



# University of Hawaii at Manoa

Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology  
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Cable Address: UNIHAW

October 9, 1975

His Majesty, The Emperor of Japan  
c/o Consulate General of Japan  
1742 Nuuanu Avenue  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Your Majesty:

I would be most honored to have you accept the enclosed color photographs from my collection as a gift in recognition of continuing friendship between the people of Hawaii and Japan. It would seem appropriate to select portrayals of sea turtles in view of your knowledge of marine biology, and the symbol of longevity which the turtle represents.

I am particularly interested in these unique marine reptiles. A portion of my research at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology has dealt with the natural history and conservation of the green (*Chelonia mydas*) and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) turtles. Like many other species of wildlife, populations of sea turtles are declining significantly throughout the world. The reasons for the decline include both overexploitation, and the destruction of nesting and feeding habitats. In November of 1974, I attended a task force meeting convened by the Secretariat of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to examine the commercial exploitation and survival status of sea turtles. A serious new problem that was discussed is the growing commerce in whole, mounted sea turtles for souvenirs. This taxidermy trade has become common throughout much of Southeast Asia with the advent of mass tourism. Turtle souvenirs seem to be especially popular with Japanese tourists. This popularity is undoubtedly due to the turtle's historical symbolism, such as the Minogame (海亀) and the folklore of Urashima Taro (浦島太郎). It is indeed ironic that a traditionally respected animal is now being destroyed for souvenir purposes. The taking of sea turtles for souvenirs is also unfortunate because it represents a waste of food resource. Therefore, one of the major recommendations resulting from the IUCN meeting was that the taking and preparing of turtles for the primary purpose of souvenirs should be strongly discouraged. This recommendation, along with other conservation guidelines, has now been adopted as the official policy of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

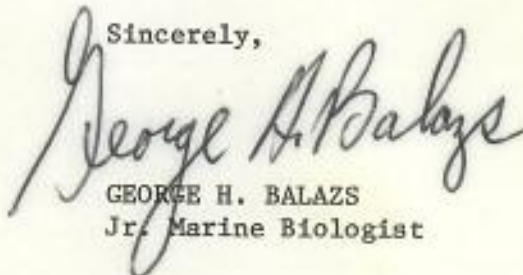
His Majesty, The Emperor of Japan

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Presently, many people are not aware of the endangered status of sea turtles and the harmful effects of buying turtle souvenirs. For this reason, I would like to respectfully request your assistance. It would be beneficial if you were to initiate the proper action to inform the people of Japan of this important conservation matter.

I hope that their majesties' visit to Hawaii will be both rewarding and pleasurable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George H. Balazs". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

GEORGE H. BALAZS  
Jr. Marine Biologist

GHB:ec

Enclosures