

WAIKIKI AQUARIUM

Education Department

2777 Kalakaua Avenue
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

SEA TURTLES

Adapted from G.H. Balazs reprint & others

None
looks like
real -

Hawaiian sea turtles as those in many other areas of the world are becoming fewer in number. For centuries these unique saltwater reptiles have been a valuable source of protein in the diets of native peoples. Unfortunately, an ever increasing commercial demand in the more affluent countries has acted to deplete and even destroy large colonies of these animals. Valuable products which can be obtained from sea turtles include food, leather, oil and shell. The high prices paid for these exotic items have provided a strong incentive for fishermen to relentlessly exploit the world's remaining stocks.

Of the eight species of sea turtles which are known to exist today, three breed in Hawaii. Included are the honu or green turtle, the ^{le} or hawksbill and the leatherback. Very seldom are the ridley and loggerhead seen here. Both the hawksbill and leatherback are officially listed as "endangered". These two animals are very seldom sighted in our island waters; in fact, so few now remain throughout the world that they are in immediate danger of extinction. The honu or green turtle is the only turtle which still occurs in any numbers in Hawaii. This animal is officially listed as "depleted", meaning that it is declining at a rate which gives cause for serious concern. Although there is a law forbidding the sale of green turtles, a fisherman can still catch honu for his family and friends.

Besides overfishing, the green turtle is also in trouble due to the loss of sand beaches suitable for nesting. Sites in the major inhabited islands where egg laying formerly took place are no longer utilized. The only remaining breeding and nesting site left in the island chain is French Frigate Shoals, a reef area consisting of several small sand islets, 480 miles northwest of Honolulu. When the honu reaches maturity (approximately 200 pounds or more), migration to French Frigate Shoals takes place, usually during the months of May and June. In August when the egg laying season is over the animals return to the major islands where they spend the greater part of their life feeding on limu (algae) in shallow coastal waters. Each female makes the journey only once every two to four years. It is unknown how the animals find their way across the many miles of open ocean. Recent studies by marine biologists at French Frigate Shoals have shown that relatively few nesting animals exist even at this site.

There are three kinds of sea turtles in this aquarium. The hawksbill has a sharp pointed beak and the plates on the hind part of its shell are jagged. The loggerhead has a thick neck and a shell consisting of plates which are not easily told apart. The rest of the turtles are green sea turtles which are so named because their meat is green in color. *Male turtles have long tails and females short ones.*

Sea turtles differ from freshwater terrapins and turtles because they have small claws and their front legs are flipper-like. They are clumsy on land and can stay underwater longer than their freshwater cousins (from 5 minutes to several hours).

George

I have (I think) brought the little article that you wrote for the Aquarium up to date. 1) May I have your permission to include it in our Docent (volunteer) Handbook? 2) Can you check on the accuracy of the assorted tidbits that I added?

Thanks muchly,

Debbie Chave

Edna Dr.

Waikiki Aquarium

So Excellent a Fish

a Natural History of Sea Turtles by Archie Carr

QL666

C5C36

Natural History Press

Garden City, N.Y.

Xerox front and rear - 1967

5 Genera

Floggerheads (Caretta)

Ridleys (Lepidochelys)

Hawksbills (Eretmochelys)

Green (Chelonia)

Dermochelys (Leatherbacks)

78-79 Hirth and Carr - observations of Green nests

Chelonia - 3 easy to identify -

8 total

all
in
Pacific

Chelonia mydas - very wide range - light

Chelonia agassizii - black turtle - central & eastern Pacific

Chelonia depressa - Northern Australia

Attenuata only has mydas

Chelonia japonica - old name - no species basis

most
migration

Dermochelys - 4 known nesting

(biggest)

1) Perenggan on east coast of Malaya
2) Tongaland coast of Zululand in Africa
3) Coast of Surinam
4) mouth of Matina

River in Costa Rica

Caretta - most northerly breeding territory - coast of Carolina & Virginia
2 feeble distinct races

Indo-Pacific Caretta caretta

W. Atlantic Caretta c. caretta

Ridley - Leptochelys

Atlantic L. kempi
Pacific L. olivacea

L. crotchi
Hawksbill

Eretmochelys imbricata

will have to be developed.
once that is worked out
it will be a double
loss: people will
be fed and species
will be saved

page 233 - yolk for 10 days
still has swim frenzy

235-6 ~~Chel~~ Thalassia

up to 8 lbs in 2 years, on a diet of eurch
no data on growth rate at different temps

< 70 F hatching activity down

72-80 optimum

" Little turtles kept in a pen
that encloses shoreline tend
to crawl foolishly ashore
and dry up there"

hurricane