

# AUBURN UNIVERSITY



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School of Agriculture and  
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George H. Balazs  
Fishery Biologist  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southwest Fisheries Center  
Honolulu Laboratory  
P.O. Box 3830  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96812

Dear Mr. Balazs:

I received your letter recently concerning the Aleipata hawksbill turtle hatchery. I won't be able to supply you a copy of the efficacy report. My only copy was lost in shipping when I left Samoa.

I worked at the hatchery from April to September, 1977. As Viliamu probably told you, Nu'ulua is the main nesting island. I spent a couple of nights there in April. The peak egg laying season falls between December and April, however no turtles were observed.

During my three years in Samoa, I saw many adult turtles while diving and for sale in the new market. I believe that the youngest turtle I saw had a carapace length of about 30 cm. The majority were generally a minimum of 45 cm in length. I never saw any turtles with notched shells.

From my observations I would estimate that approximately 200 turtles were sold per year in the new market. I really can't estimate how many are consumed at the village level. I don't think the marketing of turtle scutes is of sizable proportions in Western Samoa. At least I wasn't aware of anyone doing it in a big way.

Essentially the efficacy report was based on the egg find records since the hatchery began operations in the early

seventies. I felt then that the project was not having any significant impact on the turtle population. I thought that it might be better to protect the nesting beaches from predation (human and otherwise), and to discontinue the hatching and rearing phases.

If you have any more questions please feel free to drop me a line.

Tofa suifua.

Sincerely yours,

*Bob Davidson*

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