

Dear George,

swirl marks for photo - mailed Jersey

Print 1994 diskette, dbase

I have an easy request and then a more involved one. First, could you please send me all the info you can on our 1994 Turtle 6. She is wearing tags F - 766 and F - 765.

Now the more involved request. Tutu is BACK! We sighted her on August 25th, morning dive. She just showed up in her old favourite place (which happens to be exactly 94 Turtle 6's favourite place - where she was when you read the tag). I had only perhaps 5 - 6 dives to try and read Tutu's tag but forget it, she wasn't buying any.

I know I will get close enough in '95 but for now, I just MIGHT find her through process of elimination from your records and YES, I know it's the same turtle. Tutu didn't show all summer and then whap, she shows with brand new shiny tags in addition to her old ones and yes, she HAD to have come from the French Frigates THIS '94 nesting season. She had only her old tags in '93.

I hope you can help me with this. I am assuming this would be fairly easy because you have this all on a computer database....

Here is the lowdown on Tutu - I have been rifling through all my records and also through years of video of her.

Tutu DEFINITELY had a tag on her left front flipper in 1990. She was in Honokowai for 1990.

1991 she is missing.

1992 records indicate tags on left and right front flipper. It is possible right front was tagged in 1990, video just doesn't confirm it. She was in Honokowai for 1992.

1993 records indicate tags on left and right front flippers. She was in Honokowai for 1993. On August 21, 1993 I read her tag (after wiping it clean) as A - 354.

Back in Canada I call you and you tell me about A - 354 and confirm she was at the FFS in 1991 but you say she doesn't have tumours and for sure Tutu does. (Recall I told you we have two turtles whose tumours are getting better. Nui is one. Tutu is the other. In fact, I just reviewed the 94 shots of her and her left eye is completely clean and her right looks so good I sure can't see a tumour there! So Tutu just might be our first and only example of a tumoured turtle that is "cured". Tutu was never really badly tumoured, right eye had 3/4 coverage and lumped posterior with smaller lump anterior, left eye 1/2 covered above and posterior.

I also remember you saying she arrived untagged in 1991 at the FFS and that makes it tough to explain the tag that is clearly on her front left flipper in 1990 and YES, I am sure it is all the same turtle. (I am right about you saying that, right?)

Last year when I read that tag it was grungy and my close-up vision was going... the 3 (first digit) had brown grunge on it. I read it the best I could.

What all this says is I am CERTAIN about everything but the tag number. I may be off a digit... but I am certain and we have video of Tutu arriving at Honokowai August 25th AM sporting brand new shiny tags! She sparkled like a Christmas ornament.

I guess what I need is a printout (and I recall you said nesting was down this year so there will be fewer turtles for the computer to cough up) of 1994 turtles with two tags on the right front flipper (something else I am certain of) Peter is pretty sure about the left front... and there is DEFINITELY tag glint on the right rear flipper.

I know she was gone in '91 and she had a tag in 1990. I guess what I will be looking for is a turtle who is now double tagged, and had a tag on the left flipper pre-1990.

What I am hoping is for the computer to spit out a tag close to A - 354.

SEPT 5TH INSERT >> George, I just re-read your paper on Satellite Telemetry from the 14th Symposium. THIS MIGHT HELP!

Your fastest Hawaiian turtle was clocked at 49 km/day, the slowest, taking a shallower route was 42 km/day. Using your map, I took 4803's route and drew a line between Molokai and Lanai right into Honokowai. I figure she does about 1 350 km from FFS to our site. Your fastest turtle 4803 would cover that distance in 27 - 28 days. Your slowest taking a shallower route would take 32 days.

That narrows stuff down even further, wouldn't it? Tutu would have had to leave the FFS approx July 27, 28, 29 and swim at approx 2.0 km/hr. Or, if she took a shallower route, July 23, 24th.

INSERT END-----

NEW INFO -----> Oh... a couple of other things. In the last week or so we swung a new route to the turtle house involving heading north in about 15 feet of water to the seaweed/algae pads just to see if any turtles were in there. We were shocked to find the worst examples of tumours we have had all summer. I am talking several turtles here, including Lefty who was tumour free in 1992 (we only saw her long distance in 1993) and to my absolute amazement a male from 1991 who just had a hint of tumours in the eyes now coated and blinded with them. Add to this growing list of tumoured and worsely tumoured turtles is 1993 Turtle 11 who in my 1993 log I didn't even record her as a tumoured turtle - just wrote "suspicious white on rear of right eye". You should (you will..) see her now. Yes, I am sure they are all the same turtles from year to year.

