

# Laniakea, Oahu: Paradise for Turtle Watchers

also known as  
**Turtle Beach**  
and  
**Honulani**

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## DISCLAIMER

*The information presented here is **not** current. It is retained here for archival purposes. The Show Turtles Aloha project is no longer operating at Laniakea. Please do not use any contact information from this page in connection with Show Turtles Aloha.*

*The basking honu at Laniakea have attracted so many admirers that traffic in that area is now often congested. Plan your trip accordingly. Since basking is becoming common throughout the main Islands, consider finding an alternate place to see them.*

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Laniakea, Oahu, Hawaii, is without question the best place in the world to see marine turtles up close. Hawaiian green turtles crawl ashore almost daily to bask amid crowds of tourists and surfers, providing a unique turtle experience and unmatched photo opportunities.



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Getting there  
(click on the map for a larger version)

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[54K JPEG](#)  
[Map courtesy of Google Maps](#)

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In most parts of the world, sea turtles are shy, elusive creatures. This is partly because we humans have a long history of hunting them.

In Hawaii, however, this has been changing for several years now. Hawaiian green turtles have become more and more accustomed to seeing humans who won't harm them. This has led to exciting underwater viewing, as we have documented all over *Turtle Trax*, but these experiences are limited to SCUBA divers and snorkelers.

Not everyone can engage in these activities, yet anyone visiting Oahu can see a honu! That's because at various places around the Islands, the honu have been coming ashore to bask. Most of their basking beaches have few if any people around, but Lanikea is an exception.

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A basking honu is perfectly happy to be the subject of photographs. To ensure that the turtles are not bothered, volunteers at Lanikea use red rope to mark off a "no-go" zone, and place signs to keep visitors informed. The turtle in the foreground doesn't get a red rope because even though it's a pretty good sand sculpture, it didn't fool the volunteers.

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[63K JPEG](#)

[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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Laniakea has always been pretty busy with crowds of tourists and surfers. The honu don't care, they crawl up onto the beach anyway. Tours busses stop and disgorge literally hundreds of tourists a day, all eager to see the turtles, snap pictures, and record video of their amazing experience. While this has resulted in thousands of thrilled turtle lovers, it is not without its down side.

Most people respect the turtles and admire them from a distance. Some, however, cannot resist getting too close and even touching the honu. People have even been know to sit on the turtles!

The increasing interaction between the honu and humans has prompted George Balazs, Leader of Marine Turtle Research for the NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, Protected Species Division, to create a campaign that he's called:

### **Show Turtles Aloha**

Objective of the Show Turtles Aloha campaign: "To enhance public appreciation and conservation of the recovering Hawaiian green turtle (honu) population through respectful wildlife viewing that promotes the Spirit of Aloha to both sea turtles and people."





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Banners in both English and Japanese inform everyone visiting Laniakea Beach about the "Show Turtles Aloha" campaign.

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[68K JPEG](#)  
[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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This campaign educates people about the basking honu and how to behave around them. The idea is to maximize the turtle watcher's experience while minimizing the effects on the turtles. Some of the campaign literature is available here in PDF format. (You'll need the free [Adobe Reader](#) to view and print these documents.)

- [Hawaii Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Viewing Guidelines](#)
- [Feeding Causes Aggression](#)
- [Did You Know...? \(Facts about the Hawaiian green turtle\)](#)
- [Did You Know...? \(Japanese\)](#) (Facts about the Hawaiian green turtle in Japanese)
- [Honu & Coral Reef brochure](#)

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Turtle fans demonstrate the perfect way to "Show Turtles Aloha" by admiring from a distance.

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[48K JPEG](#)  
[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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## Turtle Guardians

The "Show Turtles Aloha" campaign already has shown great results, but it needs your help. They're looking for volunteers to spend time at Laniakea handing out literature, educating the visitors, and making the Honu experience a positive one for people and turtles alike. Susan Scott, the noted marine science writer, described the program and her intention to volunteer in her [Honolulu Star-Bulletin column of December 2, 2005](#):

"A few North Shore residents already volunteer in the "Show Turtles Aloha" program, but they need more helpers. I will soon be one of them. Please join me.

"I know. I'm busy, too, and it's a long drive to the North Shore. But our dear, gentle honu have learned to trust people now, and it's up to Hawaii residents to safeguard that trust."

If you live on Oahu, please consider giving some of your time to help the honu at Laniakea. If you're planning to visit Oahu, you can still volunteer to spend a day at Laniakea, or as many days as you'd like to spend with the turtles. For detailed information, be sure to read [the campaign description](#).

