

Weekly Summary--Week 2 (06/07/15)

All 2006 Summer Summaries are dedicated to Kurt Keuper, Ursula's father. **Hi Dad!**

Red red red red rain

[Last week](#), we reported on the red silt blanketing our dive site and the perpetual haze and gloom caused by tiny red particulate suspended in the water. Looks like we have front row seats for Summer 2006 Creep-a-rama around here. A full moon plus brisk trades make for strong currents, and two crabby divers wondering why they bother going out--especially since every turtle they see is looking equally crabby but is at least hunkered down.

The past winter's torrential rains washed this silt directly into the ocean. Now it has collected up to five inches thick between reefs, and has managed to coat corals and plants a rusty shade of red.



Scooping up mud at the head of Reef 1

[30K JPEG](#)



Why everything looks red this summer

[22K JPEG](#)

No surprise that this red dusts the turtles as well. Honu heads, necks and especially shells are caked in red.

Nothing underwater escapes the silt

[37K JPEG](#)



Uwapo

This week, we resighted Uwapo, a honu so dear to our hearts. Uwapo was a constant Honokowai presence since we first

sighted her in 1997. [In 2001](#), she was a cooperative subject in George Balazs' Time/Depth Recorder study of Honokowai honu eating habits. To our surprise, we did not sight her at all in 2004 and we speculated that perhaps she might be nesting.

Then to our great sadness [we saw her again last summer](#). It was clear that Uwapo had encountered a tiger shark. Almost all of her right front flipper was bitten off and her right hind was sheared in half as well. Understandably, she did not like us approaching her either.

This week, though, we saw her at Reef 2--our usual meeting place of other years. Uwapo did not react at all to our presence and allowed us to take several photographs of her.

"Her..." As we were taking pictures of her right hind flipper, we noticed Uwapo's tail. It had lengthened since last summer--and lengthened so much that we are fairly certain that Uwapo is a male honu. We can no longer refer to Uwapo as "her" or "she".

Uwapo is a He and it was good to see him again--and good to see him considerably bigger than the last time we met.



***Uwapo, fully healed and doing as well as
can be expected***

[71K JPEG](#)

Da Boyz are back

Speaking of males, Da Boyz are back from migration! Okay, Da Boy. We saw Pi'i. He's the first male we've seen back from [the French Frigate Shoals](#) for the 2006 Reproductive Season. How do we know that Pi'i made the trip instead of just staying around Honokowai?

Well, of the almost two dozen honu we sighted during the same dive, only Pi'i was spic and span clean. No algae fouled his countenance, nor was there a trace of red silt that is dirtying up the rest of the Honokowai ohana. Pi'i is also skinny, skinny, skinny. Moreover, he acted tired and looked like a pooped honu grateful to be (finally) Home.

The clincher? Look carefully at the trailing edge of Pi'i's flipper. See that white stuff? That's from the bites of envious males who were trying to separate Pi'i from his chosen one--sure evidence that Pi'i had a successful trip.



Pi'i relaxes at home

[72K JPEG](#)

5690 makes her fourth nest of 2006

On Sunday, July 9th, we staked out a spot along the seawall near Kamehameha Iki park in case 5690 would haul up and lay her eggs. It didn't take her long to show. At around 9:30, a dark, turtle-like rock appeared in the shore-break. It paused and then crawled up the beach.

Thus began a torturous honu-human session that didn't end until dawn, when Momma turtle finally made it back into her ocean.

In between Sunday night and Monday morning, we watched 5690 false-crawl four times, then finally decide that This is It. Her fifth crawl out of the ocean led her right through and over her first nest of the season, after which she veered left over park grass, crawled atop a concrete ramp and down same ramp, tested possible sites with scraping flippers, fussed and fussed some more, and finally decided on a spot that we knew was no good.

In that cursed spot, we watched her dig and dig at the hard debris and stone. Man it was **tough**--and that was just for us. When she finally got her body pit dug, Peter sneaked around back 5690 and hid behind a fence so that he could watch her progress as she tried to dig her egg chamber.

Ursula watched for people who might show up (yes, even at 3am you'd be surprised at the people traffic on this beach!) and scare her off. Well, 5690 never even made the egg chamber. After all her efforts clearing a deep enough body pit, she'd struck roots and rocks. She abandoned the effort and now retraced her crawl up a concrete ramp, over the grass, to the big tree, and looked to be heading back into the ocean.

We figured we were due for yet another night on the beach and poor 5690 getting to do this all over again--but no. Something stopped her and she turned north and sought sand. This time she found a perfect spot. A spot so perfect that she cleared a body pit quickly and with far less effort than her first futile attempt.



Watching 5690 dig while the full moon sets

[13 second time exposure](#)
[31K JPEG](#)

When front flippers stopped, her hind went into action. Her feet began the delicate task of scooping out the egg chamber. Fling. Fling. Little tufts of sand would scoot up and we knew she was still digging. Then nothing.

