

1-4-98 The Honolulu Advertiser A21



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Biologists hope the endangered hawksbill hatchlings that made it from seashore nests to the ocean this year off Maui will have the chance to grow up like this male hawksbill turtle at Sea Life Park.

# Progress seen in protecting turtles

## Biologists credit awareness of nesting sites

**By Jan TenBruggencate**  
Advertiser Staff Writer

Efforts to protect nesting areas are beginning to show promise for restoring healthy populations of Hawaii hawksbill turtles, or *honu 'ea*.

More than 200 endangered hawksbill turtle keiki made it from seashore nests to the ocean this year off Maui, where until a few years ago they were not known to nest.

More have hatched at isolated Molokai and Big Island beaches.

This sea turtle's nesting sites are especially susceptible to being disturbed by humans. The turtles are believed to have been much more common once, and human activity along the coastline is probably a major cause of their decline, said National Marine Fisheries Service biologist John Naughton.

"A lot of the former nesting beaches are in developed areas. Habitat is the main issue for hawksbills," Naughton said.

And the answer seems to be to protect remote beaches and to limit disruption of nests on beaches in developed areas.

"A lot of their nesting in the main islands is dependent on nesting beaches not getting disturbed," said Skippy Hau, a state aquatic biologist on Maui.

Hau said he's thrilled that three nests of turtle eggs

hatched on Maui this year, one at Maui's Oneloa, or Big Beach, and two at a beach reserve near Kihei.

Three nests yielding more than 200 baby turtles make it much more likely that hawksbills will continue to survive in Hawaiian waters, because the animals tend to return to their native beaches when they mature and begin nesting themselves, Naughton said.

On the other hand, three

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