



Online archives from The Kauai Garden Island.

June 19, 2002

Authorities seek killer of endangered green sea turtles

By LESTER CHANG - TGI Staff Writer

Officials with the National Marine Fisheries Service and state law enforcement officers have begun an investigation into the butchering of four Hawaiian green sea turtles whose remains were found on a beach in Moloa'a Bay Sunday.

The sex of two turtles could not be determined because they were so gutted, authorities said. Another turtle, a female who might have been preparing to give birth, was apparently killed by a machete blow to the head. The other dead turtle also was a female.

Don Heacock, a state wildlife biologist, said the loss of the turtles is significant.

The turtles, believed to range between 25 to 75 years of age because of the size of their shells, were sexually mature. And offspring from them would have helped perpetuate the species.

The turtles, which are believed to reach sexual maturity around 25 years and which can live up to 80 years, are an endangered species protected by the 1978 Endangered Species Act.

There no suspects in connection with the killing of the turtles.

Heacock said it appeared the turtles died either Thursday or Friday, based on the composition of the turtles.

"It may have been Friday night. Some visitors were staying at a bed-and-breakfast place (in Moloa'a Bay), and they heard a lot of commotion Friday night, around midnight," Heacock said. "There were a lot of people on the beach."

The turtles might have been nesting when they were attacked, as evidenced by turtle tracks on the sand and partial digs by the turtles for the depositing of eggs in the sand, Heacock said.

"They were vulnerable," Heacock said. "Whoever did this did a terrible deed. What they did was steal from Hawai'i's heritage."

Ancient Hawaiians were "careful in the way they took care of sea turtle," Heacock said. "Only the ali'i could eat turtle meat, so that limited the harvesting of sea turtles to a few."

Two of the turtles were so ravaged that their gender could not be determined, although the turtles might have been female because of the presence of "dig sites" at the beach for eggs, Heacock said.

One of the other two turtles had "what appeared to be a cane knife cut on the top of the skull," Heacock said.

The fourth turtle, a female, had marks on its head to suggest that it had been bludgeoned to death, Heacock said.

Heacock said it is not likely the turtles were killed elsewhere and deposited at the beach, Heacock.

"It is too risky (to move the carcasses around because someone might have spotted the culprits transporting them)," Heacock said. "They are going up against a federal law."

The law calls for maximum prison time of a year and a maximum fine of \$25,000 for killing the turtles, Heacock said.

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel at the Kilauea Lighthouse took pictures of the carcasses that could be used as evidence in any trial against those who killed the turtles, Heacock said.

Tarey Low, who heads the state Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement, said the case is under review. State law officer Milton Ching began an investigation Sunday.

Heacock said the advanced state of decomposition of the turtles made it too difficult to conduct a necropsy. "They were bloated ... The plates on the shells were starting to peel, which takes two to three days to happen," he said.

Heacock said Ching contacted the Kaua'i County Public Works Department to bury the remains of the turtles.

Heacock said the public has to be better educated about preserving "these unique natural resources" to prevent future killings.

"We need the watershed community in Moloa'a to become the eyes of the land," he said. "We need all the watershed communities to keep an open eye and to watch our resources to see how they are used or abused."

If it had not been for the visitor calling the authorities about the turtle killings, "it would have gone unreported," Heacock said.

People with information about the killing of the turtles can call the dispatch division of

the Kaua'i Police Department at 241-6711 or Ching of the DLNR at 274-3521.

TGI staff writer Lester Chang can be reached at 245-3681 (Ext. 225) or e-mail <mailto:lchang@pulitzer.net>.

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MARCH 27, 2002 A1 Wednesday The Garden Island - Kauai

Shark attack victim transferred to O'ahu

BY KENDYCE MANGUCHIE
TGI Staff Writer

The 17-year-old Koloa youth who lost his foot and ankle in a shark attack Monday was transferred to Queen's Medical Center Tuesday afternoon for additional treatment following an allergic reaction to medication.

Hokuu Aki is still listed in stable condition, according to a Wilcox Hospital spokeswoman.

Aki was alert Tuesday morning when television news crews from Honolulu videotaped him singing and strumming his ukulele from his hospital bed.

"I opened my eyes and I just seen the shark; it was just tossing me all over the place," he said, describing the shark attack.

Aki said he remembers hearing his leg break during the attack, and hearing the bones snap.

"I remember I tried to open the mouth and get it off of me, that didn't work," he said.



Hokuu Aki and his girlfriend, Bernice Lagapecan in a photo taken in January.

trained to treat trauma injuries was fortunately waiting to perform emergency treatment on his leg.

Aki said the nurse on the beach has already left the island but he had a message for her:

"I would like to thank the nurse that was at the beach. She saved my life."

His doctors are hoping that he will be out of the hospital in 10 days. They said Tuesday they want him up and walking around as soon as possible.

Orthopedic surgeon Dr. David Rovinsky of the Kaula'i Medical Clinic performed surgery on Aki's leg.

County lifeguards will decide today if it's safe to reopen the

"I grabbed the shark's eye and ripped it out and then it let me go."

"I thought it was over. I thought I was going to die."

But he found the strength to get to shore where a nurse visiting from Colorado and



VISITORS check out the still-closed Brennecke's Beach on Tuesday morning. The beach was closed on Monday afternoon following an incident where Koloa teen Hoku Aki was viciously attacked by a shark.

closed South Shore beaches.

