

letter &
articles sent
8-6-84



July 18, 1984

Steve Kaiser
Curator of Fishes
c/o Sea Life Park
Makapuu Point
Waimanalo, HI 96795

Dear Sir:

Enclosed are some photos of our green turtles basking. As you can see, we really do not have a good haul out area for them. Occasionally they crawl completely out up into the grass.

This behavior seems to coincide with feeding and warm weather. The day after a heavy feeding is when they haul out, especially on a warm sunny day. Only some of our green turtles haul out, the others have never been observed basking like that. Our greens have come from several areas: the Caribbean, Western Mexico and the Galapagos Islands to name a few. Possibly only those from certain areas are hauling out. We also have a loggerhead that exhibits this behavior.

The water temperature in the turtle ponds is around 72°F (22°C) and the air temperature in the low 80's F (27°-28°C). It seems like they bask more frequently in the spring, when the water is cooler 64°-68° (18-20°C) and the day is warm and sunny.

When they are basking, they are in a sleep like state and it takes some rousing to make them active. I suspect our turtles are basking to increase food metabolism after eating; however, they may be basking anytime hunger is not keeping them in the water searching for food.

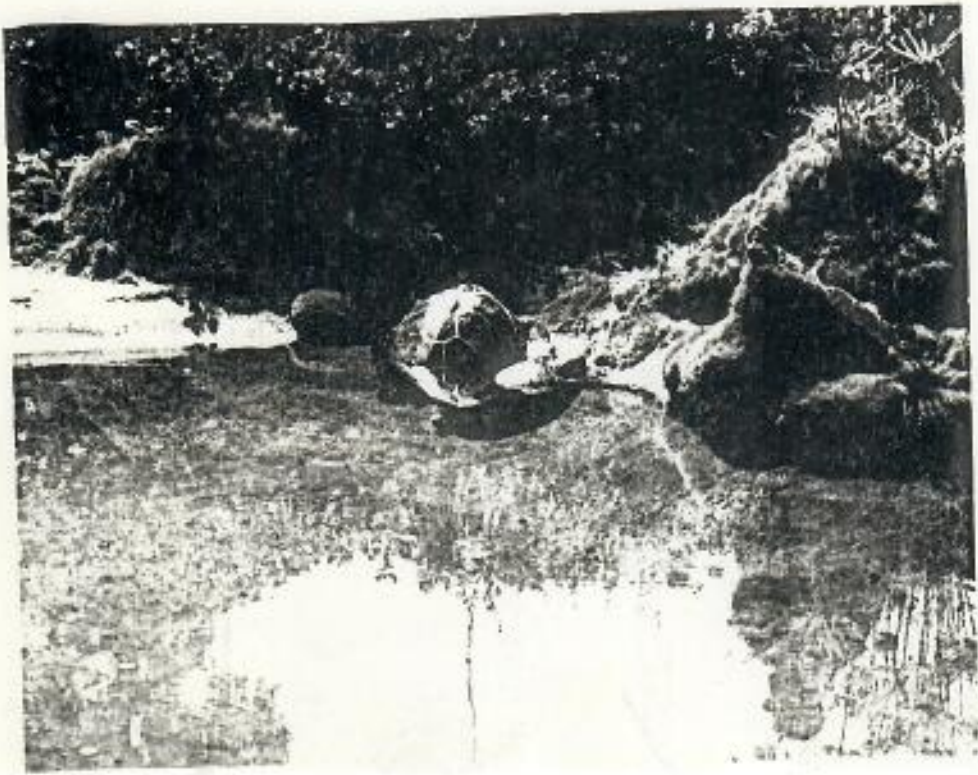
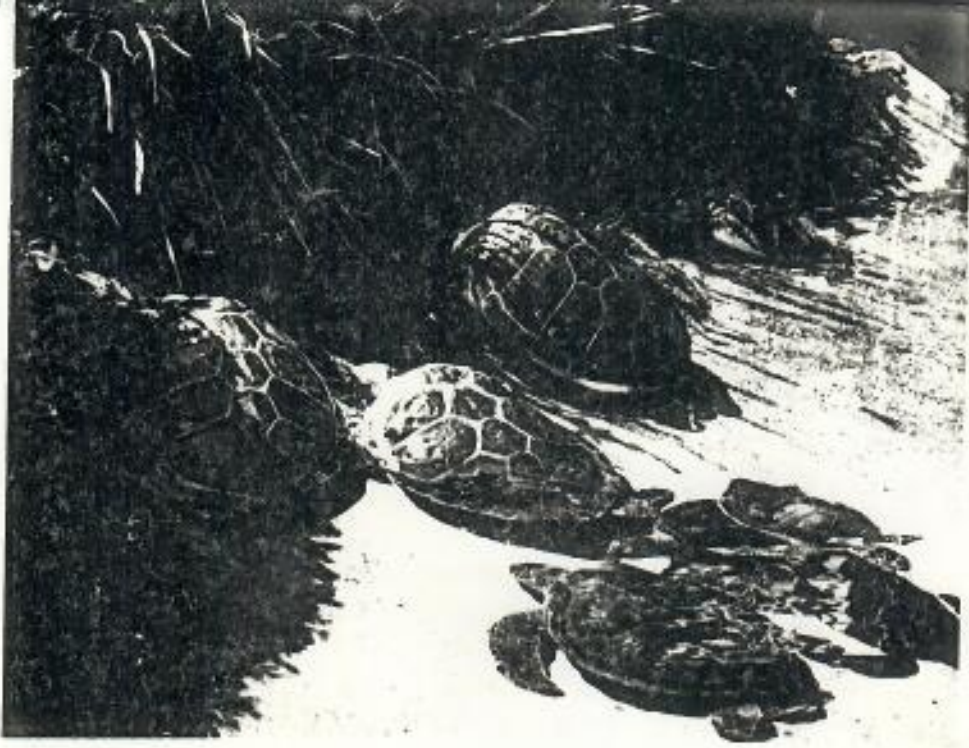
These are just casual observations of this behavior. No experimental observations have ever been made on our turtles. We would be glad to supply you any information we can on our turtles. Good luck on your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carl A. Jantsch".

