

Maui Green Sea Turtle's

Protected By Law

All sea turtles in Hawaii are protected by law, and should not be touched unless you have a permit and are conducting official research on the species. Since few visitors meet these criteria, keep your distance. There is nothing wrong with getting a good look and admiring the turtles from a distance, but grabbing the turtles, riding on their backs or otherwise harassing them is against the law.

Signs of Harassment

Wondering how close is too close is common for someone not used to snorkeling with these sea creatures. But clear signs will indicate if a turtle feels you are too close. Although it may look cute, when a sea turtle "yawns" it is not because it is sleepy. It is actually irritated that you are invading its space. It is a sign of discomfort, and you should back away. If a turtle flips its flipper over its forehead, as if to swat you away, it is deeply aggravated by your presence, and you should immediately put more distance between you and the turtle. Obvious evasive maneuvers to swim away from you are also a strong signal.

Another article:

"All sea turtles in Hawai'i are protected under the Endangered Species Act (see above) and wildlife laws of the State of Hawai'i (Title 13, Chapter 124, Hawaii Administrative Laws – posted online at <http://www.state.hi.us/dlnr/dofaw/rules/Chap124.pdf>)

These laws prohibit harassing, capturing (possessing or removing), harming or killing, sea turtles. Under state law, violation is a misdemeanor criminal offense, punishable by a fine up to \$2,000 and/or 30 days in jail.

Research on sea turtles both in captivity and in the wild requires federal permits. It is important to remember that sea turtles, both alive and dead are protected. If you are lucky enough to see a sea turtle in the wild, do not attempt to touch or grab it. The recommended distance for observation of sea turtles in the wild is 50 yards. Please remember that feeding, touching, or attempting to ride them could cause distress." If you see them on the beach, please do not disturb them, turtles often haul out to rest. Do not allow dogs to approach them.

"You may report violations of either law to: NOAA Fisheries Enforcement at (808) 541-2727 (statewide) or the NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline at 1(800)853-1964, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Or call Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement at (808) 587-0077. Report nesting or basking activities, and dead, sick, injured or stranded turtles to the National Marine Fisheries Service Honolulu Laboratory at (808) 983-5730 Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 4 p.m."