

East Island, French Frigate Shoals, Hawaii. Photo courtesy G. H. Balazs





Lahaina, Maui: tracks of 5690 making her sixth nest in 2002.

## A Page Devoted to Marine Turtles

HOME ABOUT TURTLE TRAX DEL

DEDICATION

METAPHORICAL MISSION STATEMENT

## Summer of '11

August 23rd, 2011

## In memory of Jose (1942-2011)

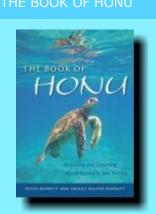
## **Moving on**

Although I find this difficult, I am finally able to come back to *Turtle Trax* and try to move things along.

Prior to losing perhaps the best friend I will ever have, I was already finding it hard to make changes here. I'd look at the site and feel overwhelmed, there is so much that needs to be done. The feeling hasn't left, but so much has happened that I absolutely must do something here. I know many people arrive looking for information and current material, but it's not easy to find here now. I do intend to fix this, but I have no idea when. As another dear friend commented recently, you pick something you can get done and do that, then repeat. Seems obvious, but so hard to do sometimes. At any rate, one thing I can do is post some of the recent good things that have happened.

## 5690 provides joy and thrills

This honu is known by many names to others but by her original tag number 5690 to us. *The Maui News* refers to her



Now available!

#### PAGES

About this blog

The Complete Turtle Trax Videos on YouTube

SEARCH THE BLOG

#### ARCHIVES

Expand All August 2011 (2) 02: In commemoration as Maui Girl, and their story Maui Girl returns (July 26, 2011) describes how she is back nesting again this summer after skipping a year.

Although we weren't on Maui during her normal nesting time last year, we don't think she waited until we showed up. As we've described here a few times, there is less and less of the algae that honu feed everywhere we've looked along the West Maui coast, and our theory is that she simply took longer to build up the energy reserves that she needs to lay eggs. *We* know she doesn't make the 800 kilometer migration to nest, but she's the result of millions of years of evolution, and her body has evolved to prepare her for that trip.

Her first reported nest was made the night of July 9. Although we were already on Maui by then, we hadn't been watching for her because she normally begins nesting in mid-May, and no one had reported any nests yet. We therefore only learned of this nest after the fact. Since we now had a reference date, however, we were expecting her back in two weeks, and as the newspaper story reports, she did indeed make what we thought was her second nest on the night of July 23.



5690 as she drops eggs on the night of July 23. This photo was taken while she was in her egg-laying trance, during which almost nothing can deter her from finishing. Prior to entering this state, she can easily be disturbed by lights and activity, causing her to abandon the effort and return to the sea.

23: Summer of '11 (44) July 2011 (1) November 2010 (1) November 2009 (1) October 2009 (1) September 2009 (1) August 2009 (3) July 2009 (5) September 2008 (1) August 2008 (4) July 2008 (3) February 2008 (1) November 2007 (3) October 2007 (4) September 2007 (5) August 2007 (4) July 2007 (2)

of Jose: a

night atop Haleakala (0)

#### **RECENT COMMENTS:**

#### joe: i love turtles!!!

Nancy: Aloha Looked out from my lanai this morning and was met with surprise and happiness to see the...

bruce drye: you guys are still doing great work. keep it up. I'm still inspired by your efforts.

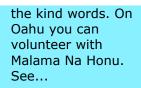
Charlayna: Hiroko Okuda- Was the turtle a Hawksbill? Did it have a jagged shell? Hawksbill sea turtle are not...

Peter: Aloha Marsha, Mahalo for Alert readers will note that I wrote "reported" nest in that description above. The reason for that is a story that gives me a lot of personal pleasure and satisfaction.

5690 made another nest two weeks after the first, on the night of August 13, so we were expecting her to nest again on the night of August 20th. This is consistent with honu females, who usually make their nests spaced roughly two weeks apart. In the past, 5690 has been fairly reliable in her intervals, but has usually made seven nests instead of the normal four or five. She typically lays fewer eggs per nest, so her total production in a given year is about average.

Honu aren't predictable, however, and we certainly don't depend on 5690 to keep to a rigid schedule. Her pattern has been to make a few false crawls on the night before she nests, so we always go to the beach on her 13th day, just in case she decides to nest early. Sure enough, on the night of the 19th she made a few false crawls, but we judged from her behaviour that she wasn't quite ready and wouldn't nest until the next evening. We gave up our watch at 1:00 AM and went home.

