



# University of Hawaii at Manoa

Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology  
P.O.Box 1346 • Coconut Island • Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744  
Cable Address: UNIHAW  
August 26, 1974

Dear Mr. and Mr. Howard,

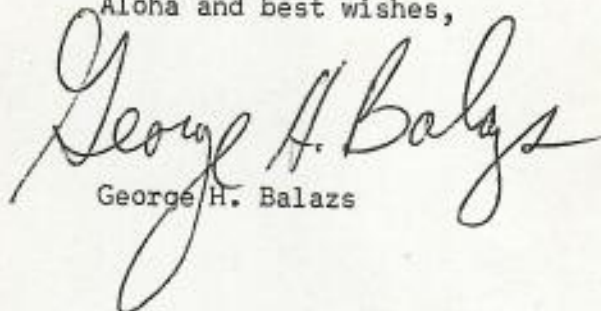
Thank you very much for your telephone call yesterday morning telling about the hatching of the sea turtle nest. I was most pleased to learn of the success. I was unable to contact the person who would be traveling to the Big Island, therefore I have enclosed \$4.00 to cover the cost of duplicating the photographs and mailing the preserved turtles. Please address to my work address (P.O. Box 1346, Kaneohe, HI-96744). I am very excited about examining the specimen as from your color descriptions I believe it to be the hawksbill sea turtle. I will certainly notify you as soon as the positive identification has been made. Also I have enclosed a narration of the events surrounding the only other documented nesting of a hawksbill in the Hawaiian Islands. I have reproduced a copy from the book, *Turtles of the United States* by Carl H. Ernst and Roger W. Barbour. Undoubtedly other hawksbills have layed eggs on Hawaiian beaches over the years, however, none have been offically reported in recent times. The old Hawaiians knew of the hawksbill, calling it E'A. You may be interested to know that I have several live 40 lb hawksbills here at Coconut Island that were brought from Western Samoa at two weeks of age. They are now two and one half years old and have been used to study growth in captivity. A mature adult hawksbill capable of laying eggs would probably not be less than 80lbs. In Samoa as well as other areas of the tropics where the hawksbill still occurs it is killed for its meat and shell. Some of the tourist shops here in Honolulu sell whole stuffed hawksbills imported from Asia and the Western Pacific. I have reported and helped to stop this illegal traffic in endangered wildlife products whenever possible. Some of the hawksbills I have raised will soon be transferred for display at Sea Life Park.

With your permission, I would like to prepare a short scientific report documenting the events of your turtle's nesting and the subsequent hatching. In order to do this, I would like for you to verify a few of the important details. It is my understanding that the turtle came ashore at Punaluu black sand beach on the evening or early morning of June 13 or 14 and that Mr. Howard followed the tracks after sunrise. These tracks led across a paved road, were obstructed by a stone wall, came back across the road where egg laying took place on the sand beach. I have enclosed a map of the area and it would be very helpful if you can mark the approx. location. I believe several unsuccessful pits were dug by the turtle but I am unsure of how many. The presence of eggs in the final spot was confirmed by Mr. Howard by digging down just enough to expose a few eggs. The nest site was subsequently protected by encircling it with fencing. On four days during the incubation period high tides ( or surf?) brought water up over the egg site. According to my tide calendar, high tides occurred between July 18 and 21st. I wonder if these are the days which you made reference to. On August 17th, 65 days after laying, a depression

was noted in the sand above the eggs. On August 24th 157 live baby turtles were found in the enclosure. Upon digging into the ground, 6 eggs were found that did not develop and 25 turtles were found live but trapped ( or were some of the 25 found dead?). You and your husband have lived in this area of the Big Island for approx. 45 years and this is the only evidence of a sea turtle nesting except for egg shells accidentally found near the same area by a friend several years ago.

These are the details as I have noted them. Undoubtedly I have made mistakes and I will be most grateful if you could correct me. Again, my thanks for contacting me concerning this very interesting event. I will be writing to you again in the very near future.

Aloha and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George H. Balazs". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

George H. Balazs