



K E O L A I K E K A I

NEWS

Jane Martin
923-1531

December 10, 1973

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nine large green sea turtles were tagged and released on the Windward shore today by the University of Hawaii and Sea Life Park, as part of a joint study of the animals breeding and migratory habits.

Details of the study were worked out this week between Dr. Edward Shallenberger, Vice President of Sea Life Park and George Balazs, Junior Marine Biologist at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology at Coconut Island.

Approximately fifteen turtles remain at Sea Life Park, five at the feeding pool, three in the Hawaiian Reef Tank and another seven in the turtle pond nearby.

Green sea turtles have been found in excess of 400 pounds and can lay up to 200 eggs per year. The University of Hawaii and Sea Life Park are using recently developed incubation techniques to attempt to produce live offspring. Normally, the animals bury their eggs in about 30 inches of sand and hatchlings appear in 45 to 65 days, depending upon temperatures of the sand.

In the five years the turtles have been exhibited at Sea Life Park, all have survived captivity in good health, however, no live young have ever been produced at the park.

(MORE)

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Protective legislation is now under consideration by the State Department of Land and Natural Resources which would place stronger controls on the capturing of green sea turtles, as their number are being rapidly depleted.

Persons capturing any of the tagged green giants should notify the Coconut Island facility. Complete information is printed on each tag.

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FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE



RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE OCEAN

THE INTERNATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHIC FOUNDATION

10 RICKENBACKER CAUSEWAY, VIRGINIA KEY, MIAMI, FLORIDA 33149
Telephone: (305) 361-2186
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3 January 1974

Mr. George Balazs
Hawaiian Institute of Marine Biology
Coconut Island, Hawaii

Dear Mr. Balazs:

I read with interest the 1½-page news release about your green-turtle tagging program in cooperation with Sea Life Park. Do you have any additional information about this study? It would make an interesting brief item for our leaflet Sea Secrets, a sample of which is enclosed.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Faith Turnbull". The signature is written in dark ink and has a long, sweeping underline.

Faith Turnbull
Sea Secrets Editor

Enc: SS 17-6
FT:ea

January 16, 1974

Miss Faith Turnbull
SEA SECRETS Editor
The International Oceanographic Foundation
10 Rickenbacker Causeway
Virginia Key, Miami, Florida 33149

Dear Miss Turnbull:

Many thanks for your letter of January 3 which expressed interest in the tagging of Hawaiian green sea turtles. Investigations have thus far included intensive surveys at French Frigate Shoals (23° 45' N 166° 10' W) during the nesting season as well as the tagging of sub-adults in the feeding grounds around the major inhabited islands. As you are probably aware, little tagging work has been conducted on turtles found in feeding areas because much effort must be expended in their capture. Most tagging studies throughout the world have taken place at nesting beaches where females conveniently come ashore at specific sites. Because valuable information can also be obtained from tagging turtles in feeding areas, I have taken advantage of every opportunity to engage in such activity.

In addition to netting, tagging and releasing individuals in the wild, I have encouraged the release of captive animals where excessive numbers seemed to be present. Besides the turtles released from Sea Life Park which you read about, 21 other animals have been set free from the Waikiki Aquarium facility. Ten sub-adults were released off the beach on January 29, 1973, while four sub-adults and seven adults were released on March 24, 1973, after being transported by Coast Guard cutter to the waters off Kauai. Three captures have thus far been reported. One animal released from Waikiki Beach was taken by a fisherman off the south coast of Molokai eight months later, while a large adult released off Kauai was taken off the north shore of Oahu five months later. The most interesting return occurred on December 9 when Mr. Ron McOmber, an experienced conservation-minded diver, captured

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by hand off the south coast of Lanai one of the adults that had been released off Kauai. This represented a movement of over 200 miles. After close examination the animal was again set free. Of particular interest was the observation that large sections of laminae on the carapace were peeling off with healthy new shell located underneath. One might speculate that the time spent in captivity with subsequent release to the wild where differing temperatures and pressures existed may have stimulated this shell molting.

As funds permit, we will continue to tag turtles in Hawaii's feeding grounds in order to collect information on migrations, growth rates and survival. I have enclosed an article on sea turtle conservation in Hawaii which may also be of interest to you.

Sincerely,

George H. Balazs
Jr. Marine Biologist

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Enclosure