

Date: Mon, 14 Jun 2010 13:38:29 -1000 (HST)
From: George H. Balazs <gbalazs@honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu>
To: Wende Goo <wende.goo@noaa.gov>
Cc: Frank Parrish <frank.parrish@noaa.gov>, Sam Pooley <samuel.pooley@noaa.gov>, Mike <michael.seki@noaa.gov>
Subject: From George Balazs Re:Laniakea Honu Guardians (fwd)

fyi Wende. I'll leave it to you as the most appropriate person to forward/inform our colleagues at PIRO of this inquiry. You know my views (none of which of course were expressed below). Given Sam's periodic experiences of what happens at, I'm sure he'll get an unpleasant 'kick' out of this too. gb

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Mon, 14 Jun 2010 13:31:51 -1000 (HST)
From: George H. Balazs <gbalazs@honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu>
To: Scott Ray <scott_ray_assoc@yahoo.com>
Cc: Diane Peck <dianepecknola@yahoo.com>, Joanne Pettigrew <laniakeal@aol.com>, Joanne Pettigrew <jokaloke@aol.com>
Subject: From George Balazs Re:Laniakea Honu Guardians

Aloha Scott, thank you for writing, I am appreciative and honored that you thought of me and had retained my email address. It's been quite a few years since we've exchanged messages.

To bring you up to date, I've had no involvement in the operation and activities of the Laniakea volunteer organization since June 30, 2006. The 'Show Turtles Aloha' (as I coined it back then) was initiated by my research program (here at the NOAA Science Center) on July 7, 2005. We, - my staff and I and a small group of informal volunteers we pulled together, - shouldered responsibility for educational outreach at Laniakea for 359 days. On July 1, 2006 the NOAA PIRO Office we had been filling in for (due to their staff shortages), assumed oversight of all aspects of the educational outreach program that later became incorporated independently as Malama Na Honu. The PIRO Office continues to provide financial grant support to Malama Na Honu, hence has jurisdictional oversight.

I have carefully read your message. I have always respected your views. However, given what I've explained above, I'm not the proper NOAA agency person to be giving feedback. Please be assured though that I'll pass your message to others of authority that will respond to you.

I'm out on the North Shore about one day every two months or so, including at Laniakea for strictly research activities. The area in front of your home used to be a hot-spot for turtles - including sadly for tumored turtles. With your permission I'd like to stop by there next time to have a look. Please let me know if that would be ok, when you are home at your families convenience.

My Best regards, also to Diane and Joan, George

On Mon, 14 Jun 2010, Scott Ray wrote:

> Hello George: Long time no talk. Hope you are doing well. I wanted to bring a
> couple of issues to your attention. Please ask the Honu guardians to make
> circles around trules and groups of turtles rather than roping off the entire
> lebghth of the beach where the water is readily accessible and not to encourage
> the over use of the life-guards dangerous conditions warning signs or use them
> in combination with the red ropes, giving the impression they represent the
> same authority.

As you are aware, when people are entering the water at Laniakea, there is
> an area (which the turtles like for the same reasons) where the water is more
> accessible in the middle, because there are rocks to climb over on beach on
> the far left and and there are lots of rocks in the water on the far right,
> and it is dangerous traversing either side for peoples' feet and their
> surfboards and other gear.

Initially the Honu Guardians placed the ropes around individual turtles or
clusters of

> turtles, but increasingly, they have a tendency to place one barrier (as it
> is) around all of the individuals or groups of turtles on the beach,
> essentially blocking off access to the water. Then of course they end
> up fussing at people (including me) for violating their "authority" and
> crossing their red rope, even when they do not come close to or in any way
> pose a threat or attempt to interact with a turtle.

I think this could be easily resolved. How much distance do you really need to
people

> to stay away from turtle? A long arms length? Five-six feet?

I think you need to set it standard, and even if it is more than five to six
> feet, any time two turtles (or groups) are further apart then that distance,
> they need to make two separate circles, even if they are only leaving a two
> foot pathway between them, so they do not make it difficult (or even
> inconvenient) for people with no immediate interest in the turtles from
> getting into the water.

Likewise, I have observed that the use of warning signs designed to keep people
out of the water

> has dramatically increased in the last year. Needless to say, they are under
> the responsibility of the life guards, who of course interact with the Honu
> Guardians. But, whereas previous years, they were posted most days in the
> winter when conditions were questionable or dangerous, this year, I don't
> think there was a single day (including the scattered calm days) when they
> were not posted, and this practice persisted well into the spring.

One day I even saw the red rope strung the entire

> length of the beach with the warning signs moved down to the two ends of the
> red rope to punctuate it and giving the impression that the two were somehow
> related.

Okay, it's summer, and I haven't seen the signs for a

> while, but if the signs loose credibility because they are being over-used to
> dissuade people from using the area where the turtles hang-out, rather than for
> their actual purpose, they will come to be ignored, and eventually, someone
> (numbers over the years) ignoring them when they should not will drown (I hope
> not me).

So, I only mention

> the warning signs, because I have thought about them a lot over the past year,
> and I just now had occaission for a guardian in a very "goody-two-shoes
> na-na-na-na-na" kind of way to address me about crossing the rope when the
> entire beach was roped off without any real need for it to be completely roped
> off.

Please say something too them.

> While they are there to protect the turtles, they need to do it as
> unobtrusively as possible for other people using the beach with no intention
> and the good sense not to intrude on the turtles. Thanks!