

Turtles entangled in fishing lines

Marine authorities have rescued five turtles in the past three months

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Two green sea turtles found tangled in fishing line yesterday are the latest in what appears to be an unusually high number of reports of turtles in trouble in the last few months.

George Balazs, a turtle researcher with the National Marine Fisheries Service, said the agency has rescued five turtles stuck in fishing lines in the last three months.

Three of the five recently rescued turtles had to have a limb amputated because fishing line was too deeply embedded in the fins.

Ken Nichols, a co-owner of a North Shore dive shop, says he's found four turtles tangled in fishing line in the last 15-days.

He said he freed two of them, a third was taken to the National Marine Fisheries Service and the

fourth turtle was found dead in Kahana Bay yesterday during an underwater cleanup of the bay.

The turtle suffered from a tumor disease, but also had a hook in its mouth and 30 to 40 feet of fishing line wrapped around its neck and flippers.

A couple walking along Magic Island found another turtle that apparently beached itself yesterday.

The turtle had fishing line wrapped around its neck, but also appeared to be suffering from the tumor disease.

Further testing is necessary to determine whether the turtle beached itself because of the disease or from the fishing line, Balazs said.

He said he believes the turtle is not in danger of dying.

Monofilament used for fishing tightens after it gets wrapped around a turtle's neck or limbs, and since it does not corrode, the continuous tightening may make it hard for the turtle to swallow food or breathe and can render a fin useless, either by detaching the bone or amputating the fin entirely, Balazs said.

Ken Nichols, left, and Nick Lohr recover the body of a large turtle entangled in fishing line off Kahana Bay. State conservation officers took the turtle to the national fisheries service.

BY BARRY MARKOWITZ,
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