Aki was attacked by what is believed to be a tiger shark Monday about 150 feet offshore at Brennecke Beach while bodyboarding in murky water conditions after rainstorms on the South shore. The popular body surfing

and bodyboarding cove is located about 200 yards east of Po'ipu Beach Park.

Beaches within one mile in either direction of the beach remained closed Tuesday, and the state Department of Land and Natural Resources has authorized the

posting of shark warning signs along the shoreline between the Waiohai Beach Hotel and Brennecke Beach.

Aki, a senior at Kauai High School, is a fire knife dancer at the

See HOKU, Page 7-A



SHARK attack survivor Michael Coots stopped by to give Hoku a bit of support.

HOKU

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The Garden Island

-Hoku Aki

"I thought it was over. I thought I was going to die."

Kauai Coconut Beach Resort. He also plays the guitar, Tahitian drums, ukulele and keyboard, and is a Hawaiian music composer scheduled to compete in Star Quest (formerly known as Brown Bags to Stardom) on O'ahu May 4 and 5.

At Kauai High School he is also a member of the track team and football team.

The boy's father, Harmon Aki, said his son was slowly remembering what happened.

"It was quite an ordeal for him, but he's recovering and doing quite well," he said.

Hoku's family was by his side all morning Tuesday, according to Lyra Ransone, a friend of the Aki family. Dozens of Hoku's classmates and friends gathered in the hospital waiting area with gifts of candy, flowers and balloons.

Mike Coots, a bodyboarder who survived a similar shark attack in

1997, also visited Aki. Coots said he came to give the Aki family his support and advice.

"I know exactly what he's going through," said Coots. "The toughest part is wanting to go out and be with your friends. I wanted to let him know that everything's going to be OK."

Coots was accompanied by Randy Honebrink of the DLNR's Shark Task Force. Honebrink is on Kaua'i to study the attack and see what similarities there might be to Coot's attack.

"I am happy to have my child alive and with us," Hoku's mother Kalei, said.

John Naughton, National Marine Fisheries Service biologist, noted that sharks have acute non-visual senses and a feeding advantage in murky water. Sharks may

be more likely to come close to shore when the water is dirty to find green sea turtles to eat.

Fire Battalion Chief Bob Kaden warned that swimmers should be especially cautious when swimming in murky ocean water, and advised swimmers to stay away until the waters have cleared.

Researchers at the University of Florida's International Shark Attack File recorded 76 unprovoked attacks worldwide in 2001, including four in Hawai'i. Hawai'i reported two shark attacks in 2000.

TGI Editor Chris Cook contributed to this report. He can be reached at 245-3681, Ext. 227, or e-mail ccook@pulitzer.net. TGI staff writer Kendyce Manguchei can be reached at 245-3681, ext. 252.

Shark victim's tale of survival told

MARCH 27, 2002 Wednesday A1

Kaua'i teen gouged attacker's eye

By Curtis Lum

ADVERTISER STAFF WRITER

and Joan Conrow

SPECIAL TO THE ADVERTISER

Hokuana Aki told family and friends from his hospital bed yesterday that as he struggled under water, punching and grabbing at a shark that had its jaws around his leg, he could feel the spirit of his late brother trying to save him.

The 17-year-old Kaua'i High student was recovering at The Queen's Medical Center last night following Monday's shark attack on Kaua'i. He was flown to O'ahu from Wilcox Hospital and was listed in fair condition.

Aki's left leg was amputated below the knee following the shark attack at Brenneke Beach.

Before leaving the Garden Isle, the popular Kaua'i High senior spent some time with his close friends. Wallis Punua, kumu of Aki's halau, said he got a call at 7:30 yesterday morning from Aki who asked that his friends visit.

Punua took his 15-year-old son, Matthew, and a couple of other friends to the hospital. Punua said an upbeat Aki was excited to see his friends and also to tell his story of survival.

Aki is a strong, athletic boy

who enjoys basketball as well as performing with the halau as a fire dancer. Punua said Aki called on his strength and spiritual help to help him survive the attack.

"He lost a brother about a year ago," Punua said of Harlan Aki, 21, who was killed in a motorcycle crash Aug. 18, 2000, on O'ahu. "At that time when he was going down under water, he felt the spirit of his brother pulling him and helping him to survive."

Aki told Punua that the shark, which Aki estimated at 15 feet, grabbed him by the left ankle and took him under water for about a minute. Aki tried reaching for the shark's gills, punching it in the nose and opening the mouth. Finally, the boy stuck four fingers in the shark's eye, gouged the eye out, and the shark released him, Punua said.

Punua said Aki was up-beat, but also struggling with the severe pain and an ap-

See SHARK, A4

► On the Web:

See video of shark attack victim Hokuana Aki as he describes how he escaped with his life. Go to: honoluluadvertiser.com



ABOVE: Friends Keith Andrade-Kaauwai, right, Jayson Smith, center, and Matthew Punua visited shark attack victim Hokuana Aki yesterday. Wallis Punua photo

LEFT: After condo residents reported seeing sharks offshore, and because the water was still murky, authorities kept the beach closed yesterday.

News 8



Shark: 'I don't want to die here ...'

3/27/02 A4 THA

FROM PAGE ONE

parent reaction to a blood transfusion. Most of the time, Punua said, Aki talked about getting his life back to normal.

