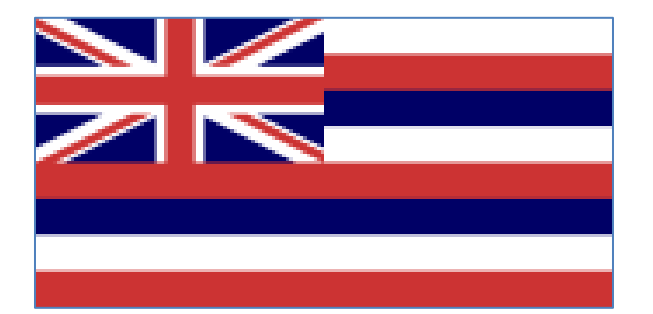


# A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP WITH HAWAIIAN AND POLYNÉSIE FRANÇAISE GREEN TURTLES 1963-2016

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1964 Paea Tahiti – Lagoon harvest for dinner. Happily, a small honu missed that meal due to my poor aim as a 21-year old novice spear fisher.



1991 Scilly Atoll – Rene Tuputu and family members hand-capturing a male honu for traditional dinner.



1991 Scilly Atoll – Rene Tuputu extended family and guests.



2006 Bora Bora – Mating pair of honu captured for satellite tracking. Project conducted by SPREP and PF Government Miri Tatarata.



2010 Bora Bora – Honu petroglyph symbol of Tahitian power carved into stone of ancient marae temple.

The story of green turtles being restored in the Hawaiian Islands during recent times has been heralded in several scientific and popular publications, but perhaps most eloquently in "The Book of Honu" and on the Turtle Trax web page <[www.turtles.org](http://www.turtles.org)> authored by Peter Bennett and Ursula Keuper-Bennett. Less known to most is the past and present complexities of the green turtles of French Polynesia, where they are also called honu. The bond between the native peoples and honu of the far-flung islands of French Polynesia continues to be deep-rooted, diverse, and intense, likely as previously existed in Hawaii, and may happen again, as the honu population of Hawaii proceeds ever upward and the tumor disease continues in decline. My relationship with green turtles began in French Polynesia in 1963 and evolved, through a series of lucky events, into a 43-year endeavor focused in the Hawaiian Archipelago. In 1963, my wife Linda and I sold our few possessions, emptied our small bank account, and left California to experience life in the South Seas among the people of Tahiti. Our journey there included a week in Hawaii before flying to the newly-opened jet airport near Papeete. Through the kindness of strangers, for seven months we subsisted in the then-outlier District of Paea in Tahiti. Visa limitations eventually returned us to California on a cargo ship via Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas and Panama. A few months later, we were back in Hawaii building a life, family, and careers that endure to the present.

I saw my first sea turtle in Tahiti, a juvenile honu that would have been dinner if not for my poor aim as a spear fisher. Later, walking the shoreline of Bora Bora with Linda, I saw my second sea turtle kept as a pet in a pen on the reef flat. I regularly still dream about French Polynesian people, islands, and turtles, as the natives still dream at night when an ancestor tells them where a turtle can be caught the next day on the reef. Since leaving in 1964 I've returned to French Polynesia on six short trips, five by invitation to assist with sea turtle studies, and once with Linda for a brief stop on a cruise vacation to Sydney. The most memorable visit was in 1991 to remote Scilly Atoll to work with Rene Tuputu and family, Rene being one of the most knowledgeable turtle hunters of the region. My most recent visit was in October 2010 as part of the "First International Symposium on Sea Turtles in French Polynesia" where Rene Tuputu and I met again after 20 years.

There is great potential for traditional ties with the honu to persist, on a sustainable basis, among the people of French Polynesia. The status of the stocks and the sustainability of the harvest need to be examined within the cultural context of island communities. I am committed to playing a role in aiding both the honu and the people in their interwoven relationships.



