



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Fisheries Center Honolulu Laboratory
2570 Dole St. • Honolulu, Hawaii 96822-2396

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COOP-7L.GHB

Mr. Alika Cooper
Golden Courie Complex Ltd.
P. O. Box 128
Deuba, Fiji

Dear Mr. Cooper

Kitty Simonds of the WPRFMC has been kind enough to provide me with your current mailing address in Fiji.

I wanted to write to you about the occurrence of tumors, called fibropapillomas, in Hawaiian honu (green sea turtles, *Chelonia mydas*). As you may have heard, this tumor disease has now reached epidemic proportions in Hawaiian honu, as well as in other green sea turtles at several sites in Florida and elsewhere. The tumors can grow rapidly to massive sizes, often covering over the turtle's eyes, throat, and flippers. Every week we have one or more turtles dead or nearly dead, covered with tumors, washing ashore in Hawaii. The situation has continued to worsen each year for the past five years, especially in Kaneohe Bay and along the south shore of Molokai (Palaau to Kawela). I have enclosed an assortment of articles about this serious disease phenomenon which I felt you would find interesting.

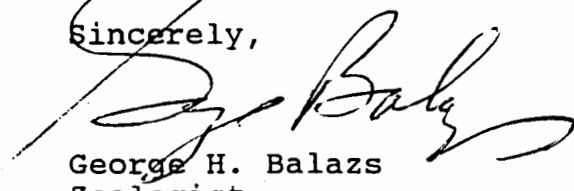
Based on historical records at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, it is my understanding that you encountered and captured green sea turtles with tumors in Hawaii during the late 1960s. Your experience may be one of the earliest documentations we have for this disease in Hawaii. I believe you first started to capture turtles in the early 1950s. When and where was the first time you recall seeing a tumor on a turtle? What percentage of the turtles had this disease once you started to notice it? For example, at present 65% (79) of the 121 turtles we captured and tagged in Kaneohe Bay during 1989-90 had the disease.

I realize that in the past years we have had many differences of opinion on matters pertaining to Hawaiian honu. However, I feel certain that we share a common view in wanting these turtles to be healthy in all respects. Epidemic proportions of sick turtles can have serious negative impacts to the turtle population, and also may be indicative of some greater problem in the marine environment. I therefore am hoping that you will write to me at



your earliest opportunity to describe what you know of this disease from past years of catching turtles in Hawaii. Thank you very much for any assistance you can provide.

Sincerely,



George H. Balazs
Zoologist

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Jan 2, 1991

At. Bahatts;

I want you to know that I have always been upset with you and W.M.F.S, for you always have and will continue to treat us Hawaiians as second class citizens. I don't think W.M.F.S has a Hawaiian working for them; since we are 20% in population in Hawaii, you should have 20% Hawaiians working for you - this shows how America treats us, as indigenous people - especially W.M.F.S -

You should know I still believe in our Hawaiian Gods, Kane, Ku, Lono, and still pray to them, for these are my ancestral Gods. There are many of us who do so.

When you stopped indigenous people from using turtle for their religious rights, that was out of line. Even under the Freedom of Religion act of 1978, you were out of line and still are.

When I left Hawaii in 1985, the turtle population was stable. They were enough turtles so the indigenous people could have had access for their religious rights. You have no track record, you haven't the years of knowledge, methods, moon phases, time of year, seasons, and the hundreds of years of experience that I have passed down from my ancestors.

My family had large acres in fish ponds in Pearl Harbor. Before the war we

used turtles both for food and to keep
some of our fish ponds free of grass, weeds,
mangrove, etc. We never used the turtles
caught in our konohiki from Pearl River
to Fort Weaver, inside Pearl Harbor.

We caught our turtles, by the shark
pen at Fort Kamehameha and across the
Pearl Harbor channel from Weaver. Every
thing under 200 lbs was let go. We ate
the males, the females usually used for
weed control and to stake up the ponds.
Every few years, while catching the market
in the Kupa season - Dec to March, we would
let the turtles go and re stock them with
new turtles. Their condition was good, fat.