Aki said he wants to be healthy enough to take part in the school's May Day program, where he will reign as king for the second straight year. Aki also is a star fire dancer at the Kaua'i Coconut Beach hotel and member of a band that is scheduled to take part in the annual Brown Bags to Stardom contest.



COOTS:
Knows post-attack stresses

"This is going to be a challenge for him, but I envision good things because having worked with him, he's the type when he's alone, he's going to work on doing his own thing and perfecting it," Punua said. "This kid will be walking and he will be doing a lot of stuff because he has that determination."

County lifeguards yesterday continued to advise swimmers to stay out of the water for about a mile on either side of Brennecke Beach, which forms the eastern end of Po'ipū Beach Park.

"Some tourists reported seeing some sharks in the water from their condominium near Lāwai Beach Resort (west of Brennecke)," said Fire Battalion Chief Ernest Moniz. "To be safe, we made some passes in our Jet Ski, but didn't see anything. But because the water was still so murky, we decided to keep the beach closed for one more day."

Public safety officials will assess the situation this morning and make a decision on whether to reopen the shoreline.

In an interview with News 8 from his hospital bed, Aki said he struggled for his life and remembered thinking:

"I cannot die. I don't want to die. I don't want to die here. It's too early to die."

Aki recalled the shark "tossing



Shark attack victim Hokuana Aki says he wants "to be able to walk as soon as possible."

me all over the place. It had my leg caught in his mouth. And then I felt my leg break. I just want to be able to walk as soon as possible."

Michael Coots, who knows what it's like to lose a limb in a shark attack, waited for several hours at the Kaua'i hospital but was unable to see Aki before he was taken to O'ahu.

Although he was unable to visit with Aki, Coots said he did talk to his father, Harmon Aki. "I told him about phantom pain and other things to expect. It's hard, because there is really nobody to tell you what to do," Coots said.

Phantom pain or sensation is experienced by most amputees at one time or another. It involves the feeling of having a limb when no limb is present or experiencing pain at the amputation site. The feeling can range from tingling sensations to sharp, stabbing pain.

Coots had to find out for himself how to manage during his recovery after he was attacked by a shark while bodyboarding at Waiokapua Bay, also known as Major's, on Oct. 28, 1997. He was just 18 when the shark grabbed his right leg, and he had to pound it on the mouth and head with his fists until it loosened its hold.

The shark removed Coots' leg at mid-calf before he was able to make his way to shore. Since then,

the gentle, soft-spoken young man has undergone surgeries and physical therapy, been outfitted with a prosthetic device and returned to bodyboarding.

Coots said he wanted to visit Aki because "he's probably going through the exact same thing I did. I would've told him everything is going to be OK. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. I'm sure he'll be back in the water in no time."

Witnesses to Monday's shark attack said Aki was lucky to receive immediate care from an unidentified nurse who was visiting the island. The nurse applied a tourniquet and gave aid until paramedics arrived.

"It probably saved his life to have that nurse there," said Kaua'i resident Bill Swanson, who was one of the first persons on the scene. "He had lost a lot of blood."

Alicia Pimental, a recent Kaua'i High graduate who knows Aki, said he often is seen bodyboarding at Brennecke Beach. "He's a water boy, but not as much as some of the other kids. His brothers are all into it more than him. But he could handle himself," she said.

Don Heacock, state aquatic biologist for Kaua'i, said the attack on Aki underscores the danger of swimming in murky water, which sharks use to their advantage to hunt sea turtles and other prey.

What to do if a shark attacks

Although water safety experts say shark attacks are rare in Hawai'i, here's what you can do if a shark attacks.

► If a shark moves toward you, face it and strike it if it attacks, according to Jim Howe, chief of operations for Honolulu's Ocean Safety Division. If the shark moves away, deliberately and calmly retreat from the water.

► Don't panic. Sharks can detect fear.

► Most victims don't know the shark is coming until it bites. At that point, Howe said, the best defense is going for the eyes or gills to try to force the shark to let go.

► If the shark lets go, move as quickly as possible out of the water. The greatest risk at that point is bleeding to death before you can get help.

► Anyone who encounters a shark bite victim should keep the victim still, in the shade, and stop the bleeding by elevating the wound, holding pressure, points or applying direct pressure or a tourniquet as a last resort.

The water around Kaua'i, including Brennecke, named for a doctor who has a house fronting the beach, was dark brown yesterday following several days of heavy rain.

Heacock said people should not get the idea that Aki was attacked because sharks mistake bodyboarders for turtles.

"I hear that all the time and it's crazy," he said. "Sharks will bite anything."

The attack on Aki was the second shark attack this year in Hawai'i. On Jan. 1, a Los Angeles man was bitten on the buttocks while snorkeling off Olowalu on Maui.

There are an average of three to four shark incidents a year in the Islands. The last fatal attack was 1 years ago.

open ocean off Kaua'i can expect to see **HUMPBACK WHALES**. There are so many of them that most boat companies don't hesitate to guarantee sightings.

Every year, humpback whales swim 3,000 miles from their summer feeding grounds in Alaska to mate and calve in Hawai'i's clear, warm waters. The whales don't arrive en masse, but researchers say there is a predictable order to their appearance in our waters. Generally, numbers peak in **LATE DECEMBER THROUGH MID-APRIL**.

Protected under endangered species laws, the humpback population is growing. In fact, an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 humpbacks are expected to cruise through Hawai'i's waters this season, coming and going at their own pace.

