



UGLY BUT NICE—A rare loggerhead turtle gobbles squid at Sea Life Park after a mysterious ocean journey to Hawaii.—Star-Bulletin Photo by Warren Roll.

Battered Vagrant Gets a Lift and Finds a Home in Hawaii

By Helen Altom
Star-Bulletin Writer

A Waianae veterinarian fishing off Lanai recently rescued an injured stranger in Hawaiian waters—a loggerhead turtle battered by sharks.

Scientists say it's only the second such turtle ever found here. They speculate it may have escaped from captivity somewhere because it isn't afraid of people.

The rare, 200-pound animal is under treatment at Sea Life Park where it is reported "eating squid like a handit . . . and eating out of people's hands."

DR. LYNN MCKINNEY of the Waianae Veterinary Clinic said his family was fishing from a boat at Penguin Banks "and the water was flat, and we thought we saw a log. We always fish by logs and we came up on it."

He said his wife, a reporter for Hawaii Fishing News, discovered the log was a turtle and wanted to get pictures of it.

"We came up close to it, and it tried to get on the boat to rest—it was so tired. We stopped the boat and it went all around looking for a ledge to climb on," McKinney said.

"We thought it was a common old turtle, but we couldn't see leaving him out there. After about half an hour of playing cowboy, we finally got him roped—it's not the easiest thing to get a rope around—and brought him back.

"Being a veterinarian, I still don't know too much about turtles," McKinney said. "I didn't know what to do with him."

HE SAID THE TURTLE had been attacked by sharks and had lost his tail and a flipper. He had a big bite on his head and he was heavily infested with parasites.

"He had two big barnacles on his back that looked like eyes sticking out," McKinney said.

"All turtles cry, and he was sure crying. Tears were running out of his eyes. He was a nice turtle," McKinney added.

He called the National Marine Fisheries Service, which suggested he take the turtle to Edward Shallenberger, director of operations at Sea Life Park.

Park officials said yesterday the turtle was "really emaciated and in extremely bad shape, but he seems to be recovering nicely."

"He is not a beauty. He's a

beat-up turtle and he has a great big head—bigger than most turtles," they said.

GEORGE H. BALAZS, University of Hawaii research biologist and an authority on turtles, noted the loggerhead's condition and surmised. "It's likely that he drifted off track and floated here."

He said loggerhead turtles generally live in the Atlantic Ocean but some are found off Baja California, off Fiji and the south coast of Japan.

"This one is a lost individual from another population," Balazs said.

He said in the late 1930s or early 1940s, former Waikiki Aquarium Director Spencer Tinker identified the only other loggerhead turtle found in the Hawaiian Islands.

Balazs suggested the new arrival might have gotten away from a facility elsewhere because of its unusual acceptance of humans and captive conditions.

"It sticks its head out of the water waiting to be fed," he said. "Wild turtles don't act that way—even sick and tired ones. A wild turtle would be fearful."