



“Aloha a me E Komo Mai, mai Nā Honu‘ea o Hawai‘i Island” (Hello and Welcome, from The Hawai‘i Island Hawksbills)

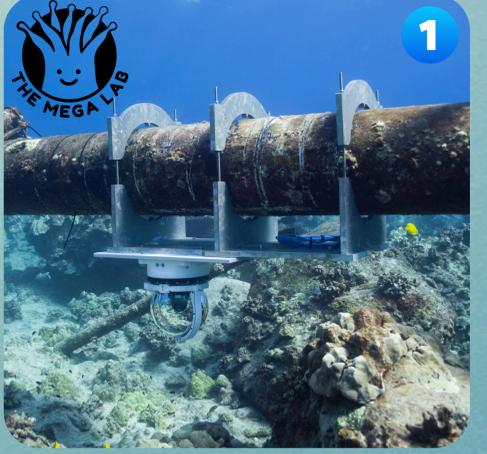
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The Hawaiian archipelago, one of the most isolated island chains in the world, consists of ~137 islands that span ~2,400 km. Two species of sea turtles inhabit nearshore habitats for foraging and nesting in Hawai‘i: the more common green sea turtle known as “honu” (*Chelonia mydas*) and the rarer hawksbill turtle known as “honu‘ea” or simply “ea” (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). Hawaiian sea turtles fulfill important ecological roles and are highly revered culturally.



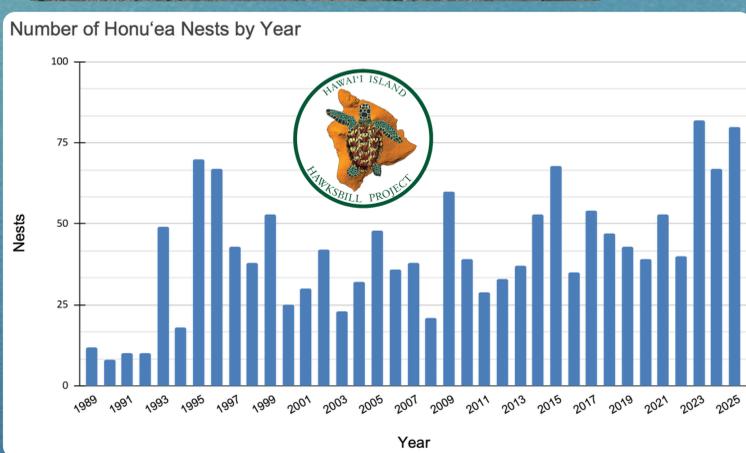
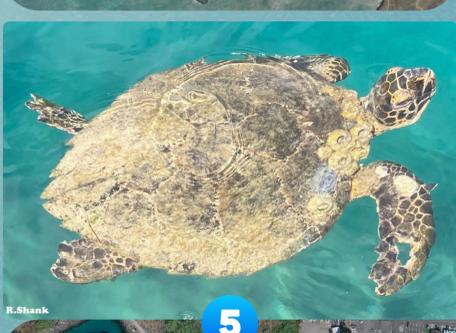
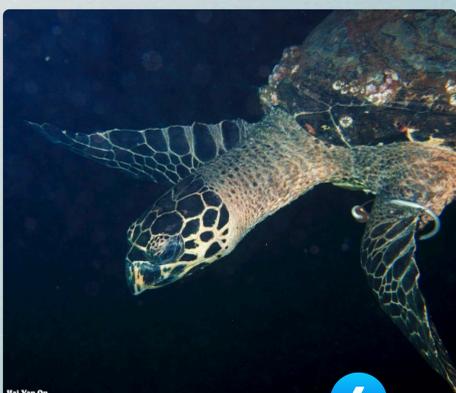
Once hatchlings enter the ocean, they likely spend their “lost years” traveling with the prevailing currents westward or remaining in local offshore habitats. After their pelagic phase, hawksbills can be found among the diverse nearshore habitats surrounding the Hawaiian Islands. If they choose Hawai‘i Island as their foraging grounds, they could be spotted on the “View Into The Blue” streaming camera installed by The Mega Lab at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo (<https://www.themegalab.org>).



A cooperative project with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Hawai‘i Preparatory Academy Sea Turtle Research Program has tagged 10 hawksbills compared to 1000s of greens from 1976-2025. Hawksbill sizes ranged from 27.0-78.7 cm SCL (4 of which were recaptured). (<https://turtle.hpa.edu/>).



One of the juvenile hawksbills tagged at Kiholo Bay in 1989 was found 20 years later nesting at Punalu‘u.



The overwhelming majority of hawksbill nests within the archipelago have been laid on Hawai‘i Island, so the epic journey of this genetically distinct species begins here. The Hawai‘i Island Hawksbill Project has been monitoring nesting activities and protecting coastal habitats for over 35 years. (<https://hawaiiislandhawksbillproject.org>)

- 16 beaches
- 200 nesters tagged
- 1,459 nests
- ~151,500 hatchlings

Upon reaching sexual maturity, many nesters from all around Hawai‘i return to Hawai‘i Island, where the natural cycle of hawksbill life continues.