Carl A. Jantsch
Aquarium Supervisor

CJ:lp





LONGMAN
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
HONOLULU LABORATORY
P. O. BOX 3830
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

October 22, 1984

F/SWC2:GHB

Mr. Carl A. Jantsch
Aquarium Supervisor
Sea World Inc.
1720 South Shores Road
Mission Bay
San Diego, CA 92109

Dear Mr. Jantsch:

I hope that you received the letter and literature on basking green turtles that I sent a few months ago, following your response to the notice in the AAZPA Newsletter.

Recently I was looking through one of the 1982 issues of Herpetological Review. In a note by Robert Hodge (copy enclosed), mention was made of a loggerhead turtle being rehabilitated at Sea World and later tagged and released. Sea Life Park and the Waikiki Aquarium here on Oahu regularly accept turtles for rehabilitation. I would be interested to learn approximately how many turtles are turned into Sea World each year, and what kind of tags are used when they are released.

I still plan to be on vacation in southern California during the first week of January. I hope to visit Sea World to meet with you in person, and to see the basking behavior exhibited by your sea turtles. Please let me know if you will be available sometime during that week.

Sincerely,

George H. Balazs
Wildlife Biologist

GHB:ey
cc: Balazs ✓
HL



October 26, 1984

George H. Balazs
Wildlife Biologist
U. S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
P. O. Box 3830
Honolulu, Hawaii 96812

Dear Mr. Balazs:

Thank you for the articles on sea turtles. I found them very interesting.

In answer to your letter, the number of sea turtles we receive each year varies greatly. For example, this year two were brought in, a juvenile loggerhead caught locally and a dying adult male Ridley from Monterey. Other years we have had from zero to 18 brought in. A large number per year usually occurred when customs confiscated a batch of hatchlings coming into the country or a long range fishing boat caught a bunch of hatchlings around some island off Latin America using a night light. When fishermen bring in turtles we inform them that they are violating federal law, thus the number they are bringing in is getting smaller.

We keep a number of turtles for educational purposes and display. We do release some, usually in small groups coordinated with a research project. In the past Margie Stinson has been the researcher. She has taken care of all tagging and records. Enclosed is a copy of those records.