On the off chance that she had come back after we left, I went to the beach the following morning to look for tracks. I was completely caught off guard when I chanced upon what looked to me like an old nesting attempt. It was in a patch of beach morning glory and not obvious, which is probably why it went unnoticed. It also didn't look big enough to be a completed nest. Since it was covered in old debris, I knew immediately that it hadn't been made the previous night, but I was startled when I looked closer and saw a hatchling! Sadly, the little fellow had already died, but I now knew I wasn't looking at an abandoned attempt, but a completed nest.



## BLOGROLL

Mississauga Musings

## TRAX LINKS



Who's Who Underwater at Honokowai: Meet the honu.



Table of Contents: The rest of *Turtle Trax.* 



Our prolog to summer 2002: How you can beat angina and dive again!



the turtles.

http://www.turtles.org/summer/[6/27/2019 10:26:31 AM]



The previously unknown nest as it appeared when I found it. The unfortunate little hatchling is circled in red.

Click image to enlarge

While the hatchling's fate was lamentable in one way, in another it was most fortunate. Knowing that this was a nest that had already started to hatch, I contacted Glynnis Nakai of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, who excavates turtle nests as part of her job. Three days after hatchlings have emerged, Glynnis excavates to determine how many eggs there were, how many actually hatched, and most important of all, to find and free any trapped hatchlings.

In this case, Glynnis responded immediately to my call, and at 5:00 PM Saturday evening I met her and Joanni Morris at the nest to help her excavate. After digging for a few minutes, we were delighted when she came upon two more hatchlings. One had died, but the other began wriggling at her touch and was clearly alive. I can't describe how happy I was at that point, but as she dug a little further I grew ecstatic. The reason was that she found more live hatchlings. They had gotten wedged beneath some rocks and a root, and without our help, would never have reached the surface. By the time the nest was completely excavated, Glynnis had rescued 17 hatchlings. Including the little one whose sacrifice had saved the others, there were only three dead. What could have been an

## undiscovered tragedy turned into a brilliant rescue!



The 17 rescued hatchlings, waiting in a bucket for their release. If their sibling hadn't died on top of the nest, these adorable little honu would have died underneath the sand.

Click image to enlarge

A little later, just at sunset, a small crowd gathered round to watch the little honu scramble down the beach to the ocean.



Glynnis Nakai, US Fish & Wildlife Services, places some of the rescued hatchlings on the sand. Since biologists don't yet understand how hatchlings imprint their beach of origin, it's normal procedure to let them reach the water on their own.

Click image to enlarge



One of the rescued hatchlings reaching the water's edge. If this is a female and she survives, one day she'll return to this beach to make her own nests.

Click image to enlarge

Counting backwards and assuming 5690 was keeping to her usual schedule, this nest was made on or near June 25th. That's still a pretty late start for her, over a month past the time she has begun in other seasons. For years she has nested only on the stretch of beach at Kamehameha Iki Park, but she has made nests in other places in Lahaina in the past. The question now is whether she nested somewhere else earlier in the summer. We've looked but not seen evidence of that, and by now any early nests have hatched. She's never nested after the end of August. We don't even know if she'll nest on September 3, which is the next date that matches her pattern. That would be Nest 6, which is not unusual for her—in fact it's normal—but if she really started so late, this is not a typical summer. If she does come back, that would support the idea that the nest I discovered was her first or at most, second. If she doesn't, there could have been two previous unknown nests, which would push her first date back to a more typical May 28th. Of course, if she doesn't come back that won't prove anything, but if she does we can be fairly sure there was at most one unknown nest—and if she comes back twice, which I think highly unlikely, we'll be almost certain all of her nests are known.

## But that's not all...

Watching an excavation and hatchling release is always enjoyable, but recall that I had found this nest because I was checking to make sure 5690 hadn't fooled us and nested after we went home the previous night. It turns out that she had not, and so our 5690 evening had actually just begun.

