

# HiwaHiwa Lays Her Eggs and Safely Returns to Laniakea after a Treacherous 1,000 Mile Round-Trip Journey

Text by **Anita De Leon**, CTTC Turtle & Tortoise Care Society Chapter

Photos and Tracking Map provided by **George H. Balazs**,  
Leader, Marine Turtle Research Program,  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

and **Joanne Pettigrew**, Educational Outreach Coordinator,  
*Malama na Honu*



HiwaHiwa on East Island, French Frigate Shoals, basking with a group other Honu.

Laniakea, located on the North Shore of Oahu, is one of the few places where Hawaiian Green Sea Turtles (*Honu* in Hawaiian) bask on the beach almost every day of the year. It is believed that the *Honu* come to bask in Laniakea because it is an abundant foraging area and possibly to escape from tiger sharks.

In 1999 Brutus (L-1) was the first *Honu* to appear in Laniakea. Since that time there have been a total of 28 resident *Honu*.

Each of the regular baskers at Laniakea has been given an affectionate nickname by the locals, as well as being identified by the marine scientists as L-1 through L-27 and E-4.

*Honu* are not known to nest every year. Both males and females tend to return to their natal beach, the beach where they were born, to mate and lay their eggs. Their migration to the Northwest Hawaiian Islands is a treacherous 1,000 mile round-trip journey. During their migration many are targets of tiger shark attacks.

HiwaHiwa (L-2) last nested in 2002. Recently a Satellite Transmitter and a Time

Depth Recorder (TDR) had been affixed to her shell by marine scientists. The Satellite Transmitter tracks location, and the TDR records diving patterns.

She was last seen basking in Laniakea on April 23, 2010. She arrived on East Island in the French Frigate Shoals on May 25.

One day prior to her arrival at French Frigate Shoals, her TDR indicated she accomplished a record-breaking deep-sea dive at 570 feet (174 meters). This is the deepest dive recorded for Green Sea Turtles. Although it is not known why they dive, scientists speculate it may be to feed on mid-water animal-like pyrosomes.

On June 10, HiwaHiwa laid her first clutch of eggs. By August 5, she was still alive and nesting on East Island. There was growing concern about her safety inasmuch as she had not been seen and no satellite transmission had been received since that time.

On September 6, 136 days since her departure from Laniakea, HiwaHiwa incredibly returned back to Laniakea. Her satellite



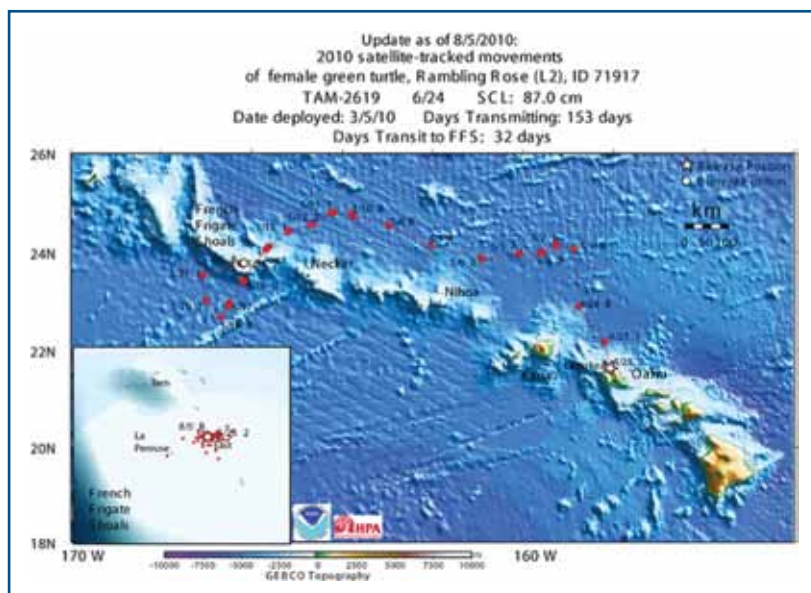
HiwaHiwa nesting on East Island, French Frigate Shoals.

antenna had somehow gotten lost.

HiwaHiwa is the first *Honu* to have been successfully tracked to French Frigate Shoals, nest and return safely to her basking and foraging grounds. To date, her deep-sea dive of 570 feet is a record breaker.

Welcome home HiwaHiwa! Your journey has been an amazing adventure.

*Mahalo nui loa* to Joanne Pettigrew and George Balazs for keeping me updated on this exciting and historic event. □



Satellite-tracking map of HiwaHiwa, recently nicknamed Rambling Rose, during her 2010 migration from Laniakea, Oahu to her nesting beach in French Frigate Shoals.

## Chronology of HiwaHiwa's Journey

- April 23: Seen basking at Laniakea Beach on Oahu's North Shore
- April 25: First satellite transmission from the Kauai Channel confirming departure
- May 16: HiwaHiwa comes within 40 miles of the French Frigate Shoals
- May 25: Arrives at East Island in the French Frigate Shoals
- June 10: Successfully nested on East Island
- June 21: Still in the vicinity of the French Frigate Shoals
- August 5: Reported to be still at French Frigate Shoals, and periodically nesting on East Island
- September 6: HiwaHiwa returns to Laniakea

To learn more about the *Honu*,  
visit <malamanahonu.org>

