



Hawksbill Turtles Nest on Wild and Remote Beaches

Honu'ea Nest Here

Honu'ea, or Hawaiian hawksbills sea turtles, are critically endangered. Most hawksbills nest on the southern coast of the island of Hawai'i. Beach development, poaching, and predation from non-native mammals have reduced turtle populations to critically low levels. Their amber and brown shells are illegally sold worldwide as tortoiseshell jewelry. As of 2007, only 81 adult females have been documented on Hawai'i Island.

Hawksbills only nest on a handful of beaches across the state. The remote nesting beaches of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park at 'Āpua Point, Keauhou, Halapē, and Kākiwai are protected. Even though you are unlikely to see one of these rare sea turtles, it is important to avoid disturbing turtles and their nesting activity.



Nesting Turtles are Very Sensitive

Nesting season extends from April to January, with peak activity from July to October. Females wait until night to crawl ashore and search for a suitable place to nest, usually beyond the tideline and around vegetation. She uses her strong back flippers to dig a flask-shaped egg cavity. Once completed, she lays around 200 eggs before covering the nest with sand. Exhausted, she returns to the sea leaving her golf ball sized eggs to incubate for the next two months.



Loud noise, your movements on the beach, and light from campfires and your flashlight will frighten female honu'ea that are searching for a nest site or digging their nests. Several years ago, a nesting hawksbill got confused by campers' lights, wandered off course and fell into a lava crack. She was found dead and full of eggs. Your cooperation can help ensure this never happens again.

Hundreds Hatch Together

Born underground, a baby Honu'ea is so small it can fit into the palm of your hand. The hatchlings work as a team to scrape sand off the roof of the nest cavity and push it down to the floor. In doing so, the hatchlings raise their nest towards the surface of the beach. Once they are near the surface, they wait for the coolness of night to emerge as a group and scramble to the water in the safety of numbers. Artificial lights such as flashlights, lanterns, or campfires disorient hatchlings on their way to the ocean. They can become trapped in thick vegetation or stuck in lava cracks. These stranded juveniles likely die of heat exposure, dehydration, or fall prey to predators.



Hawksbills Differ from Green Sea Turtles

Honu'ea or Hawaiian Hawksbill Sea Turtle



- **"Hawksbills Nest"**
only seen coming to shore at night
- Nest on the main Hawaiian Islands
- Feed on sponges, primarily on the northeast coast of Hawai'i Island

Honu or Green Sea Turtle



- **"Greens Rest"**
often seen sunbathing on the beach
- Nest on the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, over 700 miles away
- Eat seaweeds in shallow waters statewide

Stewards Take Action

Hawaiian hawksbill turtle protection is critical for the survival of this rare species. The Hawksbill Turtle Recovery Project acts to restore critical nesting habitat and works with the public to lessen human impacts on sea turtles. They monitor beaches along the Ka'ū coastline for nesting honu'ea. Continuous nightly patrols are provided during the entire nesting season.



Volunteers and staff control predators, remove non-native vegetation, tag nesting turtles, protect nests, and help hatchlings reach the ocean. Over 650 nests and 70,000 hatchlings have been protected since 1989. Recovery project staff near your campsite can provide additional information and guidelines.



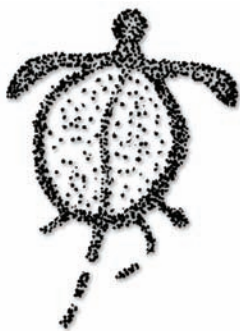
You Can Make a Difference

You can make a positive difference by observing the following guidelines during the nesting season:

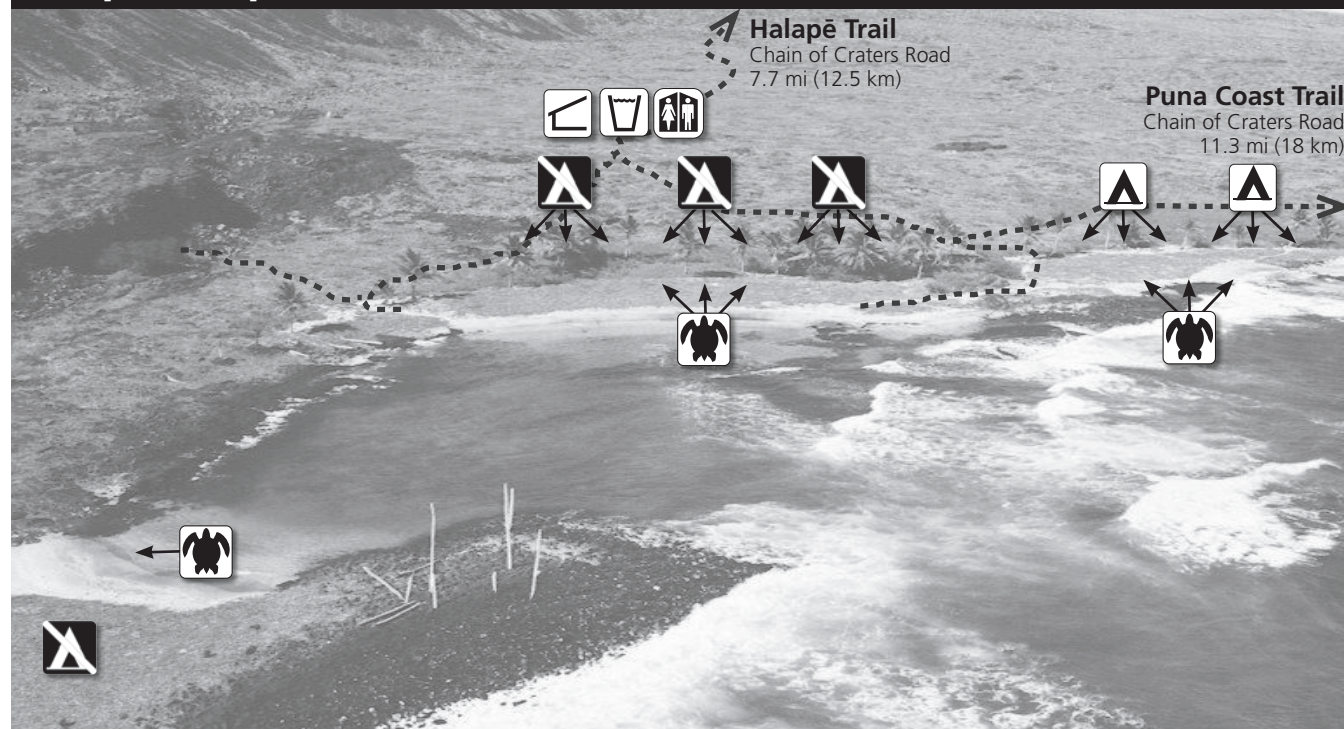
- **Do not camp or take livestock on sandy nesting beaches.** Your presence will disturb nesting turtles and hatchlings. The weight of a horse will destroy an egg chamber.
- **Campfires are not permitted in the park's backcountry.** Artificial lights, flash photography, and campfires disorient nesting turtles and attract hatchlings into dangerous situations. Use red filters on flashlights while on beaches at night. Direct all lights away from nest sites and the ocean.
- **Keep your campsite clean of food scraps.** Practice "Leave No Trace" ethics. Food scraps attract mongoose, and feral cats that prey on turtle eggs and hatchlings. Carry out your food scraps.
- **Federal and state laws protect all sea turtles and Hawaiian monk seals** from harassment, pursuit, killing, trapping, or collecting. Please stay at least 10 yds (10 m) away from turtles and 50 yds (45 m) from monk seals.

Stories of Old

According to Hawaiian legend, a mystical turtle, makes her home in the Ka'ū district at Punalu'u. Kauila was born to Honupō'okea and Honu'ea from a spring and nest they dug in the black sands. Able to turn herself from a turtle into human form, Kauila plays and watches over children as they play along the shoreline.



Halapē: Campsites and Honu'ea Habitat



Honu'ea Nesting Area



Campsites



Camping Prohibited



Water—must treat before drinking



Hiking Trail

Report Hawksbill Nestings and Monk Seal Sightings

Visitor observations have been invaluable in locating and protecting nests since the late 1980s. Please report your sightings as soon as possible to a Hawksbill Turtle Recovery Project volunteer in the backcountry, park staff at the visitor center, or by calling the Hawksbill Turtle Recovery Project Office at 808 985-6090.

Location _____ **Date** _____ **Time** _____

Briefly describe turtle and monk seal observation (mark the map above or sketch your own and include it with this form, show location of nest mounds or digs, direction of tracks with entry and exit points from ocean, tag presence, haul out locations, etc.) _____

Weather and tide condition (rain, cloud cover, moon phase, rising or falling tide) _____

Your name _____ **Phone or email** _____

Please drop this form off at the park visitor center or mail to: Hawksbill Turtle Recovery Project, P.O. Box 52, Hawai'i National Park, HI 96718. Mahalo for your help.