Our great friend and benefactor of the honu, George Balazs, had flown over from Oahu specifically to see 5690. For those unaware of the story, George has been leading marine turtle research in the Central Pacific for the US National Marine Fisheries Service since, well, almost forever. Back in 1981, George released a small yearling honu off the Big Island, with the single external tag bearing the number 5690. 19 years later, in 2000, he got a call from Maui that a turtle had nested on a Lahaina beach, and she had a tag: 5690! Since then, he's naturally felt a special connection to this honu, and he's taken a lot of pleasure from our reports of watching her make nests over the years. His job and location don't allow him to be there on most of these occasions, but this year he decided to spend his own time and money to come over and see her again.



(L to R) Glynnis Nakai, George Balazs, and Joanni Morris after the excavation of 5690's first known 2011 nest. The bucket at their feet holds 17 rescued hatchlings.

Click image to enlarge

You can imagine George's delight to have lucked into an excavation that saved so many of her hatchlings. This meant that he (and we) had the extraordinary experience of seeing the mother honu and her progeny all in a single evening. While this was an exhausting night—none of us are getting younger —it was more than worth it. It did, however, take some patience. 5690 was not beyond providing us with a little suspense.

When we've been looking for her on other nights this summer, 5690 has been fairly consistent in making her first appearance about an hour and a half after sunset, around 8:30 PM. On this night, the one-shot chance that George had taken looked at first as though it wouldn't pay off. Although he would have been happy with the unexpected hatchlings, it would have been a big disappointment if 5690 just didn't show up. By 10:30 we were getting pretty anxious, although we weren't about to quit waiting. Then, at 10:35, I saw her head pop up close to shore. She wasn't about to let George down after all.

I alerted George and Ursula that she was about to crawl up the beach, and we'd just managed to settle down to watch when she slowly emerged from the water. The moon hadn't risen yet and it was hard to see what she was doing, but eventually we could tell that she was making her way up the beach.



5690 makes her first crawl of the night at 10:35 PM, August 20, 2011. (15 second exposure at ISO 3200)

Click image to enlarge

It took her 35 minutes for this first crawl, and although she eventually went back into the water, we were relieved just to know she was out there. Usually, it would be 30-45 minutes before she crawled out again, but continuing with breaking her pattern she showed up about 10 minutes later at the other end of the beach. Now, sea turtles are supposedly shy of bright lights when they come ashore to nest, but 5690 appears not to have read the manual. She crawled out right in front of two glaring floodlights on poles, behind which there was a loud nightclub complete with more flashing lights.



This is the unlikely beach that 5690 emerged onto to make her nest. The two prominent floodlights and the flashing lights from the nightclub in the background (not to mention the constant low frequency drumbeat) should have deterred her—but didn't. (Photo courtesy George Balazs)

Click image to enlarge

As she moved up the beach, her behaviour became more typical of a nesting turtle, in that she veered towards the darkness provided by the shade of the vegetation. She crawled —and she crawled—and she crawled. Then she crawled some more. Once she was past the high-water line, she began moving parallel to the shore. She moved right over a lot of sand that I felt would have made a terrific nest. In fact, she actually had nested in that sand in a previous summer but not this time. About 100 meters later, she finally made it to the same patch of beach morning glory in which I'd discovered the nest that morning, and began to dig.

Sometimes 5690 digs for a while and then changes her mind and moves elsewhere. Not this night. Most other nests are made with just me and Ursula watching, if anyone. Again, not this night. At times there were a dozen or more observers, and at least six people (including us) watched her from start to finish, more than four and half hours. As always, I felt privileged and exhilarated to witness the process, and I'm pretty sure everyone felt much the same way. I've no doubt, however, that George got a special thrill that no one else could experience as he watched the same honu that he'd released in 1981 making her nest on a Maui beach 30 years later.



George spent a good part of the night just lying and watching 5690 as she made her nest. His 30 year connection with her made it particularly special to him. (15 second exposure at ISO 1600)

Click image to enlarge

## Links to other 5690 stories

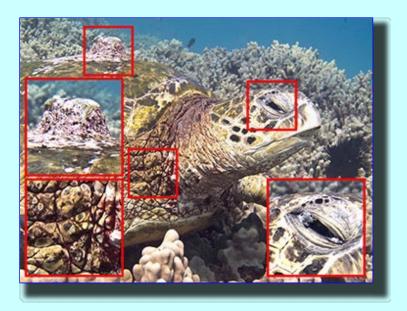
I've never created a page devoted specifically to 5690. Perhaps I should, but until I do I'm providing some links to some of the other places where we've written about her.