I can remember prior to the war, 1939,
1940 we did catch a few turtles which had this
string cancer, as it was referred to then.
My Grandfather was a doctor, M.D. - He, at
that time, said this was a type of string
cancer and not to eat them."

Dec. 1941 Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, our
total property were taken from us, our fish
ponds, homes, and the complex. We have never
been paid for our Pearl River konohiki -

We moved to Hilo, Hawaii, where I lived
most of the time and was the student of the
strongest Kahuna Kapaau - a man named
Jack Wainaku. He was a police man and a
fisherman, turtle fisherman. We caught turtles
from the break water to Pūnāhā. I saw a few
turtles with string cancer, caught by the
Waialeale River, but not many - I think two.

Spent about of '42-43 in Waipio Valley with my kahu, Sam Kakaikua hui. In those days at Waipio or Waimanu, if you wanted a turtle, you could go to the right hand side of either valley before dark, you could grab a turtle in waist deep water. The turtles there, smell of Lepoa Lima. They feed in the big reef areas.

In the beginning of summer I would ride from Waipio to Kawahae on my mule, sheep by the water hole where the service station is now. In Kawahae. Maluwa hini, the historian for King Kapaemahu, would ride with me to Keahou & up to Keinani. Turtle was part of our diet & used as with Jack Kakaikua hui for religious rights. I saw no string cancer in the Kona & Kawahae waters.

When I returned from Guada Canal, the Solomon's, New Hebrides, Noumea, were our head quarters ~~was~~ ^{was}, Gilbert, the Philipines and Japan, as a diver for Gen. MacArthur. I finished college & fished. I also was in the Korean war.

I fished all the Hawaiian IIs except Kauai & Niihau - I dove, sometimes eight to ten hours a day, I studied, I learned many turtle grounds - From 1945 to 1955, I probably caught more turtles than any living man in Hawaii. I never killed any turtle under 150 to 200 LBS. Often I caught up to 200 mature turtles in 3 to 4 days of fishing.

The turtle is like a dove, you ~~should~~ ^{should} not catch him going to feed, but when he returns. The largest turtles come from Oahu, Molokai, Maui & Hawaii - Lanai has lots of small turtles. In Lanai, the turtles

are few. The leeward islands have a fairly large breeding stock, but since the breed every two or 3 years, it is hard to determine the number of breeding females. They also breed in the main Hawaiian island, or should I say Lay.

I notice a continuous string cancer growth since the mid 50s - in areas of fresh water bays - Kihoe Lagoon, Kaneohe bay, Kahala harbor, Hilo Harbor. It seems after the sewer systems were taken out of use, this string cancer increased greatly. I believe it is some kind of a pollution in heavy ^{human} populated areas, but what, I don't know. Kahala is very heavy in ~~arsenic~~ ^{arsenic}.

I have been sending this string cancer growth to Germany, England, France, to my friend Tok Conston, the Smithsonian Inst. etc. I sent many samples to the Smithsonian Institute and under ~~war~~ sea war fair, for both were conserved. I did not fish turtle except for our religious rights, to eat from 1956 to 1965 -

In 1965 or 1966 I had a mullet study for Oceanic Institute, also the ^{state} shark contract for four years - a Rocha Fellow Foundation shark contract at Kawoa have also.

Dr John Henrikson, Director of Oceanic Institute, heard from cousin Gilbert that I knew about turtles. John spent a lot of time with me working on turtles. It was ^{obvious} ~~obvious~~ that the turtle problem had to be addressed in...

We wrote a good project to catch and tag turtles in all the 8 main Hawaiian Islands, in the summer work the leeward islands, mainly French Frigate Shoals - Due to the increase of the string cancer, we both felt this was good timing.

The main thing, with my past records and our five year tagging program, we could come up with proper numbers to learn what the population was, was it endangered, ~~etc~~ was it stable, were was it.

You know what happened, W.M.F.S. reviewed it, he wrote our project, got alot of money to run the program, tagged 5 turtles at French Frigate Shoals and that was it. I have had several projects stolen and misused.

