



### Untangling Our Marine Resources at Kiholo Bay

■ Picturesque Kiholo Bay in North Kona on the Big Island has been known for decades as a special place favored by Hawaiian sea turtles. Young turtles are attracted to this site to feed on *limu* and to sleep underwater along the sheltered shoreline.

Kiholo is also recognized as an important nursery grounds for fish. Unfortunately, the abundance of fish appears to be much less now than it was 21 years ago when I first started visiting and snorkeling at Kiholo. It is my belief that the reason for this decline is the increased use of gill nets, which commonly block off portions of the bay when set from point to point. Too many fish, especially little fish, have been gilled and killed too often over the years.

Gill nets and sea turtles don't mix at Kiholo Bay. The entanglement, forced submergence and drowning of turtles in gill nets at Kiholo is now a regular occurrence. Some of the young turtles recently found dead at Kiholo appear to have been intentionally killed. Over the past three months, four turtles are known to have died by human hands at Kiholo. Three of them were butchered, and their remains were left on shore or discarded into shallow water.

Hawai'i's fishermen can be of assistance to our paid professional law enforcement officials who are attempting to apprehend violators and prevent crimes like the ones happening at Kiholo. If you see suspicious activity, or have information about the killing of turtles at Kiholo Bay or elsewhere in Hawai'i, please call federal agents in Honolulu at **541-2727**, or state DOCARE officers at **323-3141** (in Kona); **933-4291** (in Hilo); **243-5414** (on Maui); **241-3521** (on Kaua'i); **567-6618** (on Moloka'i); **565-6688** (on Lana'i); or dial 0 from any neighbor island and ask the operator for "Enterprise 5469."

The long-term conservation of fish, turtles and other marine resources at small but important sites like Kiholo Bay will ultimately depend in part upon the exclusion or severe limitation of gill nets. Designating Kiholo as a Fishery Management Area would be a reasonable first step to the process. Hopefully some far-sighted individuals and/or organizations on the Big Island will pursue this worthy goal.

... George Balazs

### READER'S PAGE