Peter tippy-toed over and with red flashlight shone a beam into the egg chamber. Nothing. He returned to the shadows of The Tree and waited a while longer. The next red beam confirmed eggs at 3:28 am. After twenty minutes, her front flippers went back into action flinging sand over her shell and into the nest. Egg-laying was over.

5690 finishes covering up

[8 second time exposure](#)
[59K JPEG](#)



The "cover-up" is the longest, most arduous part of the nesting process. It takes 5690 about an hour forty-five minutes to disguise the location of her egg chamber. It was only at 5:34 in the morning that she completed the process and started down the beach.

5690 finally leaves the nest

[2 second time exposure](#)
[58K JPEG](#)



Well after dawn, at 5:38 precisely, she felt ocean again. We expect that after a short rest, 5690 will head for home, the Napili area of West Maui, until she feels the tug of her Lahaina nesting beach once again.



5690 reaches the ocean

[32K JPEG](#)

An All-Night-Sucker--and much much harder for her (we only had to watch) than for us. This was 5690's fourth nest and if this is like her other years, she still has three full nights to go! We know she can survive it, but can we? Tune in in two weeks!

The finished nest, number 4 for 2006

[47K JPEG](#)



5690 nest #1 hatchling watch

It's Hatchling Watch Time, with 5690's first nest expected to erupt with the first batch of Lahaina hatchlings for the 2006 nesting season. Every day now around sunset, we drive to Lahaina to inspect the nest for any signs of trying-to-get-out activity.

A high tide and swells are conspiring against us and the hatchlings, it seems

[49K JPEG](#)



Every morning, we return to look for teeny tiny flipper prints that would tell us that the hatchlings hatched during the night. So far, nothing.

The vigil continues.

Wai? sighted again at Reef 2

[Last week we reported our astonishment](#) in not only resighting the only suspected honu-'ea cross in the Hawaiian Islands, but actually resighting her at Honokowai instead of a few miles up the coast where we initially saw the hybrid last summer.

We named the honubill "Wai?", Hawaiian for "Who" and complete with a question mark. Wai?'s name contains a question mark because so far there is no DNA confirmation that this flippered oddity is in fact a green/hawksbill cross.

We got close enough to take excellent photos of both Wai?'s eyes and we're worried that they're showing the first signs of fibropapilloma. Because Wai? is so different we can't even state with reasonable confidence whether time will tell.

It's entirely possible that we won't see Wai? again. She's just that different a duck.

What was neat, though, is that Wai? appears comfy at Honokowai. She lifted for air and returned, gliding over several honu to land again. Earlier in the dive we saw the scattered and shattered and strewn about bits of coral that telegraphed a hawksbill was mining for sponge. We concluded it might have been Wai?--or maybe not, since no one knows what a honubill would eat.

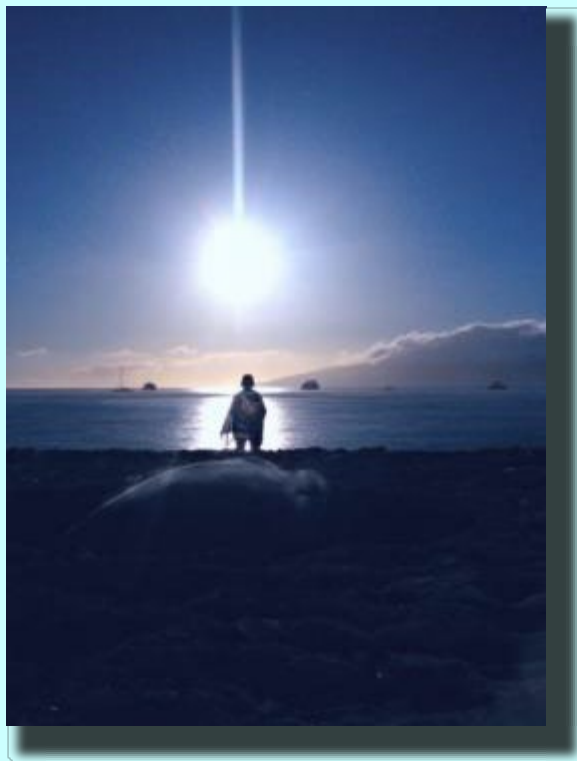


Wai? gliding by

[49K JPEG](#)

Besides, Honokowai has three hawksbills of its own: [Keoki](#), [Ake](#), and [Kiniana](#). Will they make an appearance this summer? We're keeping our fingers crossed.

Coollest pic of the week



5690, Ursula, and the full moon

*[15 second time exposure](#)
[21K JPEG](#)*



[Week 3 Summary](#)



[Summer of '06 at Honokowai](#)



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



[Table of Contents](#)

Last modified 06/07/22

Send comments or corrections to webmaster@turtles.org