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Turtle Independence Day at the Mauna Lani Bay

Posted on July 5, 2010. Tags: [green sea turtle](#) [honu](#) [mauna lani bay hotel and bunglaows](#)



Kumu Larry Ursua lowers a turtle into the ocean in what likely will be its last photo opportunity. (Hawaii 24/7 photo by Karin Stanton)

Karin Stanton | Hawaii 24/7 Contributing Editor

Seven young green sea turtles swam to freedom Sunday from the beach fronting the Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows.

The 21st annual Turtle Independence Day celebrated releasing the honu, which were born at Sea Life Park Hawaii on Oahu and raised for two years at the saltwater ponds on the resort's property.

The celebration drew an estimated 700 people, who watched as the procession moved the ponds to the beach and the turtles were honored with a traditional Hawaiian ceremony.



A young honu is ferried to the water by keiki volunteers. (Hawaii 24/7 photo by Karin Stanton)

Kumu Larry Ursua and his Halua Kupaaaina opened the festivities, followed by remarks from Sen. Daniel Akaka and George Balazs, leader of NOAA's Marine Turtle Research Program.

Then, invited guests ushered the honu to the water's edge and they were released into the wild.

Most honu were more than happy to be released into the crystal clear blue ocean, however a couple appeared to prefer the luxurious confines of the Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and had to be coaxed into independence.



Getting ready to go. (Hawaii 24/7 photo courtesy of Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows)

Over the years, Mauna Lani has released 206 honu and remains committed to preserving Hawaii's resources, environment and culture.

This year, the lightest honu was around 17 pounds and the heaviest around 24 pounds. Adults grow to measure more than three feet in length and can weigh up to 450 pounds, although their life span is not yet known.

The green sea turtle is a threatened species and is protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.



One last wave good-bye. (Hawaii 24/7 Photo courtesy of the Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows)

This year's invited releasers included Parker School headmaster Carl Sturges, author Sophie Uliano and her daughter Lola, and long-time Mauna Lani guests.

The names of the honu were:

- * Hoaliona, or omen
- * Kahiwhiwa, or precious, beloved, favorite
- * Moeuhane, or dream
- * Opio, or youth
- * Panana, or compass, pilot
- * Malae, or clear, calm, serene
- * Kulewa, or moving slowing through space (as clouds)

— Find out more:

Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows: www.maunalani.com

Sea Life Park Hawaii: www.sealifeparkhawaii.com



Halau Kupaaina. (Hawaii 24/7 photo courtesy of Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows)

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Honu raised at Sea Life Park on Oahu were brought to the Big Island and released at Mauna Lani Bay in the annual Turtle Independence Day event July 5, 2011

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Guest says:

July 11, 2010 at 3:08 pm

Beautiful !!! The Honu are so blessed to have ppl who do so much! I Miss Home!!! :(