

HONU WHISPERER

VOLUME 9 ISSUE 1

Mission: "To protect the Hawaiian green sea turtles through education, public awareness and conservation, all in the spirit of Aloha."

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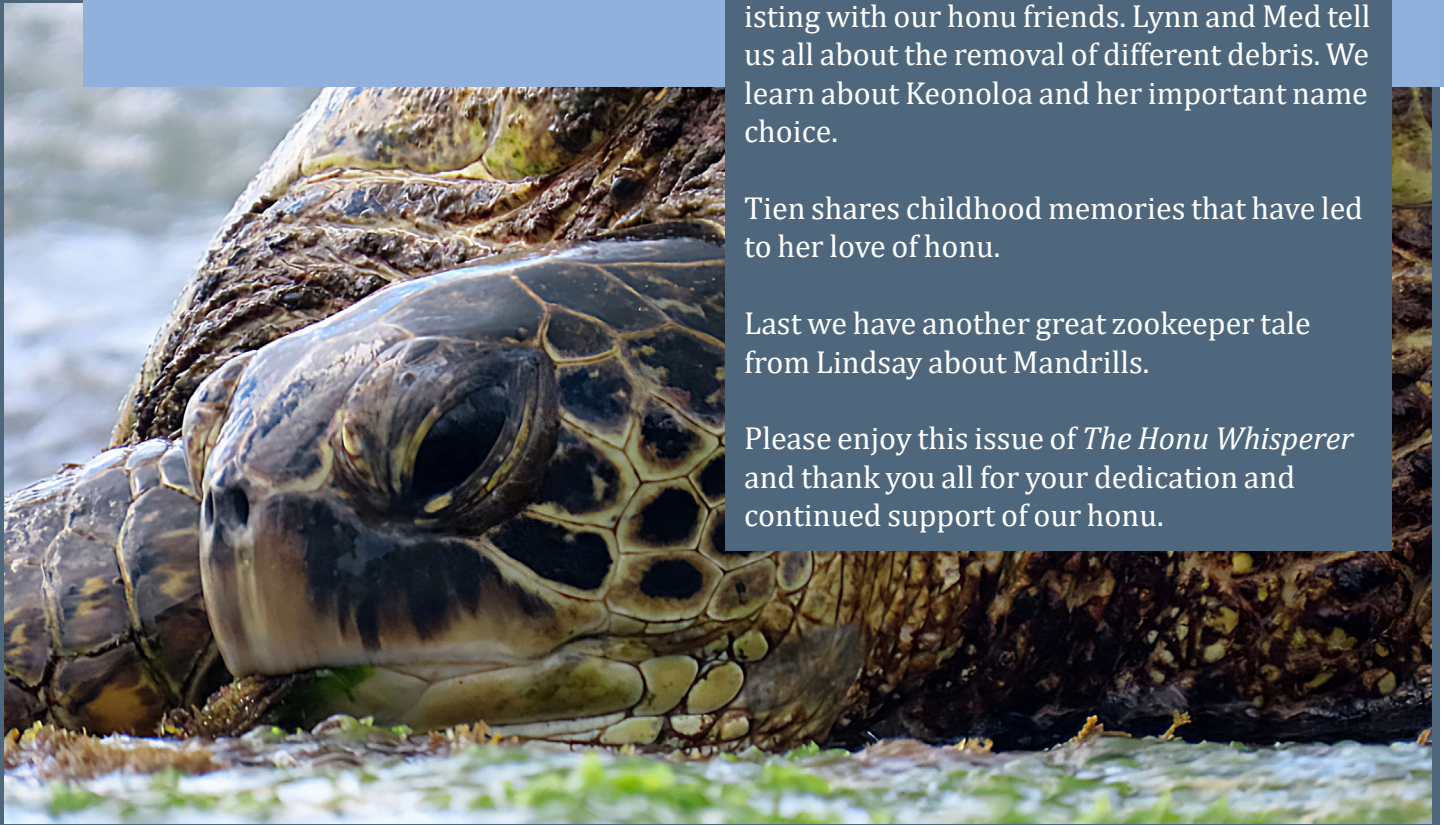
Aloha Volunteers! This is a big issue with some great stories. Our volunteers have been busy!