- Honu Highlight—Notes on the birthing process (2002)
- 5690 hatchlings (2002)
- 5690 nests again (2002)
- **5690:** Found! (2003)
- Excavating nest 1 (2004)
- 5690 does it to us—again! (2004)
- One nest excavated, another one made (2004)
- The most extraordinary 5690 sighting (2004)
- The 26 hour day (2004)
- Nest emergence (2004)
- Nest 5 hatches! (2004)

- 5690 makes nest #4 (2006)
- 5690 nests again: an experience re-born (2008)
- 5690 makes nest #6 (2008)
- Hatchlings! (2008)
- The "homeless" Mississauga Muse attracts the attention of Maui Police (2008)

## Masha Kai

Masha Kai is a female honu, resident at Honokowai, who had a satellite transmitter attached in the summer of 2009. Unfortunately, her transmitter failed sooner than we'd hoped and the tracking maps we did get showed that she never left the Honokowai area. Last fall, we did see her out on Reef 2, and it was obvious why her transmitter failed. Contrary to the report we'd gotten, the box was still attached to her carapace but the antenna was missing. That wasn't the bad news, however. We were disturbed to see that Masha Kai had developed fibropapilloma tumors.



This image shows not only the reason why Masha Kai's transmitter failed, but also that she had tumors in her eyes and on her body.

Click image to enlarge

This summer, on our second dive, we saw Masha Kai again. She was in almost exactly the same place where we saw her in December, but this time the news was good. Her tumors had not progressed at all, and in fact looked to be regressing already.



Compare this image to the one above. You can see that Masha Kai's tumors haven't gotten larger, and are showing signs of regression.

Click image to enlarge

While it's uncommon, we have seen fibropapilloma regress this quickly before. It's especially comforting in Masha Kai's case because she was carrying a satellite tag and helping us understand the honu a little better. Of course there's no connection between the transmitter and the tumors, but the tag does make her special to us. Mahalo nui loa, Masha Kai.

Post Linx Permalink | Trackback | Email to a Friend | Print This Article

## Comments

44 Responses to "Summer of '11"	
1. rachel on August 30th, 2011 7:27 am	
poor turtel i love turtels <3	
2. ReptileMan on August 30th, 2011 10:01 pm	
Great site-great pics. Would love to witness a sea turtle laying eggs.	
3. Mrs. Fraher and Class on September 19th, 2011 10:55 am	5
Dear Turtle Trax, We were so happy to find your blog because we are learning about sea turtles in class. This blog taught us many things about the sea turtles and how to care for them and protect them. One fascinating fact we learned was that out of 100 sea turtles, only one survives. This tells us that it is important to be responsible when we are on the beaches. Thank you for sharing your research and information. Have you ever had to rescue a full grown turtle? Thank you for responding and we hope you have time to visit our blog. Mrs.Fraher and Class	
4. doug arnall on September 21st, 2011 7:20 am	
check out the song "Turtle Power" by Kabbage at reverbnation.com/kabbage. One of the members of this group is from Maui. I think you will enjoy this song and if you do pass it on to others to enjoy.	

5. Hana Thompson on September 28th, 2011 6:38 am

This is a wonderful blog and I particularly loved ready about 5690 its a beautiful story and I will be sure to check in again from time to time.

I am also incredibly sorry for your loss of a dear friend Hana

6. anna on October 10th, 2011 3:39 am

7. Vonnie Marks on October 14th, 2011 3:52 am

I just returned to your website and after seeing 5690 was still alive...well I've been crying with happiness and to see she's nested again is pure pleasure! I have read "The Book Of Honu" by Peter Bennett and Ursula Keuper-Bennett and also the books they recommended on honu's. My husband and myself stay on the North Shore of Oahu (Mokuleia Beach) every year for 6 weeks or so and have watched and learned so much about these beautiful animals! Thank you for your work and others like you that devote their lives to this cause. If there's any good we can do while we're there we would love to help in any way we could. Thank you, Vonnie Marks