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## Related Links

- [Conservation at work on North Shore](#) (Ocean Watch column by Susan Scott, December 9, 2005 Honolulu Star-Bulletin)
- [Turtle trouble](#) (Story, August 14, 2005 Honolulu Star-Bulletin)
- [Police should bring order to beach popular with turtles](#) (Editorial, August 16 Honolulu Star-Bulletin)
- [Comeback](#) (Story, January 5, 2004 Honolulu Star-Bulletin)
- [Hotel's turtles stir memories of isle friends](#) (Ocean Watch column by Susan Scott, May 5, 2006 Honolulu Star-Bulletin)

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## A Laniakea Photo Gallery

Click on any image for a larger version. All images courtesy of George H. Balazs and the "Show Turtles Aloha" campaign.

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Basking turtle showing the red rope

[45K JPEG](#)

[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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Photographer gets excellent honu photo



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opportunity

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[53K JPEG](#)  
[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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Two baskers sharing the red rope

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[49K JPEG](#)  
[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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Two young honu fans pose with one of the "Show Turtles Aloha" signs

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[49K JPEG](#)  
[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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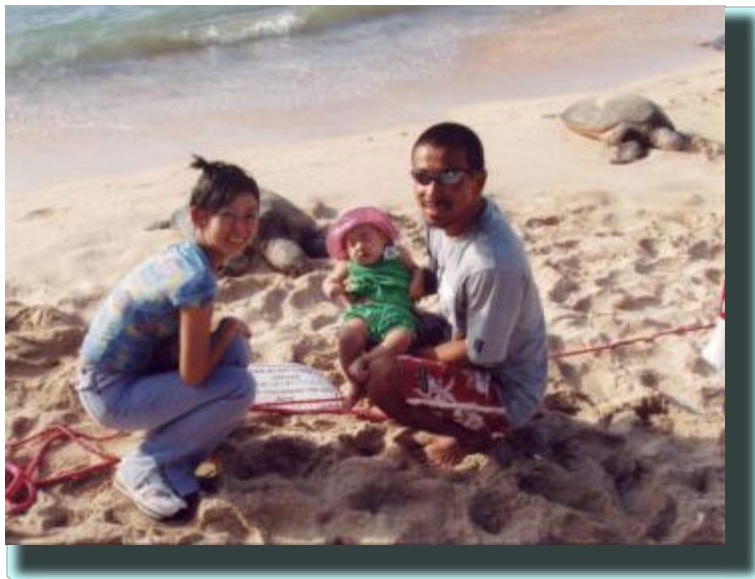
A family posing with two baskers

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[53K JPEG](#)

[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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Basking honu with informative "Show Turtles Aloha" sign in the foreground

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[51K JPEG](#)

[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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Please take one: Show Turtles Aloha information brochures

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[47K JPEG](#)

[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

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The Laniakea Show Turtles Aloha campaign visitor's log

[45K JPEG](#)

[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

Some comments from the visitor's log

[46K JPEG](#)

[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

DATE	YOUR COMMENTS	NAME & MAILING ADDRESS	YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
Oct 11 2005	When you watch the turtles swimming in water from the 11th floor the seem huge up close they are enormous thank you for protecting them so average could enjoy them	New York visitors	Edan@men.e.com@nyc.ny.net
Oct 11 2005	Amazing! They are so cute in the water. They are bigger than we imagined.	Phinity Art	stantal@geocities.com
Oct 11 2005	They are very beautiful. It was very nice to see them. Hope continue to take care of them.	Wolbar, Al	al@al.com

DATE	YOUR COMMENTS	NAME & MAILING ADDRESS	YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
10/14/05	Love this little cove! This is the 2nd time I've stopped here to see the turtles. You're doing good, important work.	Chuck Barney 312 Killingsworth Vacaville, Ca 95687	Cbarney@cc-times.com
10/14	Thank you for taking care of this beach and the turtles.	Denise Burns 90 Backsight Luling, TX 75845	Kulfolts@comcast.net
10/14	THANKS FOR MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE!! KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK... WE LOVE TURTLES...	JOHN DeSANTIS LYNN McELLES EDMONTON, NEW JERSEY	SOLEMAN1968@YAHOO.COM

More comments from the visitor's log

[57K JPEG](#)

[Photo courtesy George H. Balazs](#)

