

December 8, 1972

To: Dr. Alan Zeigler
From: Ronald M.K. Lau
Subject: Sea Turtles

Dear Dr. Zeigler, the sea turtles roaming the coasts of the Hawaiian chain are on the decline. I have come to this conclusion through conversations with some old time fishermen who have spent a great many years by the sea and have observed the reduction in the sightings of these creatures over the years. One of these fishermen no longer will kill or capture any and has burned his turtle net because of his feelings for these reptiles.

Some of the local people along the Keane - Hana coast hunt them by shooting them with .22 rifles from the shore and then diving after them. The so called "commercial" fishermen hunt them with scuba tanks and shoot the head of the turtle off with shark guns (shot gun cartridge at the end of a stick). And since this is illegal (to shoot them), they get around the law by cutting off the evidence (the turtle's head) before bringing it to shore. Turtles bring good money because it is scarce and, hence, greed breeds the worse in man.

Finally, I would like to add that there may not be time for a study while turtles are continued to be slaughtered. A more sensible approach would be to stop the slaughtering through fines and penalties and making the selling of the meat illegal. Then a study can be carried out and maybe if numbers of the turtles do increase the crop may be thinned. But as of present the crop is already much too thin.....

Aloha;

Ronald Lau
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