

# NATURE'S NEWSFLASH 2014



Aloha! Nature's Newsflash is a semi-annual publication that features stories and insights of conservation activities that help preserve and protect Moloka'i's native natural resources. If you would like to contribute information to our publication, please send it to The Nature Conservancy, P. O. Box 220, Kualapuu, Hawaii 96757.

Let's all make a difference by "Thinking globally, Acting locally"!

Funding for Nature's Newsflash is provided in part by the State of Hawai'i Natural Area Partnership Program.

November Issue

## The Majestic Honu

By: The Nature Conservancy Molokai Staff

Mo'omomi Preserve is a very rare and special place that native species like the green sea turtles or *honu* call home. During the months of April through November, *honu* like this old mother use the beaches of Kalani and Kawa'aloa to nest, laying their eggs deep in pits, then covering them over with sand to incubate. A couple of months later, the buried eggs will hatch and the young *honu* emerge together from the sand pit and head for the sea. A single large female *honu* such as this one can lay up to 400 eggs in a year.

We would always see this majestic mama *honu*, exactly as she's pictured here, basking peacefully on Kalani beach in Mo'omomi Preserve. We do not see her anymore.

In May 2014, we received a report of a slaughtered turtle at Kalani Beach in the Mo'omomi Preserve. Staff confirmed the report and an investigation was initiated with the State's Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement (DOCARE). The investigation revealed that indeed a large female green sea turtle was intentionally killed. Based on the evidence at the site, the large mother turtle was slaughtered on a "table" the perpetrators had fashioned from two car tires that had washed up on the beach. She had been full of eggs, which she most likely would have laid within the next few days. This mother turtle's eggs, instead of finding safety in those sands, were found strewn across the surface of the beach along with blood, fat and portions of her womb. The investigation is still pending and no arrests have been made.

Green sea turtles are a protected species under the **Endangered Species Act (ESA)**. The **ESA** is a federal law passed in 1973 to protect endangered and threatened species from becoming extinct (dying out). Therefore, it is a federal crime to take, possess, sell, import, export or even transport any green sea turtle, including their eggs.

We believe that the slaughtered *honu* is the very same mama that we would see at Kalani beach. Our staff and dedicated community volunteers are deeply saddened over the loss because we knew her as a mother for the area, yet she was treated without respect and her future generations were cut short.

As a result of the turtle slaughter and ongoing trespassing and vandalism, we have had to suspend our vehicular Fishing Pass Key System. Vehicular trespassers have continued to cut fences and damage gates, so we are pursuing prosecution of vehicular trespassing in the interest of preventing further property damage and protecting the native resources. To our vehicle pass key users, especially to those who honor our system rules, we hope to be able to accommodate you again, but we are not sure when. The coastal foot trail is always open to access Mo'omomi Preserve, but please enter with respect to the place and the native resources that live there.



### Little Fire Ant (LFA) Surveys

MoMISC will be conducting surveys to detect LFA on Molokai. Surveys will begin in areas where LFA is most likely to be established. Potential introductions of LFA to Moloka'i could be on plants and goods coming from highly infested areas like Hawaii Island, Maui and Oahu. Please go online to <http://www.littlefireants.com/> to learn more about LFA. If you think you may have LFA call MoMISC at (808)553-5236 ext. 6585. Remember that PREVENTION is key to fighting invasive species so please think before you import goods to Moloka'i. Mahalo!