



TURTLE TRANSPLANT—George Balazs examines a new batch of sea turtle hatchlings brought in from French Frigate Shoals for rearing at Coconut Island.—Photo by Warren Roll.

Noise Could

By Robert Barr
Associated Press Writer

University of Hawaii marine biologist George Balazs says he's puzzled, but undaunted, after hatching only eight green sea turtles from about 280 eggs.

Balazs transplanted three nests of turtle eggs from the French Frigate Shoals to Coconut Island, and two of the nests were not fertile.

What baffles Balazs is that the 72 eggs in the third nest which did not hatch showed development from four days to ready-to-hatch.

"One would think they would all be in the same stage," Balazs said, "instead of dying all along the way.

"What really bewilders me is that some who were ready to hatch didn't try to peck out."

grounds, and Balazs is proceeding with his experiments on what the young turtles eat.

His research aims to open the way for commercial raising of the tasty turtles. There are plans to transfer more clutches of eggs to Coconut Island for incubation.

Balazs said the development of the eggs might have been hampered during the five days it took to move them to Honolulu. He said future nests will be moved in one day, and will be transported whole—sand and all.

"I'd like to tie this in with

THE COAST GUARD came to the rescue, however, by bringing in 122 hatchlings from the remote nesting

Hamper Sea Turtle Hatching

the jets at Kaneohe," Balazs said of his unhatched eggs. He said he can't prove a link, but "the hatchlings started kicking around to beat the band" whenever military jets flew over.

Balazs planted microphones in each nest to monitor the turtles' development.

THE HATCHLINGS—weighing one ounce and measuring two inches long—have moved into a Manoa campus laboratory, where control groups are fed formulas containing varied

amounts of protein and calories.

Balazs said biologists know little about the first year of the green sea turtle's life, or even how long it takes a turtle to grow to "platter size"—150 pounds.

Some literature suggests

the turtles are meat-eaters during the first year but Balazs said most of his subjects are thriving on a vegetarian diet. A few are fed meat.

Although disappointed by the few eggs which hatched, Balazs said the turtles fare

worse in the wild. Half the eggs normally hatch, but less than one per cent of the hatchlings reach maturity.

"They are picked up by birds, or eaten by crabs and fish," Balazs said. "It's amazing they've made it this long."