

Robert A. Childers
3040 Alder Circle
Anchorage, AK 99504

Mr. George Baleze
Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology
P. O. Box 1346
Coconut Island
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

December 6, 1977

Dear Mr. Baleze:

Following our telephone conversation of late July, other pressing commitments preempted my time, and I have been unable to return to marine turtles until this month. My apologies for the delay.

Enclosed is an approximate translation of "The Egg-laying Season of Hawksbill Turtles in Melanesia" by Messrs. Kajihara, Uchida and Takase, which I promised to send. As I indicated over the phone, my translator was unable to identify some species' names in the first paragraph, as well as, apparently, the referenced journal. Should you know the omitted species, I would be interested in hearing.

You may be interested in hearing that, in addition to Andy McKeown's work in the Solomons, I have learned that a survey of marine turtles is now underway in Papua-New Guinea by Ms. Sylvia Spring, Wildlife Ecologist, Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Branch, P. O. Box 2585, Konedobu, P-NG. In her letter, Ms. Spring indicated her expectation that Dr. Pritchard will be going there to help draw up a five-year management and conservation program this coming year.

If you know of any other researchers working in Melanesia, I would appreciate hearing of them.

You might also be interested in an account of a sailor-acquaintance who in November, 1975 was sailing just off the southerly islands of an atoll whose principle island is Uvea, Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia (approximately 166°30'E; 20°30'S), just outside Passe' de Styx and another pass about 100 yards away surrounding an islet. Tide was running full flood with a current exiting the atoll's lagoon at about five knots. Just outside the passes they encountered a rafting of turtles which covered an area 150-200 yards across. He reported the turtles were very tightly packed with carapaces about 24" long and each turtle being no more than two feet from the next. The group's limits were distinct without stragglers. The group was diving in unison, staying under perhaps a minute or two before resurfacing. This was repeated at intervals of 5-10 minutes and was observed for 1 to 1 1/2 hours until darkness required moving the yacht.

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I should mention that John recounted the story from memory and that other descriptions of his travels were equally detailed. Taken literally, it indicates well over 20,000 animals, and in any case, a considerable number. Any comments?

Best,



Robert A. Childers
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RAC/m