, a pilot project to study the pelagic ecology of sea turtles in deep ocean waters.

The transmitter, air-activated by the turtle surfacing, sent signals to orbiting National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) satellites. The data was analyzed then relayed to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) researcher George Balazs at the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center in Honolulu.

Balazs and Mauna Lani watched sequential progress maps with wonder as the satellite honu's long journey unfolded. The honu returned to Big Island waters in November, as shown on the map at left. Honu #22270 spent much of the winter months cruising pelagic waters south of the Big Island. Imagine the excitement when it began heading toward Mauna Lani in early February.

Valentine's Day 2003 brought the first documented sighting of #22270 off Honokohau Harbor. About a week later it was spotted off Paniau (adjacent to Mauna Lani) where it was observed.

The honu appeared to have taken up residence in coastal waters off Mauna Lani. Since the transmitter batteries were near exhaustion, the transmitter was removed and the turtle is probably still in the vicinity.

The significance of this turtle's story, according to Balazs, is the fact "it made a long large circle of travel, and came back to near the place it was raised and released! Coincidence? Could be, but very doubtful," he said.

The Mauna Lani Honu Program is a cooperative educational and awareness program with Sea Life Park Hawaii (SLPH), conducted with guidance from NMFS turtle researcher George Balazs and with the assistance of students from Hawaii Preparatory Academy-NMFS Sea Turtle Research Program.

This year's satellite honu will carry improved transmitters designed for use on smaller turtles. See photo on front page.

... Honu

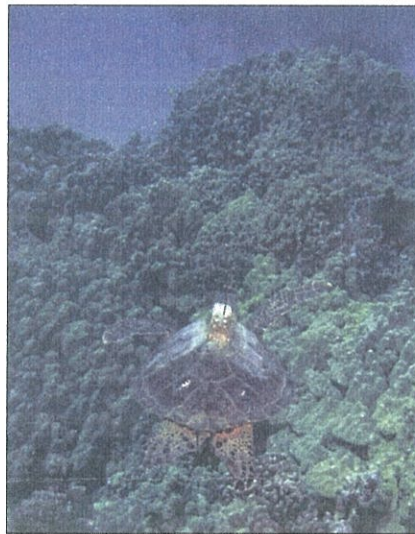
Continued from Page 1

After a recent pre-release check conducted by Balazs and veterinarian Dr. Bob Morris, it was determined that of the nine turtles to be released on Turtle Independence Day, three or four will carry transmitters. Most of this year's honu, some with "satellite tags," will be released from shore.

The smallest "satellite honu" will be a 25-cm, nine-month old juvenile currently residing in the atrium pond. It will be released in pelagic waters offshore in the afternoon. A larger satellite-carrying juvenile may also be released in pelagic waters.

The public is invited to Turtle Independence Day, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Games and educational displays by Sea Life Park Hawaii, National Marine Fisheries Service and Hawaii Preparatory Academy Sea Turtle Research Program. George Balazs will answer questions about honu and the tracking program. The celebration culminates with the honu release.

More than 100 honu have been released in the Mauna Lani Honu Program's 14 years. Honu is Hawaiian for *Chelonia mydas*, the Hawaiian green turtle.



Above, #22270 glides through Paniau coastal waters carrying its transmitter. Photo: Steve Borer
 Below, a juvenile in the atrium ponds - 2003's littlest satellite honu? Photo: Leilani Hino

