

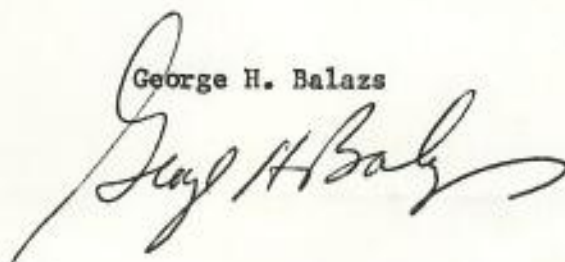
SEA TURTLES AS NATURAL FISH-AGGREGATION DEVICES

The value of green sea turtles as ecological, educational and aesthetic components of our Hawaiian marine environment is well-known to many residents and tourists who have seen these great reptiles swimming in island waters. These reasons alone seem sufficient to justify current protective laws aimed at preventing further population declines following many years of heavy and uncontrolled exploitation. However, an additional benefit of special interest to the fishing community has now come to light. The following short but true "fish story" was recently related to me by my colleague, John Naughton, of the National Marine Fisheries Service:

While trolling between Kauai and Niihau during calm weather, a turtle about two-feet long was seen floating at the surface with several seabirds circling overhead. A closer inspection revealed the presence of small fish aggregated under the turtle along with two mahi mahi. As the boat passed by, the turtle quickly dove out of sight and both fish were hooked-up and landed. The total catch amounted to a respectable 40 lbs.

Maybe there is something to the Japanese "Urashima Taro" folk-tale where the sea turtle becomes the fisherman's good friend!

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