

6/26/78

TURTLE SURVEY OF THE ISLAND OF KAUAI BETWEEN JUNE 6-JUNE 9, 1978

BY ALAN K. H. KAM*

June 6, 1978 - Tuesday

Aloha Airlines to Kauai, leave 0630. Weather over Kauai - cloudy and windy, rain over the mountains. Nawiliwili Harbor waters brown from runoff and choppy. 90% cloud cover. Pick up car in Lihue from American International (Kauai Sands Hotel/car package deal) and head to Kaakaaniu and Hanalei to look at water conditions. Attempted to go down dirt road to Kaakaaniu, too muddy for car rental. Talked to man in Chevrolet Blazer coming from coast along road - no houses built and road is very treacherous. Next road down, a cattle road, is unlocked but road is worse. Will go to Hanalei and Haena. After passing Kilauea Bay Lighthouse - closed till 1200 - visited an area called Anini, tide rising, a little bit of surf but water looks clean. Checked out small channel where in the past I had caught a turtle. Tomorrow will come here to snorkel and then SCUBA. Proceed to Hanalei, Princeville - Pepe St., and looking from the cliffs try to locate a trail down the cliff. The trail was found, will survey the area with SCUBA, water very clean, looks like an ideal spot for turtles - lots of patches of reefs, therefore ledges and turtles? Head to Haena, rainy, a few transients on road hitchhiking, locate Dolphin restaurant by side of road near Hanalei river. Reach end of the road, heavy water runoff has cut a 2-3' channel through the sand beach. One-two cars of tourist, no Zodiacs, a very peaceful scene, photographs taken. Turn around and visit "Sea Sage" a dive shop at Hanalei and then go to Kauai Sands, a hotel located on the beach next to "The Market Place," a trendy

* Accompanied by Mark Scheele, MOP student, University of Hawaii

Whalers Village-type tourist stop. Weather looks more cloudy, no patches of blue sky so I have decided to go cruising to Poipu-Spouting Horn area.

The water at Poipu was relatively calm, Spouting Horn quite peaceful and looked good for diving. Picked up two aluminum 80's at Sea Sage in Poipu, asked about turtles to the salesman (a black, who surfs and dives). He didn't know of turtles at Spouting Horn and only suggested that a few were seen at Koloa Landing. Went to Brennecke's for some body surfing and then back to the Kauai Sands.

June 7, 1978 - Wednesday

Setting up my dive gear I found out I forgot my weight belt (8 lbs). Luckily I had an extra (3 lbs) and Mark S. loaned me another 4 lbs along with his SCUBAPRO back buoyancy-compensator (push-button diving). We headed toward Anini at 0700, parked and donned our snorkel gear to first make a survey of the area.

A 1-3 foot breaking swell from the north was creating a current running toward Hanalei. By snorkeling through the surf, a fair amount of area was surveyed. 0745 Mark motioned to me to come to where he was floating. He had seen a turtle on the bottom, sitting on the rocks, 10-15 feet below. I could not locate the turtle but finally saw it as it swam out to sea. Carapace covered with calcareous algae, <20" length, not particularly curious of divers. We followed the coast toward Hanalei; the bottom that we surveyed mostly flat, little ledges, lots of manini and surgeonfish. Swam over an area that looks like the channel (deep enough for boats) created by the stream on land. Saw a larger turtle, clean shell, >20" length swimming toward shore, unable to follow it. Exited on the shallow reef flat and walked to the beach. Area covered about 2000-3000 feet.

Weather getting a bit more windy, tide rising. A tourist asks us about diving in this area; reply that it is fairly safe and then talk about turtles. Surface interval 45 minutes, don gear - push-button diving - air pressure in aluminum 80's=2800. Enter water in deep channel (15-20') where we snorkeled previously. Silty bottom, deep caves, no fish. This time we followed the channel to the right and as soon as we encountered the breakers made a 180° turn and headed to the first set of breakers on the left. Mark again saw the first turtle and as I tried to head it off, the turtle turned and swam away. It was just too fast for us (about 20', carapace overgrown with algae). Continued survey, as Mark entered a small cavern and as I proceeded above him I spied another turtle leaving the other end of the cave (about 20", algae covered). Air getting low so rather than exit further up the coast have decided to head straight in, through the rocks and surf. Exit time 1200.

Tide rising, water covering the reef flat and the weather deteriorating. I have decided to go to the south shore and perhaps survey Koloa Landing. Pick up four aluminum 80's at the Poipu Sea Sage and gather from the lady salesperson that the water on this side is clean and good for diving.