8. samuel martinez on November 28th, 2011 5:01 am

these turtles are cool

9. JERRY CAMBA on December 2nd, 2011 11:00 am

question! Recently, 11-30-2011 I was visiting the Big Island at the National Park just of Kaluia-Kona I was lucky enough to get pictures of a Hawaiian Green Turtle basking in the sun. On its

Shell was the number 112. What does this
number indicate. thank you
10. Peter on December 3rd, 2011 3:44 am
It means the turtle migrated this summer to the nesting site of East Island in the French Frigate Shoals. The number identifies the honu as the 112th of the record 808 recorded this season. I will pass this sighting along to the Marine Turtle Research team in Honolulu. Thanks for the report.
11. robert on December 12th, 2011 4:35 am
this website really helped me with my project i choosen sea turtles they are so cool and fasinating
12. rachel waters on December 13th, 2011 9:35 am
turtles are like my children, i love them so much!!(: if one was to die, i ould probably have to put my other ones up for adoption and kill myself as well, i wouldnt be able to live with such a pain! I LOVE TURTLES!!! <3
13. Nick S. on December 13th, 2011 9:39 am
Turtles are cool, but people need to learn how to type correctly before they put stuff on here, or on any blog. Love, Nicholas(:
14. Anonymous on December 23rd, 2011 1:06 pm
I Love turtles and i really want a pet, but my

	paretns wont let me  they are so cute and inspiring	
15. ł	hope for the best on January 5th, 2012 12:33 pm	
	hope for the best and soooooo sorry for your loss nice pictures by the way!	
16. F	Ryan on January 12th, 2012 9:02 am	
	You have helped me alot, i am using Turtle trax for a class that is showing people care about the animals that are endanger	
17. Anonymous on January 19th, 2012 8:32 am		
	they are cute	
18. ]	Johnny Bravo on January 19th, 2012 5:32 pm	
	Great page. I really enjoyed it.	
19. t	cara/turtle lover on January 20th, 2012 6:52 am	
	Dear turtle trax<3,i loved the page(it took me like 30 minutes to read it though!)I am encouraging you guys to help turtles forever!I would too but I live in Tennessee:( But my grandma lives in Melborne, Florida!Every summer I go there with my older sister.Right next to the beach that we always go to is a turtle store!It is called Sea Turtle Preservation Society.thank you for helping my favorite animal	

survive!!!!!!:))

20. tara/turtle lover on January 20th, 2012 6:53 am

```
p.s.-i am 12 and i have loved turtles since i was 7!!!
```

21. Anonymous on January 23rd, 2012 7:53 am

It was okay.No I take it back that was awesome. Yay!

22. Anonymous on January 25th, 2012 6:25 am

Omqq I Jst Absoulutley Love Turtles. This Is The Best Site I Have Reviewed About Turtles. Its Amazinq For Kids To Do Research On. Bye (:

23. Anonymous on January 31st, 2012 10:09 am

I love the little turtles.

24. Kayla on February 1st, 2012 2:43 pm

i am doing a research project on sea turtles and this site was helpful

25. Em on March 6th, 2012 8:31 am

This is gorgeous, and the turtles are beautiful. Thankyou.

26. Emily & Alex on March 14th, 2012 3:55 am

WE LOVE TURTLES Turtles r das bombz!!!:)

27. amber on March 20th, 2012 4:44 am

those pics are very cute this sight also gives you tons of info.:)

28. Anonymous on March 20th, 2012 4:54 am

Cool!!! Love the Turtles!!!!

29. madison on March 28th, 2012 2:07 pm

I love turtles!!

30. Przeprowadzka on April 5th, 2012 10:00 pm

I together with my friends were actually viewing the good suggestions located on the website and so immediately came up with a horrible suspicion I had not expressed respect to the web site owner for those tips. Most of the guys came as a result passionate to read them and already have truly been taking pleasure in them. I appreciate you for really being quite kind and also for picking out variety of remarkable subjects most people are really needing to be informed on. My personal sincere apologies for not saying thanks to earlier.

31. Turtle Love on April 8th, 2012 12:05 pm

Keep up the good work everyone! Bless you for helping these majestic creatures!

32. Hiroko Okuda on April 10th, 2012 7:17 am

Hi, I'm Hiroko Okuda from Japan.