# The MTRP PIFSC Honulani Visitor's Logbook at Laniakea Beach on Oahu's North Shore

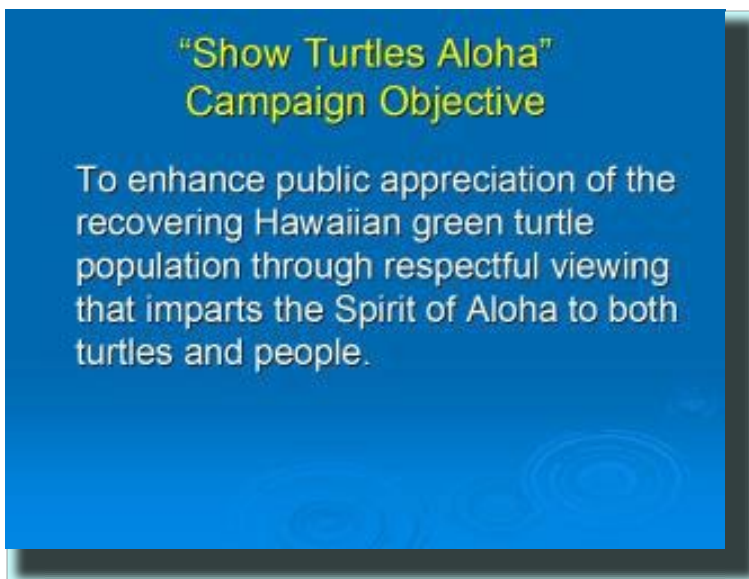
## 359 Days of the "Show Turtles Aloha" Campaign

### 7 July 2005 - 30 June 2006

These documents are PDF files.

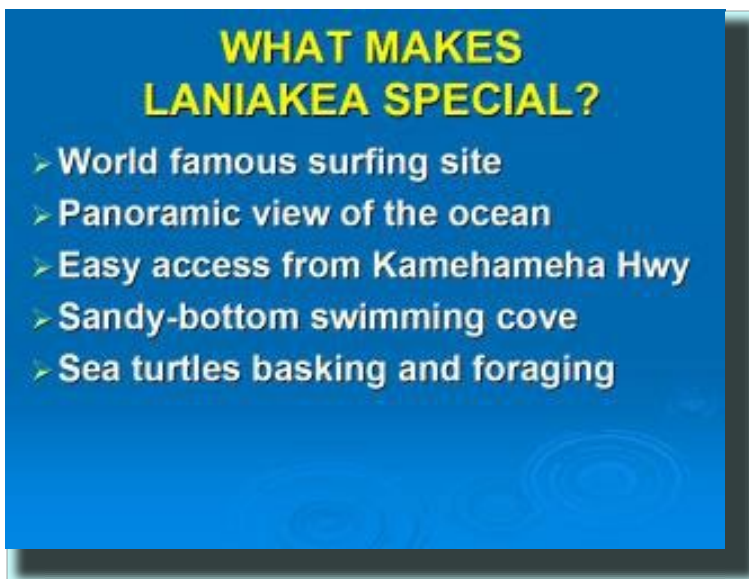
- [1151 Primarily Favorable, Non-Negative, and/or Neutral Comments](#)
  - [48 Primarily Negative Comments](#)
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### Slides from a Presentation by George Balazs Explaining the *Show Turtles Aloha* Campaign and Correcting Common Misunderstandings



**"Show Turtles Aloha"  
Campaign Objective**

To enhance public appreciation of the recovering Hawaiian green turtle population through respectful viewing that imparts the Spirit of Aloha to both turtles and people.



**WHAT MAKES  
LANIAKEA SPECIAL?**

- World famous surfing site
- Panoramic view of the ocean
- Easy access from Kamehameha Hwy
- Sandy-bottom swimming cove
- Sea turtles basking and foraging



## THE LANIAKEA SEA TURTLE APPEAL

### Love - Curiosity - Culture

- See and take pictures of turtles in the wild
- Symbol of long life and good luck
- 'Aumākua protective family spirit for some Hawaiian families
- Food as sustenance and source of cultural identity for some Hawaiians

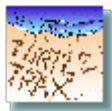
A showcase for sea turtle restoration  
unlike any other worldwide

## COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- People standing on the beach or close to the water prevent turtles from coming out to bask
- People sometimes build sand castles on the backs of turtles
- A basking turtle has been disturbed if it opens its eyes and raises its head to breathe
- Turtles are bothered by the numerous people at Laniakea



["Show Turtles Aloha" campaign description](#)



[Turtle Trax home page](#)

Last modified 13/09/12

Send comments or corrections to [webmaster@turtles.org](mailto:webmaster@turtles.org)