Enter water at Koloa Landing, easy entry and exit - a boat ramp, no fresh water. Inflate bacpacs and swim-kick out to the dive area. Large boulders immediately off of the Landing, becoming Porites lobata heads - very abundant. We have gone to the left, somewhat towards Kauai Sheraton and sunk to the bottom in about 30' of seawater. Am following the edge of the reef where it merges with the sand bottom. No coves or large overhangs but perhaps this might be a spot where a turtle might rest. Schools of C. miliaris, and in some of the darker holes, menpachi and aweoweo. Did not spot any cowries or lobsters. A few large jacks 3-5 lbs. Large coral heads 2-1/2 diameter Pocillipora lingulata, P. meandrina and large heads of Porites lobata. Bottom rock is composed of flat volcanic slabs. One turtle seen but too far away to get a good look at it. Exit 1500-1645, drop off empty tanks at Sea Sage with two filled ones for tomorrow's dive at Hanalei.

June 8, 1978 - Thursday

Wake up at 0600, gather up gear from bathtub and head to Hanalei, Princeville. Drive along main road, turn right at Pepe Street (?), first right will take you to overlook Princeville A; but follow road to Alii Kai, Kauai to some tennis courts and an empty lot. The trail begins there. Empty lot, down hill, left turn cross stream, up grass knoll and then climb down dirt and then climb down some lava boulders. And when you get to the lava bench, you realize that the water is another 6 feet below you and so an exit point must be found

Entered water and inflated backpack B.C. and kicked out on our backs. Very easy tool to use and helpful. Dropped down to a 30' bottom, many caves and overhangs. A hard bottom strata with many deep passages cut through it, sand bottom. Found an area with many rocks projecting out of the sand. I went through a passage exploring the ledge zone between sand and rock. Saw no turtles, but Mark S. who was following was able to grab a turtle that was wedged in a recess under the rocks. As we were gaining control of the

struggling turtle (I was holding the front flippers) a loud "pop" was heard. Perhaps the humerus popped out of the acromial process or the radii and ulna junction. But whatever happened, the turtle's left front flipper suffered damage for the turtle was unable to react vigorously in that flipper. We swam to the surface, inflated the b.c.'s and back-kicked to shore. The injured turtle was placed on the lava and we again took to the water in search for a turtle. We dropped down into a roughly circular sandy area and explored the perimeter. (Note: Another turtle sighted, no particular information of the siting.)

Underneath a ledge, about 4 feet from the outside I found a turtle resting upon the sand. Its eyes were open, but was not moving to escape. Because of

my gear, it was necessary to use my bang stick to prod the turtle into moving closer to me. My first couple of jabs elicited no response and I had to try to go in deeper to grab the turtle. By knocking the shell a few times the turtle came toward me and I was able to grab it, though it involved the turtle hitting the ceiling and breaking segments of some plates. Exited the water to tag both turtles.

A. First turtle caught by Mark S.: injured left front flipper, length (c) 17", width (c) 15", tail, 3-3/8. Tag number #2501 RFL. #2502 RFL trailing clean shell, no barnacles, no skin barnacles. When released the turtle swam quickly away.

B. Second turtle caught by Alan K.: length (c) 18-7/8, width (c) 17-5/8, tail 3-1/8. Tag number #2503 RFL. #2504 LFL clean shell, between 4-6 marginal on right side there is an indentation. (Note: Amphipod sample taken from healing wound left hind flipper, delivered to Bill Cooke 6-10.)

Hiked up the hill, tide rising and water getting more rough. Went to Poipu to dive the right side of Koloa Landing. Picked up four tanks at Poipu, Sea Sage. No turtles sighted. Exit at 4:30 p.m. Drop off two tanks.

Evening: visit the Hanalei Courthouse for public hearing.

June 9, 1978 - Friday

0630 wake up, breakfast and then move out of hotel with all gear and baggage. Drive to Hanalei, Princeville A, hike down the cliffs and ready to dive 0900. Lose an o-ring by hitting regulator's first stage against top of cave. Changed in water and survey resumed. Missed a turtle as it came charging at me from a likely looking cave, bounced off the roof of the

cave, eluded my grasp and sped past Mark S. Another small turtle was seen swimming above me, unable to pursue it, the turtle got away.

Due to our flying later that afternoon, I decided to do some visiting; looked at Waimea Canyon and Kalalau Lookout. Leave Kauai 8:50 p.m.