

# Chelonia Mydas » Honu « Green Sea Turtle

Mei (May) 2020 | Hawaiian Lunar Months: Ikiiki – Ka'aona

## Ka Hō'ike 'Ano - Description

- » The green sea turtle is one of the largest hard-shelled sea turtles. They are unique among sea turtles in that they are herbivores, eating mostly seagrasses and algae. This diet is what gives their cartilage and fat a greenish color which is where their name comes from.
- » Adult and juvenile green turtles are generally found nearshore as well as in bays and lagoons, on reefs, and especially in areas with seagrass beds. Adults migrate from foraging areas to nesting beaches and may travel hundreds or thousands of kilometers each way.<sup>1</sup>



## Ka Laulā Kaianoho - Distribution

- » Green turtles live all over the world, nest in over 80 countries, and live in the coastal areas of more than 140 countries.
- » The majority of adult green turtles that feed throughout the main Hawaiian Islands migrate to French Frigate Shoals in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands to nest.<sup>2</sup> (Photo right)



## Cultural Significance - Ka Waiwai Ho'oilina

- » Honu are found in the 4<sup>th</sup> era of time according to the Hawaiian creation chant Kumulipo.  
Hānau ka Honua noho I kai, Kia'i 'ia e ke Kūhonua noho I uka.  
*Born is the turtle [Honu] living in the sea, guarded by the Maile seedling [Kūhonua] living on land.*<sup>3</sup>



- » There are several wahi pana, or special places, in Hawai'i that include the word "honu" in their place names. Pāhonu is a traditional Hawaiian fishpond on the island of O'ahu and is said to be where captured turtles were kept by chiefs.<sup>4</sup>

## Hawaiian Proverbs - Nā 'Ōlelo No'eau



- » Pūhā ka honu, ua awakea.  
*When the turtle comes up to breathe, it is daylight.*  
Said when a person yawns. Sleeping time is over; work begins.
- » He honu ka 'āina he mea pane'e wale.  
*Land is like a turtle: it moves on.*  
Land passes slowly but inexorably from owner of heir.<sup>5</sup>