



## SEA TURTLE TAG CENTER OF THE PACIFIC

June 1990

The Sea Turtle Tag Center of the Pacific is a cooperative program to make available tags, tag applicators, and technical assistance in the tagging of sea turtles for research purposes to government and other qualified organizations in the Pacific islands region of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. The program is jointly conducted by the Southwest Fisheries Center Honolulu Laboratory of the National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, and the University of Hawaii's Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB). The program is designed in particular to aid those locations where small to moderate numbers of tags (i.e., 100-500) are needed, and local authorities or organizations might not otherwise order them from the manufacturer.

The tags available for use are made of Inconel, a superior corrosion-resistant alloy composed of cadmium and nickel. The tags are self-piercing, self-locking, and simple to use when applied with a special plierlike applicator to the trailing edge of a turtle's front flippers. All tags are imprinted consecutively with a letter-number combination to permanently identify individual turtles. In addition, the following inscription appears on each tag:

Write HIMB  
University  
Hawaii 96744

Persons who report the resighting of a tagged turtle to this address are sent a T-shirt bearing a sea turtle logo. The resighting information that is received is relayed in a timely manner to the research organization responsible for tagging the turtle.

The distribution to tags in the Pacific islands region under this cooperative program has been under way for several years, but without the benefit of a formal name until now.

Organizations interested in receiving more information about the availability of tags from the Sea Turtle Tag Center of the Pacific should write to: G. H. Balazs, Southwest Fisheries Center Honolulu Laboratory, National Marine Fisheries Service, 2570 Dole Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822-2396 (FAX 808-942-2062).



## How to tag a sea turtle using the self-piercing, self-locking Inconel alloy tags supplied by the Sea Turtle Tag Center of the Pacific

- Step 1: Remove a tag from the strip and record its identification number on the tagging form. Be careful not to bend the tag from its original shape. Only peel back enough tape on the strip to remove one or two tags at a time. If more tape is removed, the tags are liable to fall off and be lost.
- Step 2: With the pointed (piercing) side of the tag up, place the end of your index finger inside the tag against the bend.
- Step 3: Hold the applicator in your other hand with the painted mark (or label) on the handle facing up. Using your index finger, pull the tag straight back into the open jaws of the applicator. A firm pull will be needed for the tag to snap completely into its correct position. Take care not to squeeze the applicator together before you are ready to tag the turtle. If the handles are squeezed part way and then released, the tag will fall out.
- Step 4: Locate the correct site where the tag will be applied to the trailing edge of the front flipper. If someone is available to help, have the person hold the turtle so it won't move around. Be sure to position the tag so there will be some "overhang" after it is attached to the flipper.
- Step 5: Apply the tag by squeezing the applicator together in a firm, steady manner. The tag point will pierce the flipper and lock into place with the tip bending securely over. The applicator must be squeezed together with some force at the final point in order to *fully lock the tag*. It may be helpful to use both hands when squeezing the applicator.
- Step 6: Repeat the entire procedure and apply a second tag at the same site on the other front flipper. All turtles should be double tagged in this manner. Use consecutive tag numbers on the same turtle, whenever possible. If a tag is ruined for some reason, please record this information on the tagging form. If the recommended tagging site has been damaged or for some other reason is unsuitable for tag application, then an alternate site may be used along the trailing edge of the front flipper.