Lisa on Kaua'i discusses statistics and coexisting with our honu friends. Lynn and Med tell us all about the removal of different debris. We learn about Keonoloa and her important name choice.

Tien shares childhood memories that have led to her love of honu.

Last we have another great zookeeper tale from Lindsay about Mandrills.

Please enjoy this issue of *The Honu Whisperer* and thank you all for your dedication and continued support of our honu.



COEXISTENCE

written by Lisa Harrington, Po'ipū Docent

Aloha! I am Lisa Harrington over on Kaua'i and have the privilege of being part of an awesome team of volunteers here with Mālama i nā honu. I have been working the beach here in Po'ipū for a little over 14 months and I love it! We have a very unique situation over on this island as our honu choose to bask at night and in large groups. That's right...groups (see photo



below)! We often see them haul out and lay directly next to or on another turtle. Our numbers get so large at certain times, it actually looks like the makings of a Waikīkī traffic jam!

I often think at the end of my shift around 9 or 10 PM, when the stars fill the sky, the white of the crashing surf is illuminated by moon, and the many turtles line the water's edge, how in the world did I get so blessed as to witness this work of art several times a week? Don't get me wrong, we do have those days (many since December 2023) where we are all bundled up in rain gear, trying to keep our cones and signs from blowing into the water or on turtles. The 20mph+ sustained winds with the occasional 45-50 mph gust had our

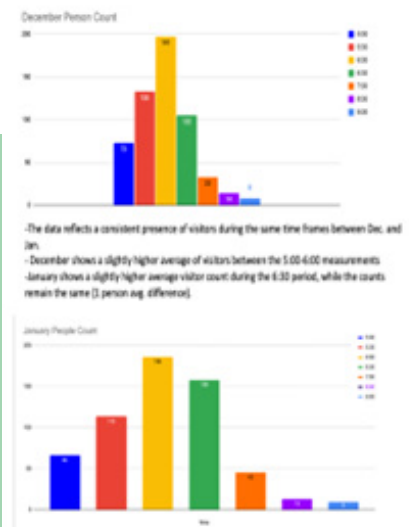
teeth chattering when it is only 65 degrees outside. Even then, the feeling of gratitude at being part of this team, and teaching people from all around the world about these majestic and smart creatures is overwhelming.

We are all very mindful that here we stand, coexisting with the honu on the most popular beach on this island. The turtles have been hauling up here for over a century. But as many locals will attest, they did not see this many at one time growing up and of course most people never knew they were here, because it was happening after people left the beach and went back to their hotels/resorts for dinner. But here we are since COVID with so many covering this beach as hundreds of onlookers come to see them out of their natural habitat.

So how do we continue to coexist on this beach? How do we ensure that how we humans behave and the honu's adapted lifestyle confluence on the same beach? While this will take some time to study and understand, the work is underway through the data

collecting and educational efforts of our Kaua'i volunteers.

Under the direction of Debbie Herrera, the organization's Education and Volunteer Coordinator, we began to change how we track data. Given we all have cell phones, it seemed more practical means to use our devices for our hourly counts of honu and people. What also seemed important was to capture some environmental occurrences and observational information from our docents. The goal was to build a digital database of information that used to be captured by hand and make the data collection consistent so we could clearly see trends and look at where this preliminary information could take us next. Currently we have almost 6 months of daily digital data (both AM and PM) showing the numbers of turtles present, the number of people visiting, the high tide cycle and its measurements, the moon cycle, the temperature, as well as a variety of observational information. In the graphs below you can see how the preliminary data translates.



