

Letters

Maui News
7-26-98

Thanks for recognizing Balazs

Congratulations and a warm mahalo to Anne Hillero and The Maui News for the Currents article "Turtle Tracks" (July 19) featuring the work of Hawaii's turtle expert George Balazs.

Anne accurately summarized Balazs' career as a researcher/scientist and marine conservationist. More gratifying, though, she captured his spirit and conveyed the love and appreciation he has for his subjects, Hawaii's honu.

We are Canadian tourists who stay on Maui during July and August every year just to dive with your green sea turtles. While Maui welcomes the return of the humpbacks each December, I am sure you need no reminder you have year-round tourist attractions in your shelled green wonders.

Every summer we witness human-honu "interactions." Squeals of delight from kids snorkeling when they've sighted their first turtle, the thrashing of flippers as they try to keep the honu in sight. And then "Hey MOM! I saw a HUGE turtle!" (A juvenile Hawaiian green sea turtle is indeed "huge" when the only other kind you've seen is the dime-store variety.)

Your sea turtles are Hawaii's special ambassadors and people simply delight seeing them in your ocean.

That the honu are increasing in numbers is the direct result of the aloha and protection Hawaii has afforded them over the years. As leader of Marine Turtle Research, George Balazs orchestrated that recovery.

In January we devoted a section of our Web page, Turtle Trax, to the enormous contributions Balazs has made to Hawaii's honu. Back then it was just two Canadians celebrating the 25th anniversary of the French Frigate Shoals sea turtle tagging program that he initiated.

It's highly gratifying to see that with this Currents article, Balazs has been finally acknowledged (and thanked) right here in Hawaii.

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Lahaina**