

HPA Sea Turtle Research and Conservation Program Activites

Monday, January 11, 2021

Helping A Hawksbill in Trouble

1/4/2021

Marc Hughes, a dive master operating out of Kona, observed a male hawksbill with a large circle hook caught in its left Jaw. It was obviously in pain and irritated by the large hook that was embedded in its jaw. Marc Hughes contacted Doug Perrine and, in turn, the message got to us at the Hawaii Preparatory Academy Sea Turtle Rescue Hotline.





In the image above, taken by Marc Hughes, you can see the large hook in the lower left jaw of the adult male hawksbill.

In talking with Irene Kelly, Sea Turtle Recovery Coordinator at NOAA Fisheries, Pacific Islands Fisheris Science Center, we made a decision to try and capture the hawksbill and remove the hook. On Saturday 1/09/2021, We launched two boats out of Honokohau Harbor (2 boats were used in order to maintain social distance between the two dive groups) and proceeded to the dive site just north of the harbor where the turtle had been seen.

We made our dive at ~0900 h and circled around the area where the hawksbill had been observed in the past (both when it was hooked and before). The visibility was good and we were able to keep about 30-40 feet apart in order to cover the maximum area possible. We saw one sleeping honu but no hawksbills..... until 44 minutes into the dive when we were running low on air. After a

Contributors

-  Laura Jim
-  mrice

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couple of attempts, Laura and Marc were able to capture the hawksbill and bring it toward the surface at 1000 h. With the help of the rest of the dive team and Thomas, we were able to get the turtle into the boat and begin working to remove the hook. It took about 15 minutes to work it loose and remove it from the jaw. While there was some damage to the tongue, it was on the left edge and did not appear to serious.

After the hook was removed, the turtle was measured, PIT tagged and marked with the designation "HA120" so that divers could monitor its recovery over the next few months. At 1030 hours, the Hawksbill was released and it swam vigorously away. We hope that it will make a full recovery from the hook injury and continue to live safely in the waters off of Kaloko-Honokohau.

Below are a few pictures of the hook we removed, the beautiful hawksbill & the dive team.



Large circle hook that was embedded in the lower left jaw of the hawksbill.



Marc Rice etches a number in the carapace so that divers can identify this particular turtle for a couple of months to report on its recovery from the hook.



Number etching on second right lateral scute- "HA120".



Left side of hawksbill showing the facial scale pattern.



Right side of hawksbill showing the facial scale pattern.



Dorsal surface of head.



Dive Team: Thomas, Marc, Doug & Laura

Posted by mrice at 10:43 AM



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