This month we launched a Kaua'i Docent Survey to hear directly from our team about some their thoughts on what they do on the beach and what they hear from visitors. We also have a Po'ipū Beach Visitor Survey to help us understand why they came to visit the honu and how they found their way to Po'ipū Beach for this nightly event. This summer, we will have

an opportunity to work with a research colleague to analyze the past 6 months of digital data, the prior years' hand-written data, and look at this information through the lens of our ability to coexist with these creatures.

What we do impacts others, human and animal alike. The information learned will help provide new

information in our daily education on the beach with visitors, fortify our outreach programs island wide, and embolden our understanding and conservation efforts not only on our islands, but worldwide. We hope the lessons we glean from what is revealed helps us in this endeavor and we look forward to sharing that with you all!

LINE PROBLEMS

written by Med Dyer

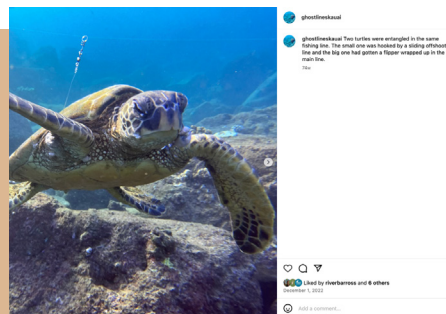
I am a SCUBA diver on Kaua'i and I specialize in removing underwater debris. While I have found all kinds of things underwater, mostly what I do is remove tangled fishing line from living coral formations.



The lines get tangled when people fishing from shore are unable to retrieve a line and it either breaks or they cut it free. The shape of some of our native corals is such that the ocean's motion wraps the line around and around a coral head. Sometime longer lines can go from one formation to another for hundreds of feet. Unfortunately the tangled line can kill a



coral in a short amount of time. The movement of the line along the surface of the coral causes the coral polyps to get cut off and after a certain amount of this irritation, the coral dies. The areas where I remove line from living coral have many dead corals with old line still tangled up.



Coral is not the only critter that is impacted by fishing line. I have found several sea turtles actively caught in fishing line. These turtles were trapped by lines that had run from one rock to another underwater, basically "clotheslining" them as they swam by. Once they get tangled, they get very frantic and that can make the tangle worse. In addition to these active tangles I have seen many turtles with line segments wrapped around fins or necks, and there

are multiple three-finned turtles swimming around that were likely victims of entanglement. I have also freed pencil urchins, as their strange design makes them very tangle-prone.

What else have I removed besides fishing line? Hundreds of pounds of lead, a dozen masks and as many snorkels, bathing suits, many spark plugs (used as fishing weights), hundreds of golf balls, tires, beach chairs, and one intact crack pipe. The majority of my time is spent on the tangled corals though. Each entanglement takes several minutes as the line has to be threaded and cut carefully, to avoid leaving any behind.



I document most of my finds on Instagram at www.instagram.com/ghostlineskauai/

KAUA'I TURTLE DOCENTS MORPH INTO SURFRIDER NET PATROL NET REMOVERS

written by Lynn Bowen, Po'ipū Docent

In December 2023, I saw a Sunday Surfrider Facebook call to action that a massive 3,000-pound ghost net had washed up on Shipwreck Beach. Half had been removed, and they were looking for volunteers



for the rest. I had wanted to add Surfrider to my volunteer efforts so I saw this as the perfect time to jump in, figuring I would offer our truck to haul it away. There was no one available the day I arrived at the beach so I removed what I could and convinced two surfers and two visitors to help. Later, veteran Surfrider volunteers arrived, but there was another large section at the water's edge half covered by sand. This needed removal ASAP before it was taken back by the ocean becoming a

treacherous floating mass once again. Over the next several days, utilizing anyone we could talk into helping, Surfrider collected the rest. Over the next weeks my husband Dan and I helped with removing more nets off Waimea Beach and Mahaulepu Beach.

