



# Hawai'i Island Hawksbill Turtle Recovery Project 2015 Season Highlights

The 2015 Hawksbill nesting season on Hawai'i Island has come to an end with our most active nesting to date! For the last eight months, over 25 turtle volunteers monitored Hawai'i Island's southern coastline for hawksbill nesting activity and protected critically endangered turtle nests. Hawksbill nesting activity was first documented in May and continued until the last nest emerged in late December. We identified 25 individual nesting hawksbills. This was the most hawksbills identified within a season, since the previous record was 17 hawksbills in 2009. Of these 25 hawksbills, 12 were returnees that had been tagged in previous seasons and 13 were newly tagged this season. These 13 newly tagged turtles increases the total number of identified adult female hawksbills on Hawai'i Island to 142. A total of 67 nests were confirmed at six nesting beaches. Two of these nesting sites were located within Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park: 'Āpua Point and Halapē. Four nesting sites were located outside the Park: Kamehame, Pōhue Bay, Punalu'u, and Kahakahakea. Approximately 7,500 hatchlings safely reached the ocean from these nests.

The following are site summaries:

**Āpua Point:** Two turtles were identified and both were newly tagged this season. Seven nests were confirmed. The hatchlings from these nests were helped across the rocky terrain to the ocean. We estimated that over 650 hatchlings safely reached the ocean from the seven nests that were excavated this season thanks to volunteer assistance.

**Halapē:** One returnee turtle, Turtle #83, was identified at Halapē this year. Turtle # 83 was originally tagged at Halapē in 2008. Three nests were confirmed and approximately 480 hatchlings safely reached the ocean from these three nests.



**Kamehame:** Fourteen turtles were identified; six returnees and eight newly tagged, and twenty-five total nests were confirmed at Kamehame this season. Volunteers were excited to see Turtle # 22, who was originally tagged at Kamehame in 1995! She has returned to nest at Kamehame in 1998, 2002, and 2005. This year she made two observed crawls that resulted in one confirmed nest. Approximately 1,795 hatchlings safely reached the ocean from excavations of 14 nests. Numerous unobserved crawls identified by tracks suggest there were many additional nests here as well.

**Punalu'u:** Two nests were located at this beach this season. The nesting individual was unknown because the nests were located after tracks and digs were observed during a day-check in the morning. Project personnel conducted public nest excavations for both nests. Having nests on a beach so easily

accessible to the public is a rare occurrence and allows us to share with the public the opportunity to see a critically endangered species, witness conservation efforts, and learn about hawksbills. More than 250 hatchlings made it to the ocean from these two nests.

**Pōhue Bay:** Eight turtles were documented at Pōhue Bay this season; five returnees and three newly tagged. A record total of 28 nests were confirmed. Project personnel saved two nests that were laid in the tidal zone and were in danger of being washed away by performing nest translocations, where the nests were carefully moved to a safer location. Both translocated nests had hatch success rates of over 98%! Just fewer than 4,000 hatchlings safely reached the ocean here this season, including 300 that were trapped in the nests and rescued by personnel during excavations.



**Kahakahakea:** Two nests were observed here this season. These are the third and fourth nests ever documented at this location! Over 275 hatchlings made it to the ocean safely from these nests.



**Kōloa, Nīnole, Pu‘u Ki, ‘Āwili Point (Road to the Sea):**

Numerous unobserved crawls identified by tracks suggest there were additional nests at these sites well. However monitoring at these sites were limited to daylight hours and it is possible we missed signs of emergences and hatchlings since wind and tides erase tracks made during the night.

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