There are many ways to observe a humpback whale in the wild. **SNORKEL CRUISES** are a good bet, as are **POWERED RAFTS** and **FISHING BOATS**, which also travel into humpback territory.

Some excellent shoreline viewing

sites include Po'ipū Beach on Kaua'i's South Shore; Daniel K. Inouye Kilauea Point Lighthouse on the North Shore; and from Kapa'a Overlook, located between Kapa'a Town and Keālia Beach on the island's east side.

BLUE DOLPHIN CHARTERS 808-335-5553
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10. MEET HAWAII'S GIANT SEA TURTLES

It's as common to get a look at Hawai'i's giant green sea turtles as it is rare to come across the nearly extinct hawksbill sea turtle. Either way, both species are a treat to see, and both happen to frequent the waters of the Garden Isle.

Green sea turtles, called *honu*

in Hawaiian, aren't shy. Expect to see them on ocean excursions, or watch for them feeding on seaweed that grows on rocks in shallow areas.

While the green sea turtle population has made a steady comeback in recent years, taking it off the endangered species list (they are still considered threatened, however), the Hawaiian hawksbill population is estimated at fewer than 30 nesting turtles.

Named for its sharp, beaklike mouth, a hawksbill can weigh up to 270 pounds, much smaller than the hulking green sea turtle, which sometimes weighs in at 400 pounds.

Look, but don't touch. The Endangered Species Act protects both the hawksbill and green sea turtles, so it's against the law to harass them in any way. If you see one when you're snorkeling give it 10-15 feet of space and enough room to surface and breathe.



NĀ PALI COAST MAGAZINE

Issue 8, 2023 / 2024

Volcanic
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Sea Cave
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Taking Flight Over the Nā Pali:
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12 Nu'alolo Kai

For a depiction of how ancient peoples may have lived at Nu'alolo Kai, see pages 12-15.

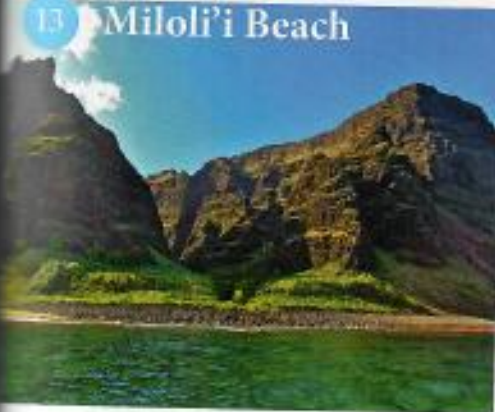
Nu'alolo Kai Beach was the portal to the sea for the people living in Nu'alolo 'Āinā Valley. A premier, fishing village once flourished here, though only traces of it now remain. While plantings behind the beach provided some food and medicine for the people, it was the protected reef that was most prized for its supply of multicolored fish, seaweeds, and shellfish, such as 'opihi limpets and pipipi snails. Outrigger canoes most likely lined the beach, ready for offshore fishing when schools of oceanic fishes like aku, akule and 'ōmilu came near.



Green sea turtles bask in the sun at low tide.

13 Miloli'i Beach

Miloli'i Beach is a wide, expansive beach and a favorite camping and resting spot for kayakers during the spring and summer months, when the Nā Pali Coast becomes calm enough for day excursions. Unlike Kalalau Beach, there is no connecting hiking trail into Miloli'i. It is accessible only by small boat or kayak. The narrow channel through the reef is especially tricky to navigate when the tradewinds are blowing strongly.