In February 2024, a 2,000-pound net we dubbed The Beast hooked itself to the jagged rock cliffs just east of Po'ipū Beach where the honu bask. Only a small amount of this big bad net was connected to the rocks with the majority floating in the water. Pounding surf and large winter swells made it a physically demanding location. Over the next several days I, along with fellow turtle docents Med Dyer, Lorie Davey and others, monitored it and reported back to Barbara Wiedner with Kauai Surfrider as a plan evolved to safely remove it. We would cringe each day as we watched many turtles swimming by and under it and feeding off the algae that had grown on it. The number of turtles seen each day in its vicinity as well as monk seals, dolphin pods and whales was staggering and worrisome. As plans for removal were in the works, the ocean detached and threw the net partially up onto the rocky cliff.

Surfrider and I gathered a crew from different parts of the island. Our group of net removal warriors included fellow turtle docents Lorie Davey, Dawn & Kawika Madeiros, Peter Rath, Greg Iten, and Med Dyer,

Greg's friend Terry the retired fireman, a local young fisherman, Janice a neighbor and nurse, Roque & Sara from Makahuena condo complex, and Bernardo, a very helpful and knowledgeable Kupuna who knew the cliffs and the ocean well. Together with our differing skill sets, after two long days, three pickup trucks, several tumbles, scrapes, and losing



slippas to the ocean, we got The Beast out of the wate and out of the clutches of the jagged cliff crevices. Armful by armful it was carried off the coastline.



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Statements from some of our Kauai Docents who put in hours of effort towards removal of nets:

“There is no doubt in my mind had that large, heavy net come loose and floated back into the ocean that innocent wildlife would have become entangled in it. It was uniquely rewarding to work on a team of caring volunteers from all walks of life who managed to neutralize this jumbled, two ton mass of killer nylon.” -Peter Rath

We were so lucky to be involved in the Surfrider net removal from this huge rocky shore in Poipu. As part of Malama i Na Honu we want to help keep their eating grounds safe. The Honu looked on while the humans worked for two days to remove this net over with 20 volunteers with steak knives working inch by inch to remove this huge massive ghost net. As the waves hit sometimes pieces would come free and float near the Honu. After Kawika scaled the rocks to release the spider webbing of net, he jumped in tennis shoes & all to save the run away net and retrieve the other volunteers slipper that got away!! We even had a paddler come by and help pick up some of the free floating pieces. It takes a village, and we are honored to be part of it. Much Aloha.” -Kawika and Dawn Madeiros

“It was a great group effort. Everyone pitched in and if there was something to be done they did it or joined the others to make it easier to complete the job. We even got a kayaker to scoop up a couple small pieces of floating net and tossed it ashore. That’s team work. My take away was seeing 20+ honu back in their feeding ground as soon as the net was removed. That made all the hard work a huge win. 🙌 to the team!” -Greg Iten



A HONU NAMED KEONELOA

written by Jerry Keese, Po‘ipū Docent

My name is Jerry Keese, and I am a volunteer with Mālama i nā Honu on Kaua‘i. My wife, Cindy, and I started as docents at Po‘ipū Beach on January 8, 2022. Early on, we developed a special relationship with a large female honu whose right front flipper had been amputated to a stump (not surgically). At that time, the honu basking at Po‘ipū Beach were not given names and we began to refer to her (irreverently in hindsight) as Stumpy. On May 24, 2022, I began photographing honu basking at Po‘ipū Beach and submitting the photographs to the National

Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) sea turtle recognition database. On May 28, 2022, I photographed the large female honu with an amputated right front flipper and submitted her photographs to the recognition database. The honu was not in NOAA’s database and she was given a temporary ID of 20220528KABA1.

On December 30, 2022, I began photographing honu basking on Po‘ipū Beach to compile a Honu Identification Book as part of the conservation program at the beach. On February 5, 2023,

20220528KABA1 was basking on the beach and I compiled identification photographs of her and designated her P24.

