

## Hawaiian Green Sea Turtles

Honu (green sea turtles) are native to the Hawaiian Islands and can be found in our shallow coastal waters. Here at Puakō Beach, the turtles commonly swim into shallow waters to feed on the limu (algae) growing on the bottom. Sometimes they crawl out of the water onto the rocks or the beach to bask or sunbathe, usually during the daylight hours. This basking is unique to Hawaiian green turtles and is a naturally occurring behavior.

Although sea turtles live most of their lives in the ocean, adult females must return to land in order to lay eggs. Scientists believe that nesting females return to the same beach on which they were born. Sea turtles often travel long distances, up to 800 miles, from their feeding grounds to their nesting beaches. The eggs of the turtles are the size of ping-pong balls and have leathery shells. Turtles lay an average of 100 eggs in a nest dug in the sand.

Green turtles are protected by both state and federal laws as a threatened species. That makes it illegal to disturb or handle them in any way. Fines can be imposed for disturbing any sea turtle. If you see turtles being captured, harmed, harassed or killed, please call the Enforcement Division of the National Marine Fisheries Service at 974-6208. After business hours, please dial 0 and ask for "Enterprise 5469." You can aid in sea turtle recovery by reporting nesting or basking activities and dead, sick, injured or stranded turtles to the Honolulu Laboratory of the National Marine Fisheries Service at 943-1276 or 943-1221.

If you see turtles basking, it is important that you do not bother them. They will crawl back into the water on their own when they are ready. Please enjoy the beauty of this wonderful creature, be it above or below water.

*Mālama na honu*  
*(Take care of the turtles)*

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