I had all my back records, all the equipment, the boats, skiffs, nets etc, with John being the world's authority on turtles, we would have learned if the turtle was an endangered animal in ~~the~~ the Hawaiian archipelago or not.

With the Mickey Mouse program you guys are running, who knows - what is your base line, what is your track record? ? ? what is your credibility - ?

In Fiji, there have been two turtles found with Hawaii tag on them.

One of the reasons I left Hawaii was due to the over number of turtles,

continuous president toward my people,
to see my people be used as second
class citizens. It gets worse yearly -

Seeing W.M.'s putting their standards
on our people - trying to take our indigenous
rights away is ridiculous - For we have
never been included in making any
decision, never been asked, just told. You
guys say I think, it, but where is your
track record, what credibility do you have - ?

I feel if John Henrikson and I
had got funded and carried out our
trustee project, you would have a strong
base line, good credibility. But you have none.

It reminds me of the Native Hawaiian
indigenous right that at W.M.F.S. Bob Simpson
and two other books put together, it is
~~prejudiced~~^{prejudiced}, one sided, there is no way I can
accept that negative report that is very, very
one sided. Read it, what do you think?

I just saw a ^{actual} movie called Blood
on the sands about a ~~political~~ case of a navy
officers wife, another called Hawaiian by
much new, ~~about~~^{James} - You should take the time and
see these videos - , sit back, you I'm sure none
of you realize what you are doing - maybe then
you might understand our side. This
prejudice still exist. when I was 19 years, I was
a SS. 12 - Also educated, Higher Education

If you want to keep me posted on your
trustee situation, I would appreciate it.

Alalo I mi loa iuhou,

P.S: As I evaluate the situation, it seems that Keolu Lagoon, Kahala Harbor area, Hilo Harbor, and Kaneohe bay are the places where the turtles are most affected.

I don't believe the Red Limu from Kaneohe bay is the problem. For 200 years boats have come to our islands with all kind of Limu on their hulls. Haven't found any Fluke, thought might be that dredged harbor might be the key, but Kawaihau does not affect the turtles. So it is something in the large population around the above harbors.

A water testing program should be set up in all harbors to learn what is different over a long period of time between the affected harbors and the others. Testing should be taken at 10⁺ different locations and depths - where the turtles feed and sleep during the day, outlets of water into the harbors, etc.

I did all the water testing for years for Kennedy Engineering out of S.F. for the water pollution of all the mills and stream run off for the HSPA study, starting from about 1966 to 1968 or so. This was a confidential report, paid for by the H.S.P.A., so I'm not sure if you can get a copy. I have a copy, but since I left Hawaii my kids probably disposed of it. I think it was called water quality studies of the Sugar industry in Hawaii by HSPA - by Kennedy Engineering - San Francisco - Calif.

We did all the harbor, including

is turtles
Loves.

Years,

There were some places very high in ^{ARSENIC} ~~arsenic~~. Kalia lagoon harbor, Hilo harbor, ~~that way between Lahaina~~ Olowalu half way to Lahaina on main - we tested every stream, every out let of water, for years, up to 100 fathom off shore from Hawaii.

The sugar plantations used a arsenic base spray to control weeds and grass in the sugar cane fields up to the early 1960 - over 100 years - it was called Agente a herbicide, that was ~~used~~ ^{discontinued} in the early 60s - arsenic is a base that does not break down, it remains in the soil and eventually ~~ends~~ ^{ends} up in the ocean.

W. L. L.

There is also natural arsenic in the soil. The crabs ^{lobsters} seem to have a higher % of arsenic than fish, this is why we see arsenic count is high, like Kalia lagoon & Hilo, many people get hives - when eating crabs, lobsters etc. the squid is high in arsenic - ALSO.

I don't believe arsenic is a problem with the turtle, I think population. Chemicals might be a part of it, what types are

questionable -

I have never caught a turtle with the string ~~on~~ cancer on Molo Kai, Lanai, Kaunohoue, Kahoohoue to Waipio on Hawaii - the leeward islands

Internal sicknesses later I will address - We as Hawaiians use everything of the turtle except the head. Alika