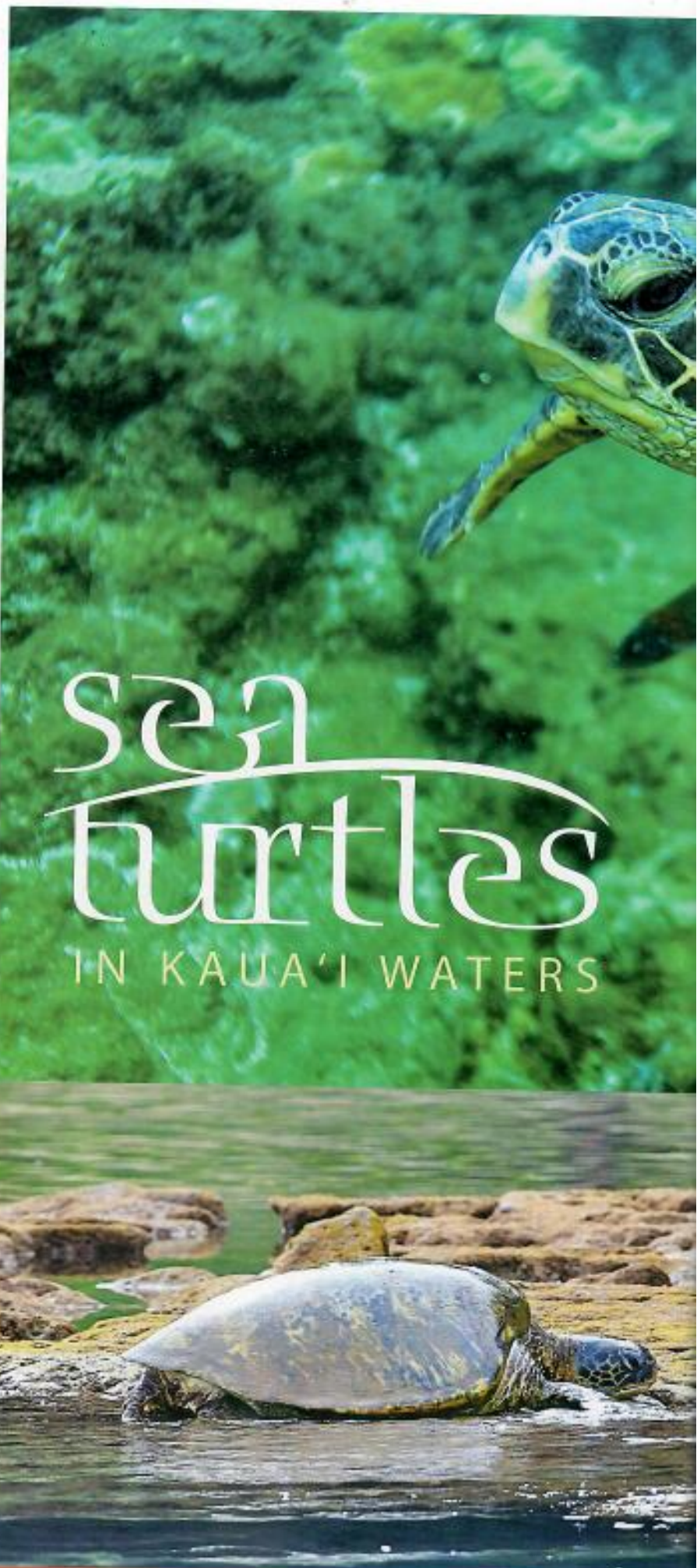
Honu, the traditional Hawaiian name for the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), is one of Hawaii's most beloved creatures. These days, spotting a honu swimming in nearshore waters is a common sighting. However, this was not the case several decades ago when the species was hunted to the brink of extinction by the commercial fishing industry.

Around the globe, honu is prized for the delicate flavor of its greenish-colored meat. Many cultures are still serving up turtle soup as a popular menu item. Not to long ago, Hawai'i also boasted an appetite for the honu. This practice began in ancient Hawaiian times, when eating honu was saved only for the kings, or *ali'i*, to consume on very special occasions.

Over time, Hawai'i became a melting pot of many races, and honu was served at restaurants and *lū'aus* (feasts), contributing to a widespread consumer demand for turtle meat and eggs. This, in turn, was a disaster for the honu population in Hawai'i.

But things are looking much brighter these days, thanks to the enforcement of state and federal laws that make it illegal to harass, harm, or harvest honu. And although the honu population has experienced a notable recovery in Hawai'i, threats still remain. There is a mysterious, fibropapilloma (tumor) disease affecting the viability of the population. Other threats are shark predation, loss of habitat, entanglement in commercial fishing gear, and harm from the accidental ingestion of marine debris. We humans are undoubtedly the largest threat to our precious honu friends.

The honu have been around since the age of the dinosaurs. They are the true ancients of Hawai'i. They are to be guarded and respected, as their future is uncertain. So remember, when you spot our friend the honu swimming or basking on the beach, admire this gentle creature from afar.

