

Weekly Summary--Week 3 (04/07/17)

We buy a kayak

After renting a kayak last summer and recognizing its potential for sea turtle observation and FUN, we finally decided to buy one. Yes. We are now the proud owners of our own hole in the water!

We bought it used, as we did the paddles. Seats, life jackets and the all-important EPIRB are out-of-the-box brand new, however.

We then set about to make the kayak truly our own.

We made the kayak our own.

[47K JPEG](#)



We named our kayak Napo'o 'Ana O Ka La, which is Hawaiian for "sunset." We also named Napo'o 'Ana O Ka La the USS HONU and the HMS HOWZIT, simply because cool names should never go unused or unappreciated.

We decorated Napo'o 'Ana O Ka La from pointy part to round end. We even decorated the bottom! We black-magic-markered it in such an Over-the-Top-Even-for-Us way that it's unlikely we'd ever be able to sell it.

Surely, however, it also means that *no one* would ever want to steal it!

We even decorated the bottom!

[49K JPEG](#)



Next week we will find out what the pointy part and round end of a boat are called in boat-talk.

We kayak

Over the week, like the Explorers of Old, we've inched our way up the West Maui coast, growing ever braver and ever more skillful. We successfully paddled to S-Bend and even did our first tour of Kuamo'o, our alternate dive site.



We successfully paddled to S-Bend.

[59K JPEG](#)

We even capsized our kayak. We'd been practicing emergency drills--falling off and the all-important getting back on. Peter, in his attempt to fall off, hooked his shorts on the tie-down for the seat. No matter how far she leaned the other way, Ursula could not compensate and Peter took her over the side with him.

The kayak was now belly up. We easily flipped it over, got back on and set about to practice some more. It was unplanned, but still great experience.

Like so many things in life, you can never really practice enough!

The kayak isn't only for falling off and having fun, however. It adds another dimension to our turtle-watching because now we can get a better idea of where the honu are feeding. By kayaking in the early morning and at sunset, we've already got some clues. The classic summary sentence still applies, though: more study is needed.

Our true love: we dive

Of course, we really come here to be under the water. The swells (a large one running right now) and other distractions have reduced the number of dives somewhat, but we have managed to be in the water occasionally. One thing is blatantly obvious.

Our dive site has changed, more over the past winter than any prior year. So many of the places that were magic places even five years ago have either disappeared completely or been--transformed. Mt. Balazs has completely disappeared, and the honu-rich North House is a mere ghost town, two or three brave honu resting about where once we could count on seeing two dozen.

Hale Manu--House of the Bird, where Keoki the hawksbill called home--is now abandoned. We haven't seen a single turtle there so far all summer.

Nearby, Hale Manu II has lost its luster as a honu congregation area. A half dozen routinely rested there in other summers. Now? One or two.

The corals in all the places we've mentioned have been pummeled and ground by a decade's worth of Hawaiian sea turtle recovery. Huge coral heads have toppled and sheared under the stress of honu scratching. Individual corals--aren't.

Corals have been crushed and worn down.

[40K JPEG](#)



Kansas isn't Kansas any more. Neither is North House, Hale Manu and Hale Manu II. The honu have adapted, however. They've moved the party to South Park.

Even then, there isn't much of a party. The feel here underwater is as though a chapter of Hell's Angels, finished trashing their hotel rooms, have slowly come to realize that the fun is over.

They've moved the party to South Park.

[57K JPEG](#)



Back to Kuamo'o

The ocean calmed enough that we found it practical to dive Kuamo'o. After seeing the changes at Honokowai, we were eager to see the changes a year has wrought there. We also had to remove the temperature logger we'd planted at The Toe last summer.

It was clear the huge waves that rolled through our dive site had also left their calling card at Kuamo'o. The first victim of the ocean's awesome power that we spotted was a chaise longue, half-buried in sand at about 20 feet deep and 200 yards from shore.



*20 feet down and 200 yards from shore,
a chaise longue, victim of the winter*



waves.

[42K JPEG](#)

Kicking seaward we began to see turtles. More seaward kicking.

That's when we saw the hawksbill.

Kuamo'o has a hawksbill!

[50K JPEG](#)



Seeing a hawksbill is always a thrill. Here's why.

Our database shows that we have identified 629 green turtles so far. We have seen (and identified) only *three* hawksbills. This new Kuamo'o hawksbill now makes four.

Only moments after sighting the hawksbill, we saw another--***another?*** Worlds collided. Mountains tore asunder. ***Two hawksbills*** mere moments apart!

Another?

[47K JPEG](#)



Then we got a closer look at this second "hawksbill."

Who?

The "hawksbill" did indeed look like a hawksbill. For one thing, it had a hawk's bill. From a distance, seen by silhouette, it looked and moved like a hawksbill. The front flippers were patterned and dramatically-coloured like a hawksbill's.

Yet it also had honu characteristics. While the rear of its shell was serrated and crimped like a hawksbill's, the rest of the shell was definitely green turtle! It only had one claw on each flipper--like a green turtle. It had a single pair of prefrontal scales (the ones between the eyes), again like a green turtle.

It was like looking at a creature who couldn't make up its mind what it wanted to be.



Could this be a cross?

[40K JPEG](#)

On the beach, we both expressed the same thought: a **cross!** It had to be a cross between a hawksbill and a green sea turtle!

Back at our computers, we emailed George Balazs and sent him over a dozen photos of this gherkin in the pickle jar. George was intrigued. While, like us, he saw mostly green turtle characteristics, he too concluded this creature could **indeed** be a cross.

If it is, it'd be the first one reported in Hawaii.

So we named this new turtle--Wai?. Yes, Wai?. Complete with question mark. "Wai?" is Hawaiian for "Who?". So, residing along the West Maui coast is a strange-looking honu/'ea called Wai?.

A strange-looking honu/'ea called Wai?.

[65K JPEG](#)



George urged us to set about to prove Wai?'s pedigree one way or another. We returned to Kuamo'o the next day. No Wai?. Of course, we'll have to return again--and again.

We have One-Mother-of-an-Unanswered Question to answer.

2004 Zeus Report

This week we received an exciting email from *Turtle Trax* fan in California, who had just returned from Maui. The email contained a picture of a large male turtle at Black Rock, which is not too far south of our dive site, and had the subject, "I have seen Zeus in Maui July 11 2004". Of course we were eager to examine the picture, but alas, the turtle was not our old friend Zeus.

Our search continues.



[Week 4 Summary](#)



[Summer of '04 at Honokowai](#)



[Turtle Happenings](#)



[Who's Who Underwater at Honokowai](#)



[Table of Contents](#)

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