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Hawaiian Green Sea Turtle Blessing and Release Celebration

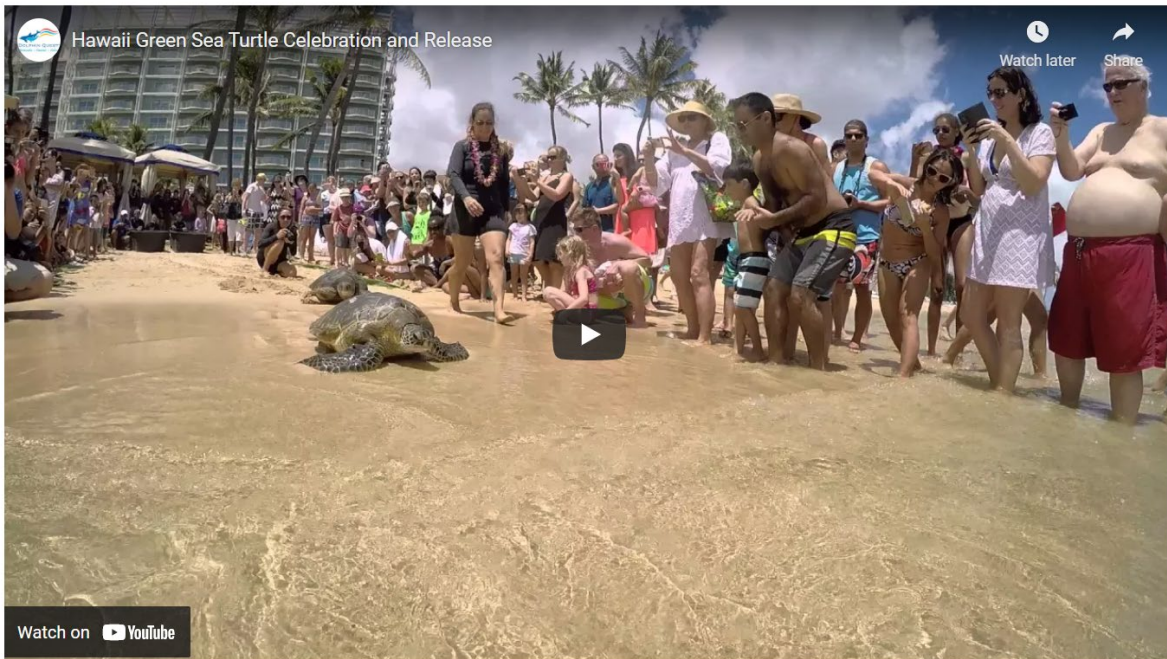
April 18, 2016



Four-year-old Hawaii green sea turtles Wailele and Momona, who were hatched at Sea Life Park and raised at Dolphin Quest, were released into the ocean on Saturday, April 16, 2016, as part of a collaborative conservation initiative to protect Hawaii's native and threatened turtle species.

These young honu (Hawaiian for green sea turtle) have been ocean ambassadors at The Kahala Hotel & Resort since May 2013. During that time, tens of thousands of school children and visitors to the resort have had the rare opportunity to connect with this threatened species up-

close and learn about their plight in the wild from Dolphin Quest's education team. This partnership between The Kahala Hotel & Resort, Dolphin Quest, Sea Life Park, NOAA and the Department of Land and Natural Resources plays an important role in the conservation of these beautiful animals in Hawaii. Watch video below of the turtle release.



This is the sixth pair of turtles that have been successfully released by Dolphin Quest Oahu into the wild. When they arrived in 2013 from Sea Life Park, they weighed only 20 pounds. Wailele and Momona now weigh over 100 pounds. They were fitted with a microchip for future tracking and a temporary ID on their shell in case of sightings the first few days after the release. Read more about Wailele and Momona in their “Animal Spotlight”.

Some of the turtles in the Hawaiian Islands are likely survivors from the early 70's when the Green sea turtle was added to the endangered species list. The growing tourist demand for exotic turtle meat and shell products took a toll on our Hawaii's local honu and dwindled the number of nesting females below 150. Now, 40 years later, that number is above 850.

The Hawaiian green sea turtle is currently a threatened species. Most of those 850 nesting females do so in northwest Hawaii on a low-lying coral atoll. Sea level rise could have a severe impact on their nesting grounds. Although sea turtles have been on the planet for over 1 million years, six of the seven species are threatened or endangered around the globe.

This ocean ambassador program raises public awareness of these issues, inspires them to help protect these animals in the wild and it directly impacts the growth of the Hawaiian green sea turtle population.



On Saturday, April 16, we celebrated the ocean release of four-year-old Hawaiian green sea turtles Wailele and Momona as part of a collaborative conservation initiative to protect this native turtle species.



Four-year-old Wailele and Momona



These young honu (Hawaiian for green sea turtle) were hatched at Sea Life Park and have been ocean ambassadors at The Kahala Hotel & Resort since May 2013.



The Dolphin Quest Oahu crew and Kumu Hula

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