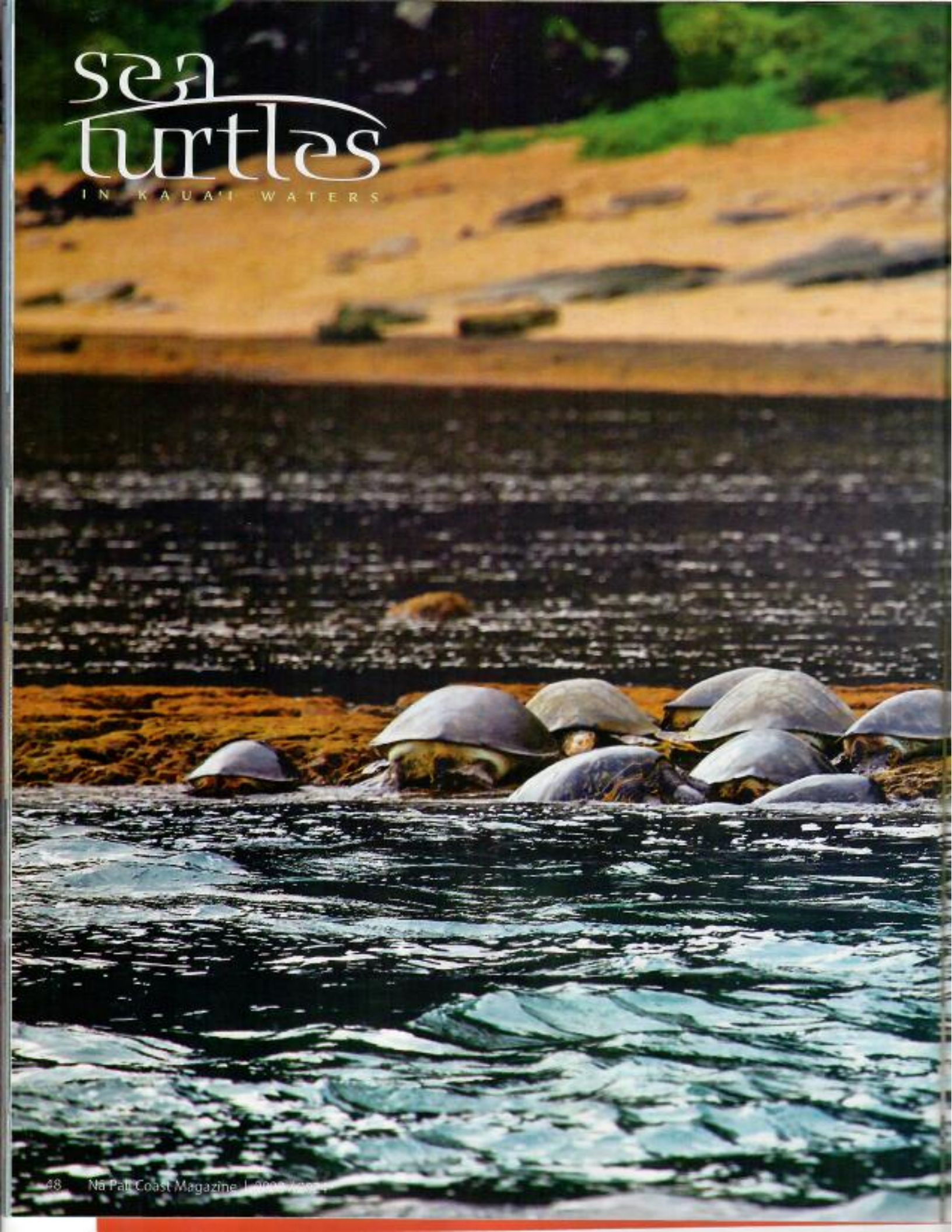


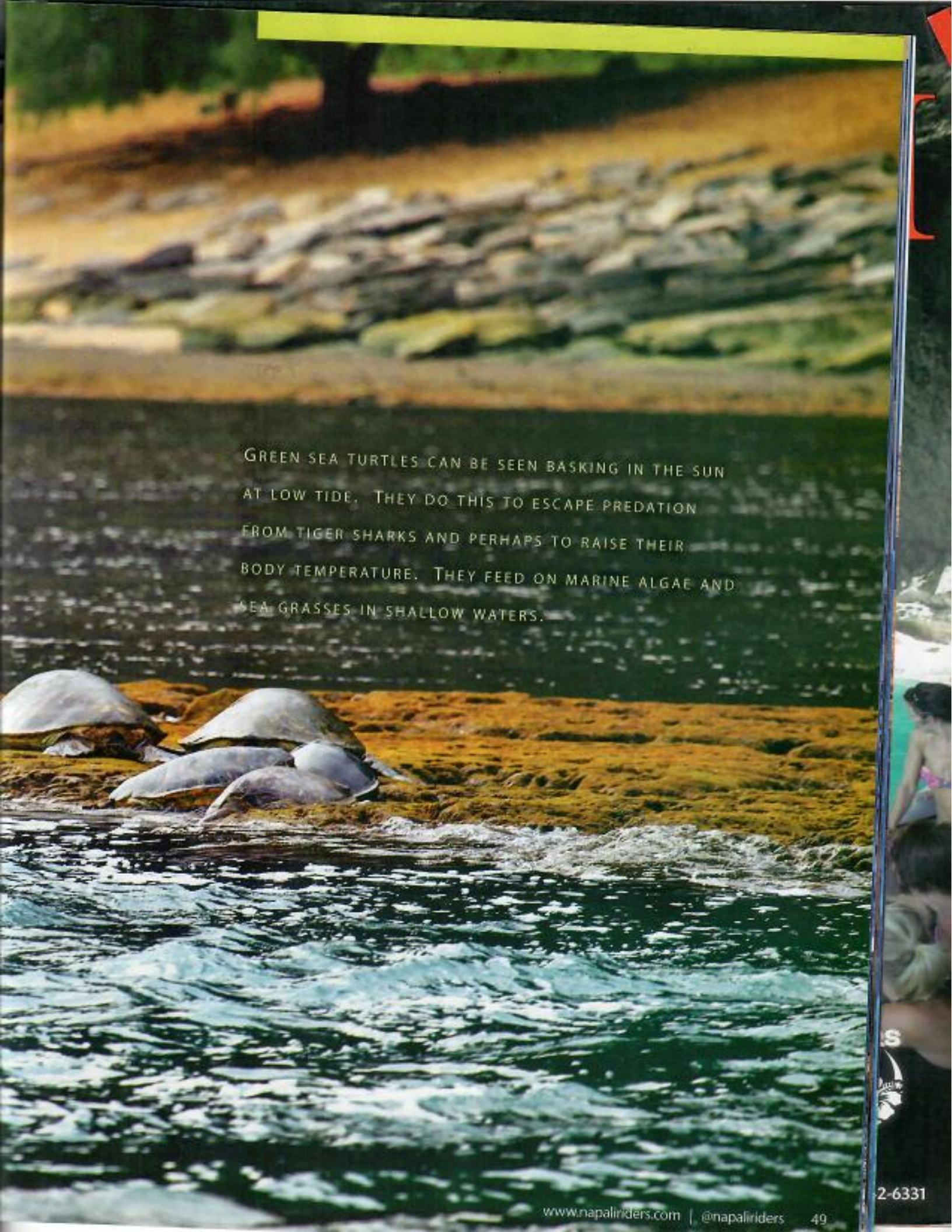


THE HONU HAVE BEEN AROUND
SINCE THE AGE OF THE DINOSAURS.
THEY ARE THE TRUE ANCIENTS OF
HAWAI'I. THEY ARE TO BE GUARDED
AND RESPECTED.

sea turtles

IN KAUAI WATERS





GREEN SEA TURTLES CAN BE SEEN BASKING IN THE SUN
AT LOW TIDE. THEY DO THIS TO ESCAPE PREDATION
FROM TIGER SHARKS AND PERHAPS TO RAISE THEIR
BODY TEMPERATURE. THEY FEED ON MARINE ALGAE AND
SEA GRASSES IN SHALLOW WATERS.