Please do visit our park when you are in San Diego. Give me some advance notice so I can try to make sure some of the turtles will be basking.

Sincerely,

Carl A. Jantsch
Aquarium Supervisor
Sea World San Diego

CAJ/kw

Enclosures

February 6, 1985

F/SWC2:GHB

Mr. Carl A. Jantsch
Aquarium Supervisor
Sea World San Diego
1720 South Shores Rd., Mission Bay
San Diego, CA 92109-9980

Dear Mr. Jantsch:

I am writing to tell you that I was able to visit Sea World with my family during our recent vacation to California. We were there on Sunday, December 31st. The decision to drive to San Diego on this date was made at the last minute, consequently there was no opportunity to contact you in advance as previously planned. I asked at the information desk if you were available, but was told you were not working that day. I regret that my plans could not have been arranged differently so we could have met in person.

I spent about an hour observing and photographing your sea turtles in the ponds surrounding the main entrance gate. None were actually basking on the banks during this time, but quite a few of the green turtles were motionless near to the water's edge. I was able to get a brief look at the plastron of four of these turtles. All were white or light yellow with no sign of the heavy pigment characteristic of the east Pacific stock. The temperature of your seawater in the turtle pool at this time of the year is quite cool, and it is easy to understand why the turtles were so lethargic. However, I was told by an employee at the entrance gate that the turtles become very active at feeding time.

I was amazed at the number of coins people tossed into the turtle pool during the hour I spent there. The animals seem to attract a considerable amount of attention and discussion among your customers. Since they are so popular, at some point you might want to consider putting up an interpretive sign for viewers to read. For example, I overheard many customers asking each other what kind of turtles they are, how large they grow, do they bite, etc. It might also be helpful to indicate the location of the turtles on the guide map given to each visitor. If you need any additional background literature on sea turtles, I would be happy to mail it to you. Also, if you ever need tags, I would be able to supply them to you.

I should also mention that all of your sea turtles looked exceedingly healthy and well-fed. Usually with such a large group of turtles, this is not an easy thing to accomplish. You obviously have the situation well under control, and are doing a superb job.

Sincerely,

George H. Balazs
Wildlife Biologist

cc: Balazs
HL

SEA LIFE PARK



June 14, 1985

Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal Wildlife Permit Office
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Sir,

I recently had a chance to review "The Care and Maintenance Standards for Sea Turtles Held in Captivity" produced by your office and I would like you to consider adding under facility construction some amendment to include an area for sea turtles to haul out.

Here at Sea Life Park we exhibit both Green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and the Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) both of which on a daily basis haul out and bask. The only other facility that I know of that has provided haul out areas is Sea World and they have reported that their sea turtles also haul out and bask.

This seems to be an important behavior. Many of our turtles that regularly bask show less health problems than those that only bask occasionally.

I salute your interest in addressing the care of sea turtles being held in captivity and hope a haul out area will be included in later guidelines. If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Steven Kaiser
Curator of Fishes

cc: George Balaz, N.M.F.S.
Honolulu, Hawaii

Kim Wright, U.S.F.W.S.
Honolulu, Hawaii

4-23-84

REPORTS WANTED OF SEA TURTLES BASKING ASHORE

Green turtles, Chelonia mydas, regularly bask ashore during the daytime on remote beaches located hundreds of miles to the northwest of Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, Hawaiian green turtles held in captivity also display this unusual basking behavior when provided with a sloping ramp that offers them the opportunity to haul out. At Sea Life Park on Oahu they can commonly be seen basking on a concrete ramp and its adjacent artificial sand beach. Studies have been published about basking in Hawaii, but very little is known about sea turtles basking elsewhere, especially when they are in captivity. We would appreciate receiving information on this interesting subject. How many aquarium facilities have ramps that would permit sea turtles to bask, should they have the desire to do so? If a ramp or other sloping area is present, do the turtles bask or attempt to bask? All who respond to this request for information will be sent additional details on the basking behavior seen in Hawaii.

Steve Kaiser
George Balazs
c/o Sea Life Park
Makapuu Point
Waimanalo, Hawaii 96795