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## OCEAN WATCH

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### Coming back to Oahu always a treat

I'M home from Midway now, and even though I enjoyed every day of my month there, it's good to be back on Oahu.

I missed our bustling city, towering mountains and miles of beaches. And I can still enjoy Hawaii's native animals. I just have to work a little harder to see them.

One of my favorite wildlife viewing spots is Kaena Point, a 5-mile round-trip hike where, right now, 38 Laysan albatross couples are nesting. Juveniles are also there, singing and dancing in their search for mates.

The DLNR is planning to enclose the Kaena Point Nature Reserve with a pest-proof fence to keep out cats, mongooses, dogs, rats and even mice. New Zealanders invented this special fine-mesh fence, which is effective at keeping ground-nesting birds safe. The fence is less expensive and more humane than continually trapping and killing predators.

Monk seals too like to rest at Kaena Point as well as other beaches around the island.

It's easy when admiring seals to forget to look up. During whale season — now — humpbacks are out there breaching up a storm.

When I need a turtle fix, I head for a North Shore beach called Laniakea. There, 10 or more green sea turtles routinely scoot themselves onto the sand and bask in the sun.

Volunteers called turtle guardians take turns there to answer questions and see that the turtles get their rest. Still, some Hawaii residents worry about the turtles' welfare be-

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cause busloads of visitors are now going to this beach to see this wildlife wonder.

I asked turtle specialist George Balazs what he thought about that. "These are wild animals," he said. "If the turtles don't like something that's happening at this beach, they won't keep coming here. Believe me," he added, laughing, "turtles only do what they want to do."

That was years ago, and the turtles still arrive almost daily to bask at Laniakea.

Another great place to see turtles, as well as fish and invertebrates, is Hanauma Bay. Too many residents shun this exceptional marine park because they believe it's just for visitors. Not so. Hanauma Bay remains the best and most beautiful place on the island to go snorkeling.

The Waikiki Aquarium is another place we send our guests but don't go ourselves. This excellent facility, however, can be a serene break in a hectic day. I've promised myself to drop in more often.

In Kapiolani Park and a few other areas where trees are tall, fairy terns (officially known as white terns) raise chicks. Since these terns lay their eggs on bare branches, the chicks and parents are easy to watch.

For reasons unknown, Oahu is the only main Hawaiian island to host these charming seabirds. Lucky us.

During my daily walks, frigate birds soar over my head, red-footed boobies skim the waves and shorebirds peck in the sand. A golden plover lives in my yard.

I love to travel, but the fact that I live on the best island in the world makes me yearn to return. Home bases don't get better than Oahu.

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