

MARINE TURTLE RESEARCH

Basic research on captive green sea turtles at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology has been directed at determining the nutritional requirements of the hatchling and juvenile, as well as examining the digestibility of select formulated diets. Although we have collected considerable information over the past 18 months, these studies will soon be terminated with most of the animals being tagged and returned to their natural environment.

Farming has been suggested as a means of meeting the commercial demand for turtle products while at the same time helping to conserve the dwindling natural populations. Superficially, the immediate implementation of commercial turtle farming seems logical, however, many biological and economic problems need to be solved before such plans will do anything but further endanger the animal's already precarious position. Major problem areas include control over the life cycle, control over disease (including salmonella), developing diets that will take advantage of the animal's herbivorous feeding habits, and developing realistic marketing plans that will not place further fishing pressures on natural populations. The information that we have gathered will be of benefit to future farming endeavors by helping to establish such enterprises on a well founded basis.-GEORGE H. BALAZS