I visited Oahu last week. When I was enjoying

snorkeling on the west coast beach close to the electric plant, I saw a huge sea turtle eating dead body of a squid. Surprisingly, he was using his flipper as a hand to grab the squid to bite it off into small piece that could be swallowed.

On my way back to Tokyo, I read "the book of honu" and I found that honu is vegetarian. So I thought I should report what I saw at the west coast.

Unfortunately, I did not take any picture.

Regards,

Hiroko Okuda

After this experience, I read "the book of honu" and now I know that honu are basically vegitalian.

33. gabbie on April 16th, 2012 3:00 am

hi im gabbie and i love turtes. your picturesmade me want to get a pet turtle! they completly moved me alot.

your pal, gabbie

## 34. sam\_raisani on April 16th, 2012 3:04 am

Really this is Amazing work which you people are doing to secure the marine food web and food cycle! I would like to join you'r Organization by voluntarily and it is my pleasure to become the member of you team . . . Regard: sami Raisani

35. Anonymous on April 30th, 2012 10:34 am

great webste

## 36. katie lynn on May 2nd, 2012 3:32 pm

turtles are my favorite animals i know so much about them. at school i get called smartical particals . i hope you enjoy turtles as much as i do. check out some books about them at your local library. learn and read its a great way to make your brain happy.

## 37. sail power on May 29th, 2012 3:47 am

Sunday before Memorial Day 2012, we sailed upon an 8 year old kemp ridley turtle who had been struck by a power boat in Old River between Ono Island, AL and Perdido Key, FL, about 1/2 mile East of the state's line. A turtle expert came and picked it up but we have no information as to whom it was. It appeared that the boat had turned it over and the prop caught it on the breast plate where it penetrated, causing pectoral damage and possible internal damage as well. It survived for at least 10-15 minutes as it was swimming to shore; this was how long we had spent helping it to shore and looking for a phone and people to call. 911 ultimately connected us to the turtle specialist who resides in Orange Beach, AL or on Perdido Key.

We did not realize how rare this turtle is in to this area. I found your website this morning and thought I should relay the information. I saw a documentary on Houston public television a few years ago about the mass harvesting of eggs and turtles on the Padre islands many decades ago.

They said they would freeze the turtle for research purposes.

Perhaps more information on who to call and metal turtle/animal guards should be required on all external propellor craft in regions where this can occur.

## 38. Marsha on June 8th, 2012 7:45 am

Aloha – I'm wondering who to contact on Oahu to work with sea turtles. I've been working with them in Clearwater Beach, FL for over 5 years, and we're moving to Hawaii in July. We were hoping to be on Maui, but the State position ended up being on Oahu. Can you please provide information on who I could help with regards to turtles there? Love the site – thanks for all you do to educate people! Mahalo.

39. Nancy on June 8th, 2012 12:11 pm

I am sorry for the loss of your Jose. I applaud you and your efforts of taking care of these wonderful creatures. Keep up the great work.

40. Peter on June 18th, 2012 2:37 am

Aloha Marsha,

Mahalo for the kind words. On Oahu you can volunteer with Malama Na Honu. See http://www.malamanahonu.org/volunteer.asp for more information.

41. Charlayna on June 22nd, 2012 1:07 pm

Hiroko Okuda-

Was the turtle a Hawksbill? Did it have a jagged shell? Hawksbill sea turtle are not vegetarians, although I'm sure a Green turtle would feed upon a dead squid for the additional protein if the opportunity arose...

42. bruce drye on July 14th, 2012 2:13 pm

you guys are still doing great work. keep it up. I'm still inspired by your efforts.

#### 43. Nancy on August 4th, 2012 10:40 am

#### Aloha

Looked out from my lanai this morning and was met with surprise and happiness to see the "S.S.Howzit" out and about . So glad to see that you are back and out checking on your Honu. One behavior you are likely to observe is that the Honu over the last couple of years seem to like to spend a lot of time sunning themselves on quiet beaches in the Honokowai area. Hope you are enjoying your time here and getting requainted with your old Honu friends

44. joe on May 8th, 2013 8:48 am

i love turtles!!!

## Leave a Reply

You do not have to leave your real name, email address, or website to comment. Thanks to despicable spammers, however, comments must be reviewed before publication.

If you prefer, you can send a private comment to the Webmaster.

Name

Email Address

Website

#