Our latest "discovery" strongly suggests the very worst cases tend to stay in shallow water and hidden from view and expending as little energy as possible both in terms of being close to food AND perhaps in how far up they have to go for air.

And talk about ratty shells! These turtles don't get to cleaning stations. (small wonder, their tumours would be pecked and bitten by C. jactators (White Spot Tobies) and Saddle Wrasses. Another thing noticed this year is how much cleaner the shells are of our regulars. What a difference from previous years and I don't know why. Badly tumoured turtles still have shells as ratty as ever though...

IMPORTANT -----> I recall you said that you didn't really find our site all that different from other stressed coral reefs in the Hawaiian Islands. Remember that you never saw the really bad parts a few minutes kick to the north. Our regular route is at the southern edge of our site. Kick north and you won't find ONE piece of Pocillopora endouyix or meandrina coral alive. They are just green or brown lumps of seaweed. Will send video because I wanted to prove it to you. It is all slime city there...

Next summer, we will take this new route to the turtle house....

I saved the best for last. I wish to report the first turtle/human collision and communication. I saw the whole thing with my own eyes (but not on video because Peter had the camera). I signal Peter there is a turtle at the mound. Peter slowly and carefully makes his way there, eyes intent of seeing a resting turtle. At the same time, Howzit is returning from getting air and it looks like she will do a swoop right over Peter's head. (I watch with fascination because Peter says turtles do that to me all the time and I don't even notice).

Looks like Howzit isn't paying attention either and they both collide... nothing hurtful to either party because both were moving slowly. Both were startled and Howzit immediately began her eye wiping gesture. Peter responded with a spirited one finger salute.. and George, here I watch Howzit, gesturing three times irritably and Peter responding in his own "language" to each of Howzit's gestures.

Makes me smile still thinking about it. Howzit then swam to me and I figured I was in for a series of "screw u's" but she just looked at me and then went to her resting place. I have about 7 rolls of 36 slides waiting for development. I have also good shots of the badly tumoured turtles in the algae pads too.

It will take a long time to edit our video, ID and log the turtles to computer, and all that other stuff but it will be interesting. Catscratch, Poino and Kimo never showed this summer. I hope they're ok... later, this is a lot for you as it is.

Aloha and take care...Ursula



Date: Thu, 13 Oct 1994 22:02:00 -0400
From: rn.2403@rose.com
To: gbalazs@honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu
Subject: Coming up for a breath

Dear George,

It has been almost a month since I had the time to read, view or do anything with turtles. No exaggeration I have been up to my ass in alligators here at the school (which makes me wonder how Ross is doing with that Grade 8 class).

I received Losey's article on cleaning symbiosis. I've read it once and need to go over it a few more times. One thing stood out really quickly... how scientists write. The example that stood out the most was on page 686, Losey writes (I assume it's him) "Apparent feeding bites by both fishes produced an obvious response by the turtle as though to a painful stimulus and were often followed by the turtle leaving the area."

I've read this several times because it is so different from what I would write. I'd write something like, "Wrasses and in particular Tobies, target tumours and inflict clearly painful bites which have caused turtles to wince, slam their eyes shut and up and leave." Hell, I've winced when I've seen a turtle nailed in the eye.

Peter gave me your previous Internet transmissions, I just haven't had the time to respond. Re. the tag numbers of French Frigate turtles. I can wait. I know what computers are like... Plus I know Tutu will be there next summer and she will let me close. But it would be so exciting to find her in your printouts by process of elimination...

RE. 1994 turtle video. I haven't even started yet. School has snowed me under. Same with the slides. They look ok, some interesting stuff but can't get at it yet.

Oh.. Peter and I are going to Grand Cayman for 7 days during Christmas. They have a turtle farm there and ironically, last time I was there in '85, I showed little interest in the turtles. I even ate turtle soup!!! (I get sick just THINKING about it.)

I made up my mind. I am going to the Turtle Symposium and will try and give a talk... I mean a real talk, not just a paper. I'll lose pay but now I don't care. I'm going.

I am also going to write a couple of articles, I just don't know who/where to write to. I want to focus on the impact of fibropapillomas on the INDIVIDUAL turtle... I also want to do one on just how neat it is to dive with turtles - and maybe how divers can play a better part in monitoring the ocean. (I thought about Skin Diver for that one) And finally I want to do one like the one for the Advertiser... A kind of Once Upon a Turtle House. Photos and all, cuz I have about a half dozen truly beautiful photos. (not bragging either. They just have captured the personality of the turtle and that is what wildlife photography is about.)

