

# SNORKELING IN MAUI, HAWAII

BY JAKE LEE

Last summer, my family and I had a memorable time in Maui. One of the most enjoyable activities of our trip was taking a boat to go snorkeling. We went to a place that was known for corals, obsidian rocks, and sea life.

Being underwater, I was worried that sharks would try to come and eat me because I had recently hit my knee on a sharp, pointy rock while swimming in the ocean. As a result, I had a lingering wound. I was afraid that I would attract sharks with the dried blood from the injury. I was also a little afraid that the water would be ice cold because it looked crystal clear and at least fifteen feet deep.



After I exited the boat, I was relieved to find that the water was warm and that there were no sharks in sight. As soon as I was in the water, I swam around looking at the corals surrounding Molokini Crater. At first, I expected the corals to be colorful and bursting

with life, however there were only black urchins and mostly dull bleached corals, with few fishes swimming here and there. I was surprised because before the trip, I had watched a video about Hawaii in which all the corals were clean and colorful, and the waters were clear. Seeing the dull bleached corals and small number of fishes with my own eyes made me start to think about water pollution.

On our second stop after Molokini Crater, we sailed to a snorkeling spot called Turtle Town. I was excited to jump out into the water and was the first person to exit the boat. Just like the previous snorkeling area, I saw turtles that had algae on their backs, spiny black urchins, soft purple urchins, and



larger soft red urchins on the corals. I also saw blue fish, yellow fish, gray fish, and fish of all colors. Turtle Town was different from Molokini Crater because it had more wildlife. From what I observed, corals in recovery could look very vibrant. I felt that there may be a chance to save these corals because they were not yet fully bleached.

Leaving the snorkeling spots, I became more concerned about the environment because I learned that there are very few fish living in the corals these days. The cause is water pollution and harmful sunscreen ingredients such as oxybenzone, avobenzone, octinoxate, homosalate, octisalate, octocrylene, and ethylhexyl methoxycinnamate. These ingredients cause DNA damage to coral, abnormal skeletal growth, deformities in larval growth, and an increase coral bleaching. I imagined that if the corals recovered, the fish would return. I decided to brainstorm ideas about what I can do to help. One idea I came up with is to raise awareness.

Since returning from Maui, I've had time to reflect on the rich marine life as well as the effects of water pollution that I observed there. I sometimes watch documentaries to compare. Now I have come up with a few ideas to raise awareness. The most appealing idea was to make posters with my little sister and distribute them to our neighbors. The themes of our posters are Do Not Litter and Recycle More. I hope my posters will have some positive effects and that people will be able to enjoy snorkeling at beautiful places around the world, especially Maui.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jake Lee is a fifth-grade learner at Welsh Valley Middle School in Penn Valley, Pennsylvania. He most recently earned his red belt in Tae Kwon Do. Jake enjoys traveling to new places and learning new things. He loves to build with Legos, read all types of books, and watch documentary films about nature.