1976 Miami, Florida – IUCN Marine Turtle Farming Task Force.



1977 Necker Island.



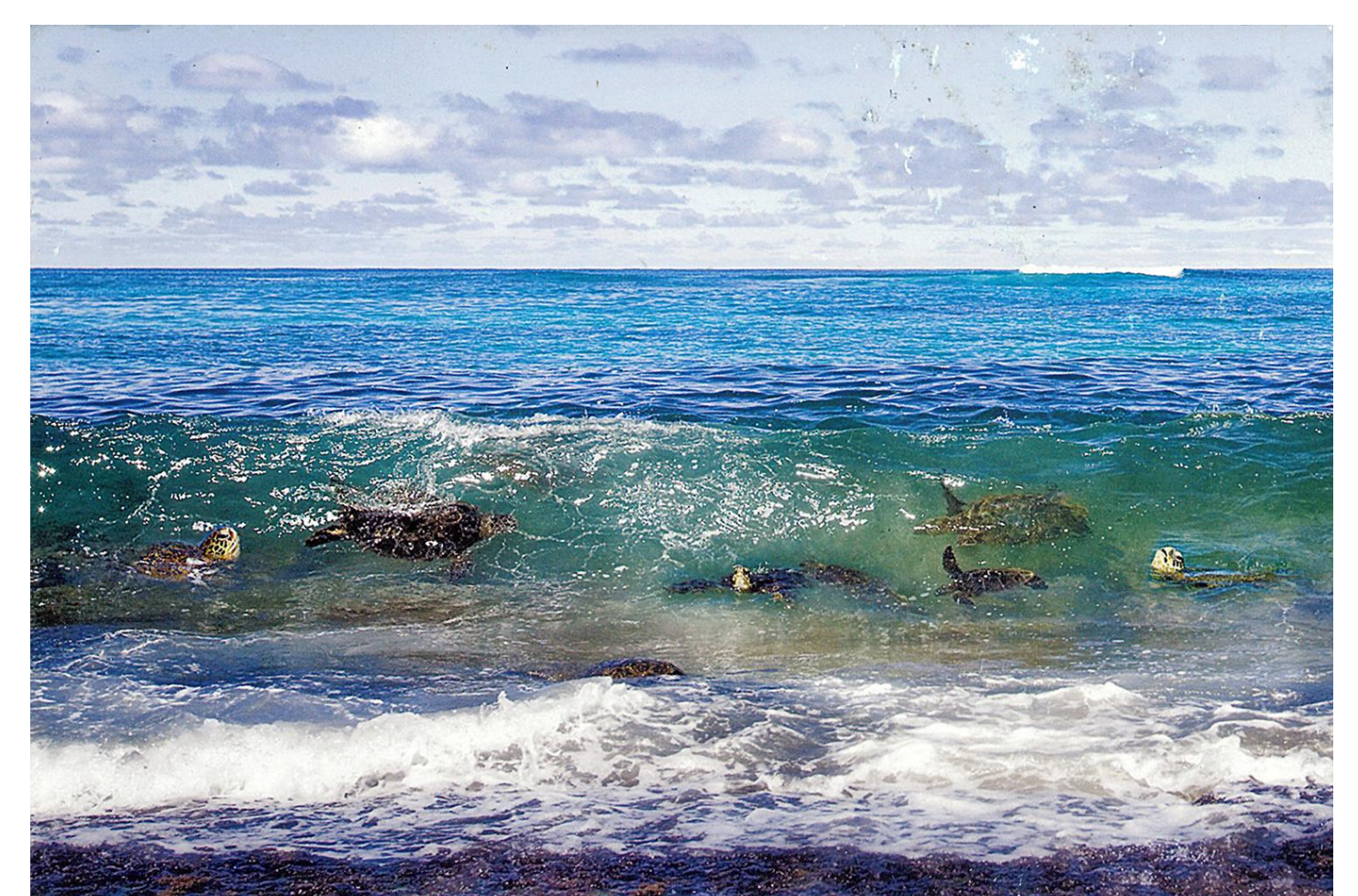
1973 – Prominent honu nesting site of East Island at French Frigate Shoals in the remote Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.



