

HUNTING

No cultural right to green sea turtles

Regarding the June 7 article on the push to legalize hunting of green sea turtles, a threatened species:

The "Hawaiian culture" argument is almost ludicrous. Just because it was popular in the past to kill the turtles for their meat and body parts does not mean it is OK today. Cultures evolve; methods of gathering food change. Like it or not, in today's Hawaii, there is no need to kill turtles to feed oneself or one's family.

Some Pacific cultures used to practice cannibalism. Should we now legalize murder so that these cultures can return to cannibalism?

As the sidebar story regarding the killing of a turtle illustrates, these harmless animals are easy to corner, easy to drown, easy to kill. Is this really the type of activity we want to pass along to future generations?

I, for one, am more proud to be human when I see a turtle in the water and know that we have a law to protect it so that it can always be out there.

Clay W. Valverde

NATIVE HAWAIIANS

Green sea turtles must stay protected

In response to the June 7 article and sidebar story regarding the honu, all I can say is that I

was truly disgusted by the implication that it is somehow time to resume the slaughter of green sea turtles under the guise of Native Hawaiian rights.

As a resident of the Waianae Coast and part-time scuba instructor, I am appalled by the tone of portions of these articles.

The green sea turtle population may be on the rise for the first time, but this is hardly the time to encourage the needless harvesting of these harmless and gentle herbivores. All the divers I know who operate out of the Waianae Boat Harbor go to great lengths to encourage the protection of the already-depleted coral reefs and marine life that we are fortunate enough to encounter.

Although not an expert on Native Hawaiian culture, I can't recall the role of motorized whalers and scuba tanks in Native Hawaiian hunting practices. The tradition that "a hunter only takes what he needs to feed his ohana" is certainly not true in the year 1998 with regard to the green sea turtle. One who advocates the return to the practices of the past should stop and listen to the cry of a drowning turtle for the 20 to 30 minutes it takes to drown it.

Joe McLary
Waianae

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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CULTURE

Hawaiians value green sea turtles

It is absolutely stunning in this age of awareness to read the remarks of two letter writers regarding the cultural taking of green sea turtles.

It appears both perceive modern Hawaiians as mindless, wanton killers hell-bent on slaughtering and causing the extinction of the honu. Nothing can be further from the truth. Most of us are responsible people who deeply cherish the natural resources left to us by our ancestors.

Our role as stewards of the land and sea is a deeply ingrained tenet of our culture. Please be assured we fully understand that the elimination of the honu from our waters is not in our best interest. So much so, that many of us have taken active roles and dedicated part of our lives to help facilitate the resurgence of sea turtles.

Make no mistake, the perpetuation of the species is of utmost importance to us Hawaiians. Thus, come the time when the population of turtles is judged

stable enough to tolerate a limited harvest, we ask simply to be allowed to resume our millennia-old relationship with this cultural entity.

If you think the uniqueness of our Hawaiian culture is of some value to the state, then you must be willing to allow it to occur. It is unprincipled to restrict Native Hawaiians to only Merrie Monarch festivals and Kamehameha Day parades because you've decreed these practices acceptable. It is not fair for you to pigeonhole us into a box for your convenience.

Just as Native Hawaiians over the centuries have accepted you and all your idiosyncrasies, so, too, we ask to be accepted — here in this, our very own home.

Bill Puleloa
Kaunakakai, Molokai