There is something very exciting Losey wrote and I want to talk about it. Very last paragraph. "Cleaners might even serve as a carrier or vector for the agent that causes the fibropapilloma." You have mentioned that before, but let me toss this at you.

If I had to lay down a hundred American on who the likely "villain" is, I would say check out the Toby too. This summer again confirmed that a Toby will feed exclusively off tumours on the badly tumoured turtle. Happened last year too with Kimo - Peter has 10-15 minutes video (non-stop) of two Tobies picking and probing tumours.

I have often wanted to catch the Tobies and Wrasses after a prolonged cleaning session on a grossly tumoured turtle and then get it to a lab to do a check for viruses on the mouth/teeth and compare that to "normal" wrasses/tobies in non-infected turtle stations.

For example, I have fits when I see a wrasse going from a badly tumoured turtle over to Aikane (the only non-tumoured turtle we have).

While in Hawaii, I called the clean water people in Honolulu and asked how much lab analyses cost. I thought maybe a hundred, a couple max. They quoted figures in the THOUSANDS for one sample depending on what I wanted tested! GULP!

Oh.. yeah, you wrote and mentioned you were in Kaneohe and found fewer tumoured turtles and you speculated on whether the worst cases were just dead and so no longer showing up. You can be sure of it. (laypeople like me can say stuff like that -grin-)

Same in Honokowai. I don't have the final stats but there did not seem to be an increase (as I had expected) in tumours. But then again, some tumoured regulars from previous years, (Kimo, Catscratch, Clothahump, Poino -off the top of my head- never showed!)

Two startling discoveries were grossly tumoured Lefty (emaciated, she won't be around in '95) and 1991 Turtle 1 - so bad, he looks anorexic, all caved in - won't see him in '95 either, so yeah, the bad ones are dying. Then in the shallows, we saw about four new recruits, shells all cleaned and polished.

And I suspect that is what happens.. tumoured turtles die and recruits come in. Except George, I give recruits in Honokowai, 6 years to tumour up. That is what happened to Clothahump. Recruit in '88, tumoured by '93, gone in '94.

And tell you something right now. I am going to stick out my neck here. Howzit will show tumours in '95. She had "salt and pepper" this year and I don't like her left eye either. That "salt and pepper" is now a precursor to full round tumours in one year.

Remember Nui? I said his tumours were receding? Sure looks like it, except his left shoulder has "salt and pepper" and I am worried there too.

Thanks for reading this. I know I always come in long but that is because when I write you I get to think about the turtles and images flood my head and I can escape Canada and work for a while.

Gotta go, you have other things that need tending. Aloha and when you are diving, try and sneak a pat on a shell for me, ok?

Ursula (The Dry-docked)

Forwarded by

Date: Fri, 21 Oct 1994 00:11:00 -0400
From: rn.2403@rose.com
To: gbalazs@honlab.nmfs.hawaii.edu
Subject: Letter from Ursula

Dear George,

I tried calling you three times today but each time your lines was busy.

Got your files! Thanks! Took me less than 10 minutes to find Tutu. I was looking for tag A-354. Your records show a turtle with a left front tag of A -254. I checked my field notes from '93 and they confirm the tag as being on the front left. My notes also say the first digit was scummed up and almost illegible.

I called to ask you to scan your computer. I GOT to confirm it is Tutu. At your leisure can you call up A -254 and just tell me this. Was she at the FFS in 1991?

And this is my MOST IMPORTANT question. Do her records for that year show she had tumours in both eyes? ...because it should. We have her with eye tumours in 1990 and again in 1992.

But here it gets neat. Her eyes are clear in 1993! And YOUR 1994 FFS records state that A -234 has no tumours! Maybe, just maybe, if you check your 1991 FFS records of A -234 and then your 1994 you will see confirmed what I have said for a while now. Tutu's tumours have cleared.

PLEASE let me know one way or another.

Also for Turtle Z33 records 107 - 109, what do the numbers 3,1,2 J
1,3,1 N

mean in the field notes? This looks like an impressively tumoured turtle and I just kind of want to know what that means.

I have tons of other questions especially re. the Losey article that only today, I had the leisure to read and do notes on.

Gotta go, I rented a Bela Lugosi Dracula movie and an Abbott and Costello movie. (I am into an old movie kick....)

...and George, I can't really begin to tell you how important those pages you sent were or how much I appreciate all the material you funnel this way. I will be working on ID'ing our turtles over the weekend and getting seriously into our 1994 documentation.

Mahalo, aloha and have a great weekend.

Peter Bennett, Mississauga, ON a/k/a peter.bennett@rose.com
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