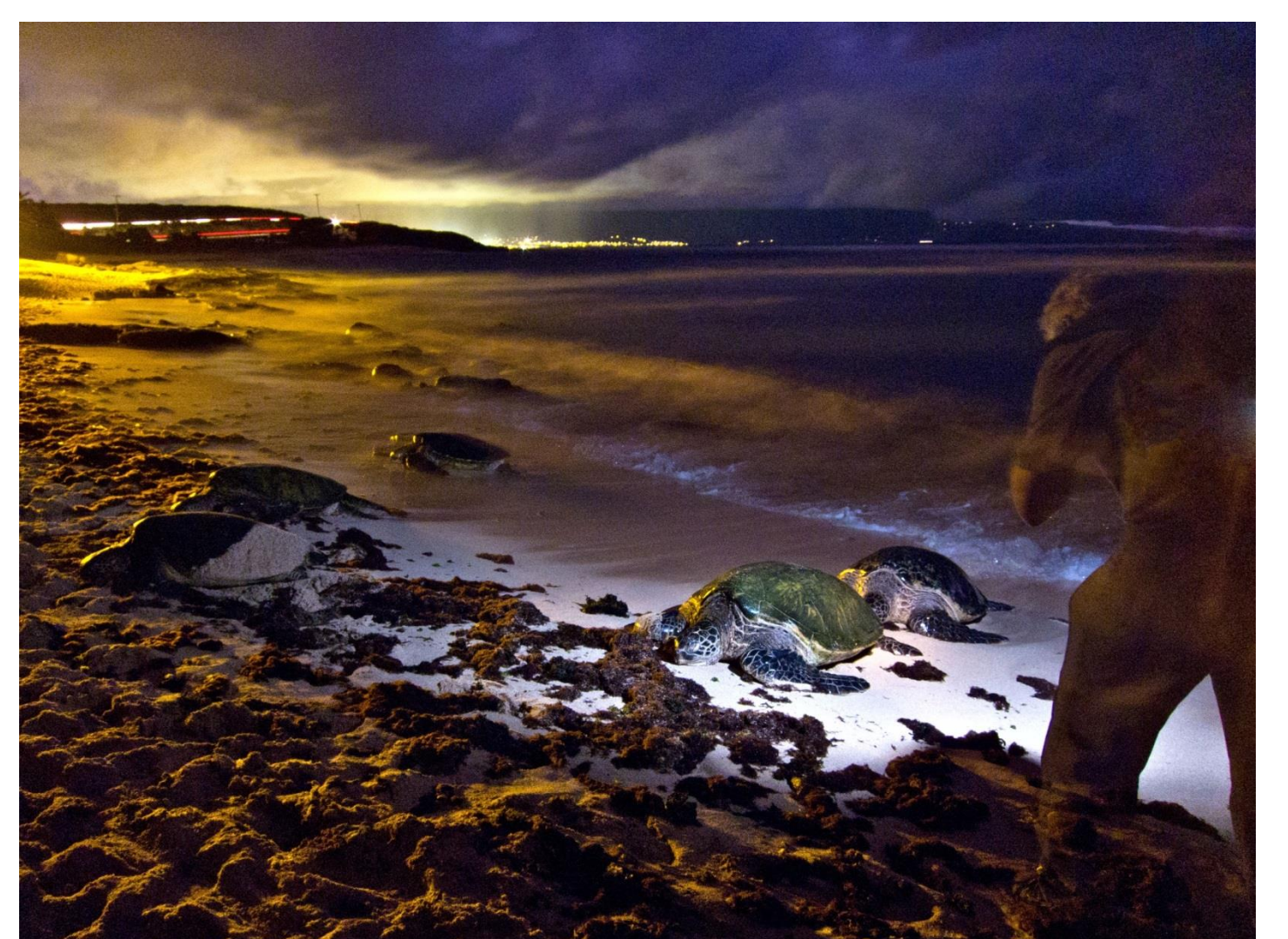
1973 – First of 43 annual field camps to monitor and tag nesting honu at East Island.



1974 – Honu nesting at East Island.



2010 Laniakea, Oahu – Honu foraging near shore in abundance.



2012 Hookipa, Maui – Numerous honu coming ashore at sunset for their nightly sleep.