

GREEN SEA TURTLES TURNING TO  
TERN ISLAND, FRENCH FRIGATE SHOALS, HAWAII

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Basking by green sea turtles (Chelonia mydas) on Tern Island in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands was documented between April 14 and June 5, 1981. In this period (53 days) 68 observations of turtles basking on Tern Island were made. One or more turtles were found basking on 36 days (68%). This is a marked increase from the numbers of basking turtles seen in past years. The length of time that an individual turtle basked was noted when possible. Twenty-nine turtles (43%) were known to bask for more than four hours and two turtles (3%) basked for more than two hours. No basking time was known for 37 turtles (54%). Fifty-four (79%) of the observations were of adults and 14 (21%) were of subadults. Of the 31 sexed adults, 15 were males and 16 were females. Ten of the subadult observations were of males and four of females. The use of the near shore habitat of Tern Island was noted. Since green sea turtles are extremely sensitive to human disturbance the increased use of Tern Island by turtles for basking may be attributed to the decrease in the number of people that now inhabit Tern Island and the regulated use of the beach and near shore waters.

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