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today

SECTION D
MONDAY 11/21/11

With a little help from their friends

Sea Life Park gives young sea turtles an assist entering the ocean for the first time

By Nina Wu
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Upon hitting the Makapuu shoreline on a warm fall evening, dozens of Hawaiian baby green sea turtles instinctively scramble as fast as their little flippers will take them toward the ocean.

Once they hit the saltwater, their flippers become like wings, taking them on a flight through the ocean — and their first taste of freedom.

Every year, sea turtle hatchlings go through this nighttime ritual.

What makes this latest batch of turtles different from others is that they were bred in an artificial lagoon right across the street at Sea Life Park.

The park is home to 15 Hawaiian green sea turtles — 10 female and five male — ages 15 to 72. It claims to be the only marine park in the country actively breeding baby sea turtles in captivity and releasing them on a regular basis.

THE MOST recent release took place in late October, with 55 hatchlings, and will likely be the last of the year.

That brings the tally to about 474 hatchlings released this year, according to Sea Life Park curator Jeff Pawloski.

The sea turtle breeding program happened by chance, he said. The turtle lagoon at the park was built in 1964, with a small, shallow beach that wasn't anticipated to be acceptable for egg laying. But a few years later, the park discovered baby turtles emerging from their shells on the sand.

It was completely unexpected, according to Pawloski.

With advice from turtle expert George Balazs, the marine animals

Please see **TURTLES, D3**



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GREEN SEA TURTLE FUN FACTS

- >> The marine reptiles have a lifespan of 60-70 years.
- >> They are sexually mature at 25-35 years of age and may be reproductive for more than 20 years (the 70-year-olds at Sea Life Park are still going).
- >> A typical adult weighs between 200 to 500 pounds and has a carapace length of 40 inches.
- >> More than 90 percent of the Hawaiian population of green turtles nests at French Frigate Shoals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.
- >> Some Hawaiian families consider green turtles ("honi" in Hawaiian) an aumakua, not to be eaten or harmed.
- >> If you see a stranded or entangled sea turtle, do not touch it; call the turtle stranding hotline at 983-5730.

Source: NOAA Marine Fisheries Service



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Curator Jeff Pawloski of Sea Life Park holds a juvenile green sea turtle. At left, grown turtles swim in the lagoon at Sea Life Park, which is also their breeding grounds. Right, a juvenile turtle is set free in the ocean. In the background photo, more turtles are released.



TODAY

MONDAY 11/21/11 >> HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER >> U3

B.J. Penn plans to train and teach in his UFC Gym

By Steven Mark
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The UFC Gym, a new fitness center that mixed martial artist champion B.J. Penn is opening in the spring, promises to be an all-encompassing training center for aspiring MMA fighters, fitness-conscious families and people seeking self-defense skills.

"We've got everything from different kinds of

equipment that you won't see at any other gym, and you've got the self-defense (training)," Penn said at a preview for the gym last week. "Parents can come to work out, their children can take self-defense. They got a kid area to take care of them. They really thought about all the stuff that the other gyms don't have and they put it in this gym."

Penn, 32, said he will be teaching some courses him-

self on a casual basis. "I guess sometimes we can announce it, but I'm always here on Oahu so there's no reason for me not to come by to my gym.... (Coaching) is going to be the next transition through my career. I never know (if) I could fight again, but one thing I know for sure is I'll probably be teaching the rest of my life."

Penn also said he plans to be heavily involved in recruiting trainers for the gym, which is expected to employ a staff of about 100. Asked whether any of the martial arts trainers would have to take him on in the octagon to get a job, he grinned: "We have some pretty good ideas about the people we want to bring in here."

Penn is a signature partner with UFC Gym, a company that runs four other gyms, all in California. The company is affiliated with the Ultimate Fighting Championship mixed martial arts competitions, but says the initials stand for Ultimate Fitness Center when referring to its fitness centers.

