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NCLA Ocean Cruising with Hawaiian Sea Turtles Aboard the "Pride of America" – October 2008

Sea turtles are threatened and endangered species worldwide. Fortunately in Hawaii the native green sea turtle, known as "*honu*" in the Hawaiian language, has experienced an encouraging increase in numbers during recent years. Hawaii's conservation and research programs for sea turtles have been highly successful. Studies have resulted in an improved understanding of how sea turtles live their lives and what steps are needed to effectively protect them. However, one of the remaining unsolved mysteries is where and how small turtles live in the open ocean. From tiny newborn hatchlings to about 4-6 years of age, green sea turtles in the wild live on the high seas far from land. When older and larger they move to shallow water close to shore. To solve this puzzle a unique project is being conducted by NOAA and the Hawaii Preparatory Academy in partnership with NCL America and Sea Life Park Hawaii. Captive-bred 2-3 year old green sea turtles are being released at sea carrying miniature radio transmitters. Signals sent to orbiting NOAA satellites within the ARGOS system will reveal the turtles' movements for 4-6 months until the transmitters' batteries run out. Information on oceanographic features will be combined with trackings of the turtles to learn about their life away from land. The six turtles for this study are presently aboard the Pride of America. They will be released Friday afternoon, October 24th, off the north shore of Kauai. Prior to release turtles will be available daily for passenger viewing in a special salt water pool. Please stop by to see the turtles and wish them Aloha. Satellite tracking maps, including the results of past research, can be viewed at www.hpa.edu/turtle.html courtesy of the Hawaii Preparatory Academy.