Compiling photographs used to identify individual honu was done to identify female honu exhibiting behaviors of a potential nester during the upcoming nesting



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season, i.e., spending much of the day basking on the beach, building up body fat (becoming fluffy), and going higher and higher on the beach when basking. Although Cindy stopped being a docent in July 2023, she continued to observe the honu on the beach. In April 2024, Cindy identified P24 as a nester for the 2024 nesting season. Other docents on the beach who were formally gathering basking data for Mālama i nā Honu had arrived at the same conclusion.

Early in the morning of July 22, 2024, docents Lynn Bowen and Dora Samson observed P24 nesting on Keoneloā, a beach about one mile down the coast from Po'ipū Beach. In the words of Debbie Herrera, Mālama i nā Honu Volunteer Education Coordinator, "It is very special to have data of a basking honu that also is a nesting honu close by where she calls her "home" basking beach." To honor the impact that P24 has had, Debbie Herrera asked

my assistance in giving the honu a Hawaiian name. Three names were discussed with and approved by Moani Tolentino, Cultural Practitioner, and manager of Ke Kumu o Hihinui, the cultural activities and resource center at the Grand Hyatt.

The three names were:

- Mu`umu`u which translates to amputee.
- `Ōkumu which translates to stump or cut off short.
- Keoneloā which translates to The Long Sand and is the ancient name for the beach on which she nested.

The criteria presented for consideration of an appropriate name were:

- Does the name show respect for that specific animal?
- Does the name have a meaningful impact?
- Will you be able to share the meaning of the name and use it when educating the public?

The Hawaiian name chosen for P24 was Keoneloā!

Keoneloā is an ancient, sacred beach on the South Shore of Kaua'i! It is sacred because, in early Hawai'i, the harvest from the sea fed the Ali'i (chiefs). It is also sacred because the sand dunes backing it is an ancient burial ground. Dr. William Kikuchi, former anthropology professor at Kaua'i Community College is on record as stating that in earlier times, it was difficult to walk on the dunes without hearing the crunching sound of bone beneath the surface of the sand.

Culturally and spiritually, it may be that P24 is an Aumakua possessed by the spirit of a kupuna (ancestor) buried there. With that in mind, P24 chose to nest on Keoneloā and entrust her eggs to the kūpuna (ancestors).

No matter what you may believe, it is very appropriate that P24 will now be known as Keoneloā!



HONU LOVE

written by Tien Saiki

“Baby Honu” is a stuffed animal that was gifted to me when I was 4 years old. She immediately became my best friend and my love for all things honu was born. When it came time to choose a project for my Girl Scout Gold Award, I knew I wanted to do something to help turtles.



Malama I Na Honu has always been an organization that I admire. Their mission: “To protect Hawaiian sea turtles through education, public awareness and conservation, all in the Spirit of Aloha” fit perfectly with the values that I have learned through the Girl Scouts: to be considerate and caring, use resources wisely, and make the world a better

place. I decided that working with both organizations to host an Adoption Event for the honu at Laniakea Beach would be the perfect Gold Award Project for me. I started my project by connecting with both Malam I Na Honu and Girl Scouts of Hawaii. Once my project was approved, I began designing a Girl Scout patch for the event that girls could earn by participating in the event and adopting a honu. This was a lot of fun for me. I worked with Miss Debbie at Malama I Na Honu on deciding what activities could be held at the event and how we could raise awareness about protecting

honu and ocean conservation. It was decided that I would do a “Trash Talk” to share about the dangers of marine debris and Malama I Na Honu staff would do a presentation about the turtles on Laniakea Beach.

I enlisted the help of my Girl Scout Troop 873 and our sister troop, Troop 675, to help volunteer at the

event. We had environmentally friendly activities like Kindness Rocks painting, temporary turtle tattoos, and DIY recyclable craft kits.

