

HAWAII

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Star-Bulletin

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Authorities seek killers of two protected turtles

Associated Press

HILO — State enforcement officers are looking for the people who butchered two protected Pacific green sea turtles on the Big Island this past weekend.

A similar killing also occurred over the weekend on Maui and authorities are worried that a pattern could be developing.

"I hope that's not the trend," said Lenny Terlep, chief of the Big Island conservation enforcement office.

"I don't want people to think it's open season on turtles," he said.

The Big Island turtles were found at Wailea Bay and officers say they were killed sometime between midnight and 5 a.m. Sunday.

The bay is a Marine Life Conservation District.

Diving or killing an animal in a conservation district is punishable by a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Federal penalties could also apply because the green sea turtle is a threatened species, Terlep said.

A witness who was camping told authorities he saw diving lights coming from the ocean about 2 a.m.

Later, he went to his truck and saw a four-wheel-drive Chevy truck that wasn't there before and heard two men who were "loud and boisterous."

Killing an animal in a Marine Life Conservation District, is punishable by a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

The witness found the slaughtered turtles at 5 a.m. on a trail leading to the beach.

Terlep said the witness was "very upset."

"(The perpetrators) just slaughtered them," Terlep said.

"They butchered them. And they didn't even

try to cover up what they did."

Only the head and flippers were left behind, he said.

In the Maui incident, enforcement officers arrested two divers suspected of killing the turtle shortly after they dragged the animal ashore.

Anyone with information about the Wailea Bay turtle killings is asked to call state conservation officials.

Police Beat

Rare sea turtles butchered

By Hugh Clark
Advertiser Big Island Bureau

HILO, Hawaii — Two rare Hawaiian green sea turtles were found killed this week in the Puako area of South Kohala, part of a state Marine Life Conservation District.

State enforcement officials have identified one man and are searching for at least one other they believe captured

and killed the turtles at Beach 67 parking lot between midnight last Sunday and 5 a.m. Monday.

The meat and shells of the two 50 pound-plus turtles were taken, but the heads, flippers and entrails were left behind.

State Land Department officials asked for the public's help in identifying suspects. Call 885-0670 in Waimea, 933-4291 in Hilo or 323-3141 in Kona.