Sharks: Not all are 'aumakua gods

FROM PAGE F1

embodiment of gods, family deities called 'aumakua.

But where does this belief fit today? How do contemporary Hawaiians, especially those who spend time in the ocean, reconcile the two conflicting views of sharks?

In Hawaiian, 'aumakua is defined as a benevolent guardian spirit or family protector. Though some view the practice as a religious one involving worship, most, like

Maxwell, a Christian, regard it as a continuation of an ancient belief system, a cultural practice that does not interfere with other religious beliefs. Its prevalence today is difficult to determine, often varying according to the age of the person to whom you speak. Nonetheless, for those who have a relationship with their 'aumakua, it remains a powerful force.

"An 'aumakua was actually a dead ancestor's spirit that was deified into an entity," explained Maxwell.

"Could be clouds or trees or animals." But the best known of the 'aumakua seems to be the shark. Why?

"We're ocean people," said Maxwell.

thousand years. "It would be a cultural insult if I asked my parents, 'How did we get this 'aumakua?' You're just told." Western man, he said, "thinks everything has to be in black and white to be fact."

Beyond the stories, Silva said that there is "usually some kind of sign," when an 'aumakua makes itself known, by behaving in a non-threatening manner, or even coming to the aid of a family member in a dangerous situation. The recognition between human and animal is instant and mutual.

Where the 'aumakua resides is usually determined by a significant family event that occurred there. "Maybe the family had a miscarriage or a stillborn and sent the fetus or the child out to sea," said Silva. "Or maybe the family had a drowning. Wherever this event occurred, if a sea animal showed up in that area, this is generally seen as a reincarnation."

The affinity is often so strong that older family members make significant efforts to introduce their children and grandchildren to the relative who resides in the ocean.

Silva said she knew of a man in

will not speak about their 'aumakua with anyone outside their families. Ka'ulane Lee, a canoe paddler of Hawaiian, Chinese and Tahitian descent and owner of the Loni Shop, agreed: "It's kapu to have (your 'aumakua) known," she said. "It's only known for certain reasons and purposes."

Maxwell believes that many actively practice these ancient Hawaiian beliefs today, but Brown, who is also Hawaiian, thinks the observance of Hawaiian culture and religion is not as prevalent in modern society. "Because of Christianity, everything has been diluted." He believes it's harder for people of his generation to hold onto their culture. "There is a renaissance now, but it will never be as strong as it was in the old days."

Power of sharks

For many in Western society, Hawaiian cosmology in general, and the concept of 'aumakua in particular, is too far out of their experience.

"It's a different perspective on the tie of life within different life forms," said Silva, who volunteered to be

thought to appear in that form, for if they did, they knew the punishment could be as severe as death.

Alia practices this belief, with some rare exceptions. "I make it a policy not to kill sharks," he said, "though he does believe that there is an appropriate time to kill a shark if there has been a series of attacks in one area. He reconciles this practical approach with his cultural beliefs, as long as there is a good reason for the hunt, and all of the shark gets used. "The same teachings that would not let you use a piece of land destructively is the same philosophy that does not let you take something from the ocean and waste," he said.

He has joined some shark hunters for two reasons: to do away with bad shark and to make sure his 'aumakua was not harmed.

How does this belief in a pagan deity mesh with the conversion of many Hawaiians to Christianity?

Former national champion free diver Wendell Ko, of Hawaiian and Chinese ancestry, remains conflicted. "If you believe in a higher power, you know that you'll be protected," he said. "But I don't think that a

"In ancient times, you either lived in the mountains or the ocean. The owl, the eel and the whale were also famous 'aumakua."

'Blood relationships'

This does not mean every owl or shark is an 'aumakua. And even if a shark is your 'aumakua, "not every shark is going to be gracious to you," said Carol Silva, a researcher of Hawaiian culture. "Aumakua are identified very specifically by body markings, and are named. They are part of the family. There is a direct connection, a blood relationship."

William Aila Jr., a Wai'anae fisherman for most of his 42 years, compared the relationship to the feelings a person might have for his elders. "When you're in a difficult situation, don't you recall the lessons that your grandparents or great grandparents taught you?" he asked. "There's a thought that they'll be there to watch over you."

How is this unique and enduring tie to an 'aumakua determined?

Paul Brown, 35, a fisherman, freediver and teacher at Kaimuki High School, said his family's 'aumakua can be traced several generations back to his roots on the Kohala coast at Upolu Point on the Big Island.

Maxwell said that his grandmother fed the sharks, and everyone knew the sharks had been their family's 'aumakua for several

Kona whose grandfather led him on a diving expedition into a specific cave to acquaint him with their shark 'aumakua.

Care and feeding

But the connection is not limited to meeting and greeting.