UFC Gyms are intended to provide a unique combination of familiar 24-hour gym programs and the "functional" training that mixed martial artists employ, said Adam Sedlack, senior vice president of UFC Gyms. "Functional" is defined as



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B.J. Penn signed an autograph for a fan Wednesday at the UFC Gym B.J. Penn showroom. Penn was promoting a 37,000-square-foot workout facility scheduled to open in April at the former Pipeline Cafe site.

using every muscle in your body," he said. The gym, to be located in the former Pipeline Cafe site on Pohukaina Street, will have 37,000 square feet of space dedicated to a variety of fitness technologies, from the latest in exercise machines to an octagon for mixed martial arts sparring. An onsite cafe, the Arm Bar, will serve up food based on nutritional counseling provided at the gym, Sedlack said. Memberships, being offered at discount prices, will

be on a month-to-month basis, requiring the gym to keep clients interested and motivated, he said. Penn, who last fought Oct. 29 in a loss to Nick Diaz, looked trim as he greeted well-wishers and new gym members. He said he took two weeks off after the loss and has started jogging again. He left open the possibility he might return to the ring. "When it comes to fighting, that's the only thing that can be on your mind," said Penn, whose storied career

includes two UFC titles, a Brazilian jiu-jitsu championship and a reputation for taking on the toughest fighters regardless of weight differential. "I'll ever feel like that's the only thing on my mind, that nothing else matters, then I'll be back," he said. "I'll ever step back into the ring again, you'll definitely see me training at this UFC Gym." The UFC Gym showroom is at 660 Ala Moana Blvd. Visit ufcgym.com for information.

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TURTLES: 12,000 released over 35 years

Continued from D1

were released into the ocean at the small beach across from the park. Since then, anywhere between 200 to 800 baby hatchlings have been released annually. Every hatchling is tagged with a microchip that allows scientists to track its development and journey. "Every turtle here has its own story to tell," Pawloski said.

BREEDING season starts in April and runs until September — providing a risqué show for park visitors. Female turtles nest every other year, laying several clutches with up to 100 eggs at a time. The eggs incubate for about 60 days. Pawloski said the park isn't so much focused on breeding turtles as on educating the public about the creatures and the threats they face from entanglement in fishing lines, getting hit by boats and ingesting plastic debris in the ocean. In addition, the turtles face habitat loss and natural predators, such as sharks.

Turtles in the wild also suffer from fibropapillomatosis, which results in tumor growth in the flippers, head and neck areas. The babies bred at Sea Life Park have been free from the tumor-causing virus. The green sea turtle population underwent a steep decline in the 1970s due to the direct harvest of turtles and eggs by humans. In 1978, the turtles were listed as "threatened" and received protection under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Today, scientists say their population is actually on the rise in Hawaii. "Our program is about raising awareness and not repopulating the wild," Pawloski said. "We're just a drop in the bucket." Balazs estimates that over a 35-year period, the park has released more than 12,000 baby sea turtles into Hawaii's waters. A few are kept at the park until they grow into juveniles of between 2 to 5 years old. Sea Life Park also has an educational loan program that sends baby turtles to the Maui Ocean Center and Mauna Lani Resort for display until they are old enough to be released. Sea Life Park consults with Balazs, who leads the marine turtle research program at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's Marine Fisheries Service, on the care and release of the baby turtles.

USUALLY, THEY are measured for length and weight, tagged with microchips, and within 24 to 48 hours of hatching released at water's edge as the sun is about to set, mimicking their natural cycle as much as possible. Balazs says the park plays a major role in the conservation of Hawaiian green sea turtles, primarily through its education efforts, but its release of hatchlings into the ocean helps, too. Even more rewarding for the park, though, is preliminary evidence the hatchlings may be returning to beaches in the main Hawaiian isles as grown sea turtles to nest.

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Keiki ornament contest kicks off

Kids, help us trim our pages with the holiday spirit. It's time for our annual Keiki Kalikimaka drawing contest. Design an ornament and you'll have a chance at our prizes of \$100, \$75 and \$25 cash. We'll select a daily finalist, to be printed on Page 1 of the features section, beginning Friday. On Christmas Eve we'll run all 29 finalists and announce the randomly chosen winners.

The contest is open to kids up to age 12. All entries must be between 5 and 8 inches wide. No 3-D entries (don't glue on any objects). We must receive your drawing in the mail — no faxes or emails. Ornaments cannot be returned. Attach the entry form below. The last day to enter is Dec. 9.

KEIKI KALIKIMAKA
Child's name: _____