Our first annual “Hanai-a-Honu” event was held on July 23, 2023 at Laniakea Beach. We had over 50 girl scouts from around the island participate in the event and 1 turtle join the event by basking on the beach and allowing girls to take pictures (from a distance). We even met a girl scout from the Big Island and a girl guide from Australia! Over 40 turtles were adopted, with the fan favorite being “Tiny Tim,” a turtle from Kauai.

My hope is that the “Hanai-a-Honu” Adoption Event becomes an annual event that will continue to raise awareness of the importance of ocean conservation and protection of Hawaiian sea turtles. I also hope that this event helped other girls to develop their love of all things honu. “Baby Honu” would be proud.



ZOOKEEPER TALES: MANDRILLS

written by Lindsay Byrne

Have you ever wondered what the biggest monkey species is? Well wonder no more, it's your friendly neighborhood zookeeper here to answer your question! Mandrills are the largest monkeys in the world, weighing in at 70-100 pounds (although that's just the males; females are much smaller at 25-35 pounds). You may recog-



J.J. showing off his impressive canines (photo from Teri Webster)

nize mandrills because of a movie character – Rafiki from *The Lion King*. Online you may see Rafiki called a baboon, but you can tell by his coloration that he's actually a mandrill (they belong to the same family, but have different characteristics).

Mandrills aren't only the largest monkey species, they're also the most colorful. From blues to reds to purples, their faces and rear ends can be quite vibrant. The dominant male in the troop is the most brightly colored due to his level of testosterone. It signals

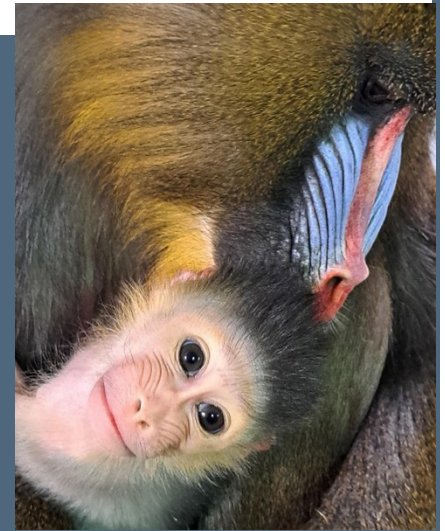
to the females in the troop that he is healthy, strong, and able to produce healthy offspring. Another way he can show his dominance is by showing his canine teeth that can reach 2-2.5 inches long. They're pretty impressive and also serve to warn other monkeys not to mess with him.

What's a mandrill's favorite treat? Well, I can speak for our individuals at the zoo and say that fruit is their favorite snack. We use it for training purposes because they're motivated to work with us if they get bananas, grapes, and apples afterward. Some of their favorite enrichment treats (novel and often hidden or scattered) are popcorn, mealworms, and hard boiled eggs. Since they are omnivores, their daily diet includes plenty of leafy greens, vegetables, fruits, and proteins. However they usually want to eat their treats first, then their healthier foods after (I can relate).

Mom Scarlett holding baby Ruby with her adult coloring coming in (photo from Fort Worth Zoo)



Speaking of our mandrills, we take care of a troop of four monkeys. Until the first of the year, we had adults J.J. (13), Scarlett (13), and Sudi (29). Then Ruby was born in January and really ramped up the energy level in the mandrill exhibit. She's very energetic and loves to play and explore



Mom Scarlett holding baby Ruby just a few days after she was born (photo from Fort Worth Zoo)

her environment. You can see in the pictures that she had quite a different coloration when she was born. After about 2 months, babies lose their black hair and start to develop adult colors. Mom Scarlett is still very protective, but we're slowly building a trusting relationship with her. We love working with each of our mandrills – they all have their own quirks and personalities that keep every day interesting!



Do you have suggestions for our newsletter? Maybe you have a great picture from the beach or a fun story. If so, please contact Debbie Herrera by email at

debbie@malamainahonu.org

Reference Honu Whisperer.

Thanks for reading and we'll see you at the beach!

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Photos provided by article authors or editor.

Resources available upon request.

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