"Care and feeding of your 'aumakua was an essential part of this symbiotic relationship," said Silva. "The 'aumakua shark would drive off all bad sharks and carry its mortal family members to safety, but in return, family members were responsible for scraping the barnacles off the shark's back, and making sure it was well."

A clergyman called Kaiwi told author Martha Warren Beckwith the following story for a 1917 magazine article. Speaking of a shark 'aumakua and its family of fishermen, he said, "The men give out some of the first catch, then it disappears, and they always come back with full nets. Only when the shark appears do they have luck. Sometimes the 'aumakua tells them beforehand in a dream that it has gathered the fish together."

Does modern fisherman Aila follow this practice? "Of course!" he said of his habit of giving the first catch or the choice part of a large fish to the shark. "How else would I feel comfortable in the water and not have to look over my shoulder?" Maxwell says most Hawaiians

struggle to define these concepts. "Sharks are powerful. They have the ability to harm and take life. But they also have the ability to give life. We often don't look at things in terms of the whole harmonic realm."

Both Maxwell and Silva believe that ancient Hawaiians' relationship with the environment helped them connect more readily with their 'aumakua. Said Maxwell: "In ancient times, there was one penalty for polluting the ocean or taking things out of turn: death. Every wind, every piece of land, every cloud had a name and a story. Hawaiians could talk to the trees, mountains and the animals, and they would answer. But we've lost that." In fact, he said, every Hawaiian "has an 'aumakua, and sometimes two — from their mother's side and their father's side — but most people don't know."

Hawaiians did kill sharks, but only for specific purposes, and given that they used nothing more than a canoe and a spear or fishhook, obviously they took sharks in small quantities. And they wasted nothing. Leighton Taylor wrote in "Sharks of Hawai'i — Ecology and Cultural Significance" (University of Hawai'i Press, 1993) that Hawaiians used the teeth as cutting tools, ate the meat of the shark, and used the skin to stretch across ceremonial drums.

However, Maxwell has written, "In ancient times, families were careful not to eat certain forms of animal life if their 'aumakua was

Christianity can exist together."

Their ocean

Ko sets aside the religious questions and takes the practical approach when in the ocean: careful diving and respect for the ocean. "If there's too much sharks, we just pick up and go somewhere else. But they hardly bother (us). Last week we had to poke a shark a couple of times, and after that he left. Ko's philosophy is simple: "It's their ocean, yeah?"

Despite his deep ties to his family's shark 'aumakua, Ko's fellow freediver, Paul Brown, tends to focus on the same common-sense issues.

"There's an awareness and a sense of respect," said Brown. "I think a lot of it has to do with maintaining calm, and choosing the right conditions (clear water, for example) for diving. Sharks can sense your heartbeat. They can feel vibrations in the water, and they feed off that."

Though he will kill a shark if he has to, Brown said that most of the time, like Ko, he will "pick up and leave" when he senses trouble.

Maxwell feels the same deference, yet finds harmony in blending his cultural and Christian beliefs. Whenever he enters the water near his 'aumakua, he chants and prays. "I don't worship the maono, but our culture is alive, which is why we have to respect."

Shark: Trauma nurse on the scene is credited with saving life of surfer

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foot was gone. The other was holding his hand," Brown said.

One of the women on the beach was an experienced trauma nurse visiting from the mainland. Fire officials credited her with saving Aki's life by stopping the bleeding, but did not release her name.

Aki's father also commended the nurse for helping his son.

He said his son is under medication but is aware of the attack. "He's recalling it bit by bit. No doubt, traumatic," Harmon said.

Lifeguard Kalani Vierra said he had just received a radio call from the fire dispatcher telling him there was a swimmer in distress at Brenneke Beach when several people came running up to his tower asking him to help.

"I grabbed my equipment and

started running. The closer I got to the beach and the more people were telling me what happened, it turned from a swimmer in distress to a shark attack," Vierra said. "When I got there, I could see his foot and ankle were gone."

"He was conscious the whole time. He knew his name, knew what day it was, knew his phone number," Vierra said, adding Aki's parents arrived right after the firetrucks and ambulances.

"He's very tall and a big, strong kid. It was like a regular day for him," Vierra said. "There were four other people in shallow water, but he was on the outside waiting to catch a wave."

Witnesses said Aki was pulled under by the shark but managed to free himself. Aki told firefighters he punched the shark several times and finally

gouged one of its eyes, forcing it release him.

Vierra said after two days of heavy rain, the water was murky.

"The sharks come closer to shore after a flood," he said. "All kinds of carcasses come floating down the rivers into the ocean."

Randy Honebrink, a spokesman for the state shark task force, said he plans to fly to Kauai this morning to investigate the attack.

Honebrink said he suspects it was a tiger shark that attacked Aki because "there's not many sharks that will be that close to shore that will do that kind of damage."

Harmon Aki said his family regularly goes to Brenneke Beach on the south shore and never had an encounter with a

shark. "It's not an area that you would consider frequented by sharks. ... There's never been so much as a sighting," he said.

Kauai Fire Department Battalion Chief Bob Kaden warned swimmers should be especially cautious in murky ocean waters around the islands, and advised them to stay away until the waters have cleared.

Yesterday's attack was the second reported in Hawaii this year. On New Year's Day, a California man reported being bitten by a shark about 100 yards off a West Maui beach. Thomas Holmes, 35, of Los Angeles said he needed about 35 stitches for cuts he suffered on his buttocks and thigh after the shark bit him once.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.