| HHC Catalog | TOTAL Hawksbills | Juveniles | Subadults | Adult Females | Adult Males | Barnacles | Fishing Gear | Injured | Deceased |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Kawaihae | 17 (14.8%) | 15 (88.2%) | 2 (11.8%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 14 (82.4%) | 4 (23.5%) | 5 (29.4%) | 1 (5.9%) |
| Honokohau | 18 (15.7%) | 15 (88.2%) | 1 (5.9%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (11.1%) | 9 (50.0%) | 2 (11.8%) | 9 (50.0%) | 3 (17.6%) |
| Remainder | 80 (69.5%) | 42 (51.9%) | 24 (29.6%) | 4 (4.9%) | 10 (12.5%) | 6 (7.4%) | 1 (1.2%) | 33 (40.7%) | 1 (1.2%) |
| TOTAL (% of Total) | 115 | 72 (62.6%) | 27 (23.5%) | 4 (3.5%) | 12 (10.4%) | 29 (25.2%) | 7 (6.1%) | 47 (40.9%) | 5 (4.3%) |

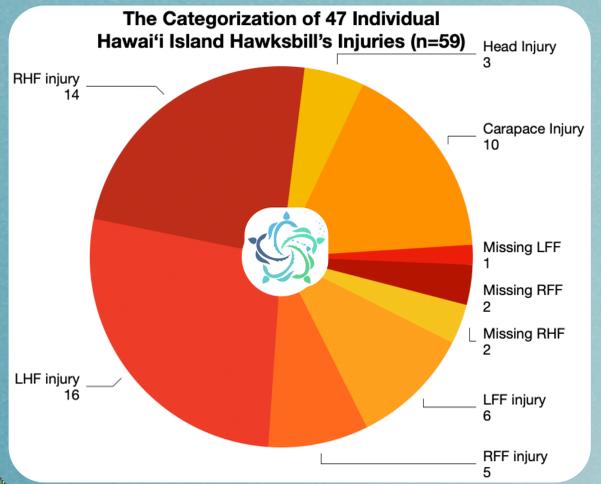
Through the Hawaiian Hawksbill Conservation Project (<https://www.hihawksbills.org>), 115 individual hawksbills have been identified around Hawai‘i Island utilizing photo-identification (PID) methodologies from opportunistic citizen scientist reports. This amount comprised 26.6% of the total 433 individuals in the statewide catalog (1998-2025). Nearly one third of these Hawai‘i Island individuals have been found in the Kawaihae Harbor (n=17) and the Honokōhau Harbor (n=18), possibly due to foraging species preferences. The higher density of anthropogenic threats within harbors include vessel collisions, fishing gear interactions, pollution, and marine debris.

Five individuals in the PID catalog are known to be deceased and 40.9% of the 115 hawksbills had a physical injury.

The age-class groups in the Hawai‘i Island PID catalog consisted of:

- 62.3% juveniles (n=72)
- 23.7% subadults (n=27)
- 14.0% adults (n=16)

Among these adult-sized hawksbills, 4 individuals were females and 12 were males.

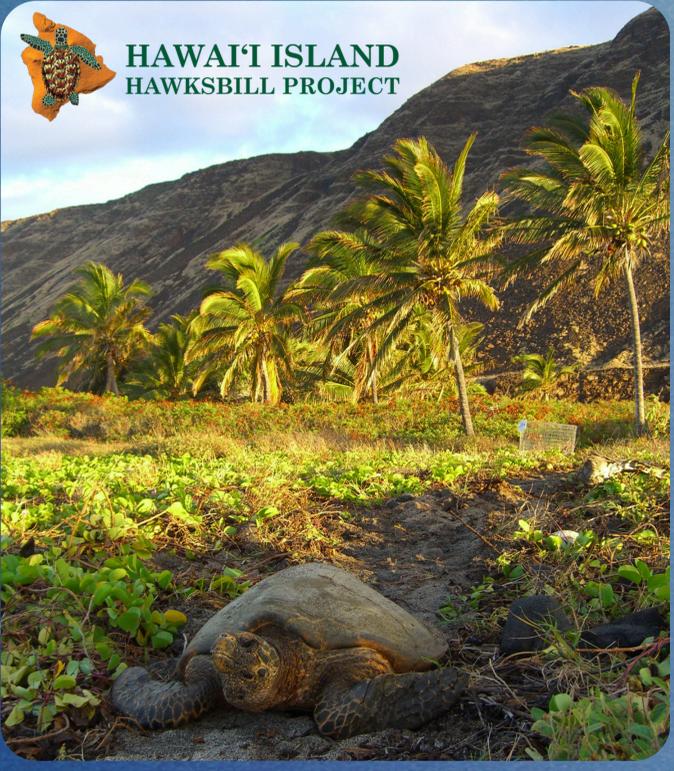


HAWKSIBILLS LOVE HARBORS!



A total of 8 post-nesters (3 from Maui and 5 from Hawai‘i Island) have been satellite tracked to this Haumakua Coast, an important foraging area.

Six West Maui hawksbills in the Hawaiian Hawksbill Conservation PID catalog have been discovered nesting by the Hawai‘i Island Hawksbill Project!



WANTED
Information on **Hawksbill Turtles (Honu'ea)**
REPORT ALL HAWKSBILL SIGHTINGS TO:
hihawksbills.org or respectwildlife@noaa.gov

HAWKSBILL OR GREEN? How to tell the difference

| HAWKSBILL / HONU'EA | GREEN / HONU |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> | <i>Chelonia mydas</i> |
| Narrow head and pointed beak | Rounded head |
| 4 pre-frontal scales (between eyes) | 2 pre-frontal scales (between eyes) |
| ALL sightings of baby turtle hatchlings are important. | Shell: serrated edges |
| | Shell: smooth edges |

* Report injured/dead sea turtles to the state-wide marine animal reporting hotline: 888-256-9840 *

Their respective long-term projects will continue to collaborate to gather information on knowledge gaps that will help further monitor, understand and protect this iconic species. Mahalo nui loa to everyone who has supported these projects!

